



# drishti

## The Big Picture: 75 Years of UN

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### Why in News?

On October 24, 2020 the United Nations marked its diamond jubilee.

- Far from a joyous celebration, it was an occasion sombrely reflecting the stagnance of the UN at 75.
- How it can regain its lost lustre is a matter of discussion.

### Key Points

- Despite that the UN has gone through several improvements, the tussle between 'principle' and 'power' still remains the same.
- The UN is for global governance and not a global government.

- Though the organisation was designed to maintain a peaceful and just world, it still privileges the most powerful states.
- The UN has seen successes as well as failures almost equally.
- The United Nations must be sustained as there is no parallel organisation to it.

## The United Nations

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Founded in 1945, the **United Nations** is an international organisation aimed at:

- Maintaining international peace and security
- Protecting human rights
- Delivering humanitarian aid
- Promoting sustainable development
- Upholding international law.

The UN headquarters is located in New York, USA.

### UN's Success Areas

- **Increment in the UN membership:** Post- 1960's decolonisation, the membership of the UN expanded from about 50 members to double.
- **Decolonisation:** It was the UN which played the lead role in the 1960 decolonisation and helped around 80 colonies in gaining their freedom.
- **Involvement with civil society:** The UN is no more an organisation of nations only, more and more UN bodies have begun engaging with the people within the nations, experts, intellectuals and media with time.
- **Better sustenance:** The UN has successfully sustained itself till now, as compared to the **League of Nations**, which is an achievement.
- **Peacekeeping:** The UN has successfully prevented World War - III.

### 1960's Decolonisation

- In 1960, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)), known also as the **Declaration on Decolonization**.
- When the United Nations was established in 1945, 750 million people- almost a third of the world's population then lived in Territories that were non-self-governing, dependent on colonial Powers.
- About 80 former colonies had gained their independence.  
At present, there are 17 only Non- Self- Governing Territories remaining and fewer than 2 million people live in such Territories.

## The League of Nations

- The League of Nations was an international diplomatic group developed after World War I as a way to solve disputes between countries before they erupted into open warfare.
- It was established on 10 January, 1920 with its headquarter in **Geneva, Switzerland.**
- A precursor to the United Nations, the League achieved some victories but had a mixed record of success, sometimes putting self-interest before becoming involved with conflict resolution, while also contending with governments that did not recognize its authority.
- The League effectively ceased operations during World War II (1946).

## UN's Major Setbacks

- **Arm races and Cold war:** Although, the WW-III has been successfully prevented till date, violence, arm races, nuclear races and cold wars still occur among nations.
- **Power suppressing principles:** The world body still continues to see a tussle between 'principle' and 'power'.

While the hopes of a peaceful and just world are represented by the UN, the most powerful states are privileged by granting them commanding heights over international politics via the undemocratic instruments of veto power and permanent seats in the **UN Security Council** (UNSC).

- **Not a multipolar organisation:** The UN has been unable to present itself as a multipolar and multilateral organisation.

At the time of formation, the UN had 5 permanent members with a total of 51 members, presently, it has 193 members but permanent members in the UN General Assembly are still 5.

- **Laggard in holistic growth:** The organisation had not been able to cope up with the increasing globalisation.

The UN has been a laggard in overall development; no institutional arrangement is there to deal in particular with Pandemics or new technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence.**

## The Significant Role of India

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- **India and the UN:** India is one of the founding members of the UN.  
Since its independence and even before that, India has been an active participant in all initiatives undertaken by the UN like Millennium Development Goals, **Sustainable development goals** and various UN summits, including on climate change.
- **Maintaining peace:** As far as the peacekeeping ambit of the UN is concerned, India has performed quite well in maintaining peaceful and friendly relations with most of the nations.

- **India and UNSC:** India has been recently elected as a **non permanent member of the UNSC** and will be joining the latter from 1 January, 2021.
  - The non permanent membership of India can be taken as an opportunity to convince the like-minded nations for fighting international terrorism.
  - Moreover, India should also focus upon sitting upon the apex body in future; becoming a permanent member of the UN.
- **Raising concern over need of reforms:** India has realised the urgent need of reforms in the UN specially at the UNSC and has raised concerns over the issue.

### What can India do?

- **Perseverance:** India must persevere and be determined about its position rather than bringing it out only on occasions.
- **Alliance:** It should make other allied nations that have ties with India realise its value and the power they can all gather together once India gets a permanent seat at the Security council.
- **Balance its international and internal responsibilities:** India must also see the added pressure it might receive if it becomes a member on the Security council and not have to compromise with its own internal issues.
- **Principles over power:** India's tilt towards principles is what is appreciated and shall be continued to maintain its goodwill.

### Way Forward

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- **Reforming the UN charter:** The UN charter talks only about the rights but not duties and responsibilities. The duties and responsibilities at individual, community, global and national level need to be emphasised too.
- **Reforms in the UNSC:** The UNSC should be expanded in terms of its core members, only five permanent members with a total of 193 members does not provide justice to the others.
- **A more multilateral organisation:** The UN should engage strongly with multilateralism and harness the capabilities of all those who matter, not just the P5.
 

What is needed is a multipolar and multilateral approach rather than autocracy of the P5 countries.
- **Choosing principles over power:** If the principles are written by the most powerful states, then it cannot create any difference; the unequal and iniquitous structure will remain the same.
  - The salience of power is what is needed to be reduced.
  - This is where India can take up the lead and may start a dialogue with the like minded countries first about the same.
- **Judging the elements of power:** It is needed to be looked upon what elements of power need to be appreciated- the crude, military power or the soft, economic power.

- **Principles for the powerful too:** The other members need to make sure that the powerful members are made to work within the framework of principles so the balance between the power and principle is maintained.
- **Specialised agencies:** The need for specialised agencies dealing with specific affairs such as Artificial Intelligence, Information Technology, Pandemics etc shall be looked and acted upon.

### **P5 Countries:**

- The P5 refers to the UN Security Council's five permanent members; namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States plus Germany (making it P5 +1).
- The P5+1 is often referred to as the E3+3 by European countries.

### **Conclusion**

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- The UN has survived and thrived and has certainly seen incremental changes over the last 75 years but the time has come for the UN to change and change for the better.
- UNSC is in desperate need to undergo reforms, the sooner the better, the later the more redundant.
- In a nutshell, as far as the whole UN is concerned complete reform is needed with principles not to be written by the most powerful anymore.