

EDITORIAL

DATE : 27th October

The United Nations in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: Roles, Failures, and the Road to Reform"

General Studies-2

Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their structure, mandate.

Introduction

- The **United Nations (UN)**, since its inception in **1945**, has aimed to **prevent conflicts**, promote **global peace**, and **protect human rights**.
- Mandated by its **Charter**, the UN is empowered to resolve conflicts **peacefully** (diplomacy, mediation) and, if required, through **force**.
- However, significant **shortcomings** have emerged, as seen in **Rwanda, Bosnia, Ukraine, and West Asia** conflicts.
- These limitations raise calls for **UN Security Council reforms** and **effective peacekeeping** strategies to improve **international stability**.

UN Charter: Framework for Conflict Resolution

1. **Chapter VI (Peaceful Resolution):**
 - **Goal:** Promote the **peaceful settlement of disputes** through **diplomacy, negotiation, and mediation**.
 - **Mechanisms:** Encourages dialogue among conflicting parties to prevent escalation.
 - **Limitation:** These methods are voluntary, and the **UN lacks enforcement power** unless both parties agree to cooperate.
2. **Chapter VII (Enforcement by Force):**
 - Allows **Security Council-authorized use of force** in cases where there is a **threat to peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression**.
 - **Examples:** The **UN's coalition forces in Korea (1950) and Kuwait (1991)**, where collective action successfully contained conflict.
 - **Challenges:** Member states must **voluntarily contribute** troops or funds, limiting response capabilities if countries are reluctant to participate.
3. **Chapter VIII (Regional Peacekeeping Partnerships):**

- Authorizes **regional organizations** (e.g., **African Union, NATO**) to manage conflicts in their regions with **Security Council support**.
- **Strengths:** Encourages **regional solutions** to local issues.
- **Limitations:** Reliant on **regional capabilities** and may face **funding and resource constraints**.

Success Stories in UN Peacekeeping

1. Cambodia (1992-1993):

- The **UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)** supervised **disarmament, democratic elections, and reconstruction** after years of civil war.
- **Impact:** UNTAC's mission is considered a model for **multi-dimensional peacekeeping** in post-conflict societies.

2. Mozambique (1992-1994):

- **UN Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ)** facilitated the end of a **civil war** between **FRELIMO** and **RENAMO** factions.
- **Outcome:** Helped stabilize the nation, laying the groundwork for long-term peace and economic recovery.

3. Timor Leste (1999-2002):

- Following **Indonesian withdrawal**, the **UNTAET mission** was critical in **maintaining order, facilitating a transition to independence, and establishing government institutions**.
- **Significance:** Timor Leste's independence showcases the UN's capability to support nation-building under favorable international conditions.

Failures of the UN as a Bystander

1. Rwanda Genocide (1994):

- Nearly **1 million Tutsis** were systematically massacred while **UN forces** remained unable to intervene meaningfully.
- **UNAMIR** (UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda) lacked adequate **resources and authority**.
- **Result:** UN's inability to prevent or halt genocide led to intense **criticism** and subsequent reforms like the **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)** doctrine.

2. Bosnian Conflict (1992-1995):

- The **Srebrenica Massacre** in **1995** saw **8,000 Bosniak men and boys** killed despite the presence of UN peacekeepers.
- **UN's Issue:** Troops were outnumbered and restricted by a limited mandate, preventing intervention.
- **Lesson:** Exposed the UN's vulnerability when member-states lack **political will** or **resources** for effective action.

3. Current Conflicts (Ukraine and West Asia):

- In the **Russia-Ukraine war** and **Israel-Gaza conflict**, the UN's presence has been minimal despite the scale of civilian suffering.
- **Inaction** due to **Security Council gridlock** (vetoes from P5 members) limits **timely interventions**.

Challenges with UN Peacekeeping and Security Council Structure

1. UN Peacekeeping Structure and Limitations:

- **Mandates** often restrict peacekeepers to non-intervention roles, limiting effectiveness in active conflict zones.
- **Funding and Resources:** Relying on contributions from **193 member states** leads to **resource constraints**.
- **Limited Authority:** Peacekeepers can be unable to respond to emerging violence if **mandates restrict** the use of force, as seen in **South Sudan** and **Central African Republic**.

2. Security Council Veto Power:

- The **P5 members—U.S., U.K., France, Russia, and China**—can veto any **substantive resolution**.
- **Impacts:**
 - Russia's vetoes blocked action on **Ukraine**.
 - The **U.S.** has also used its veto on matters involving **Israel**.
- **Criticism:** Vetoes prioritize **national interests** over **collective security**, creating impasses during **humanitarian crises**.

3. Need for Security Council Reform:

- **Proposal to expand P5 to P7:**
 - Inclusion of **India** and **South Africa** would represent the **Global South** and **emerging economies**, enhancing legitimacy.
- **Veto System Reform:**
 - A **majority-based decision-making** process could bypass **P5 vetoes** on critical security issues.
 - **Suggested System:** Gradual phasing of veto power or restricting vetoes for humanitarian and genocide prevention issues.

Proposed Reforms and Future of UN Peacekeeping

1. Expanding Peacekeeping Authority:

- **Flexible Mandates:** Peacekeepers could be granted authority to act in **civil protection** and **active conflicts** scenarios.
- **Example:** In **Timor Leste**, a stronger mandate enabled the UN to transition from peacekeeping to **nation-building**.

2. Improving Resources and Funding:

- **Regular Funding Mechanisms:** Introduce a **mandatory contribution system** to ensure steady **financing**.
- **Streamlining Contributions:** Encourage **regional blocks** (e.g., **European Union, African Union**) to coordinate funding and resource contributions.

3. Strengthening Regional Partnerships:

- **Empowering Regional Organizations:** The **African Union** and **ASEAN** could be granted greater **autonomy** with **UN endorsement** to resolve regional conflicts effectively.

- **Decentralized Approach:** Allow regional bodies to manage conflicts locally, with **UN support**.
4. **Enhanced Civilian Protection Mandates:**
- **Proactive Role in Civilian Protection:** Missions could include **humanitarian corridors, monitoring, and refugee protection**.
 - **Responsibility to Protect (R2P):** Formalize **R2P** in peacekeeping mandates to ensure UN's proactive stance in preventing **genocide and war crimes**.

Conclusion

- **UN Security Council** limitations, particularly the **veto system**, have frequently rendered the organization **ineffective** in conflict prevention and peacekeeping.
- To evolve from a **bystander role**, the UN needs significant **Security Council reforms, proactive peacekeeping authority**, and improved **regional partnerships**.
- **Without reform:**
 - The UN risks becoming an **ineffective body** rather than a **global peace enforcer**.
- **Path Forward:**
 - By expanding **representation**, enhancing **decision-making processes**, and equipping peacekeepers for **modern conflict scenarios**, the UN can reclaim its **foundational role** as a **guardian of global peace and security**.

MAINS QUESTION

Despite its ambitious mandate, the UN often finds itself in a bystander role in modern conflicts." Analyse the limitations of the UN's peacekeeping framework in the context of recent conflicts like Ukraine and Gaza. (250 words)