

Has UN succeeded in averting war?

Outline

1. Introduction:

Thesis Statement:

Although United Nations has tried to ensure peace and prevent wars, its efforts have not been fruitful. The world has witnessed many wars, conflicts and even outright genocides in the presence of this multi-lateral organization.

2. The role of UN in preventing conflicts
3. UN efforts for ensuring peace and security of the world.
 - a. Role in disarmament programs and de-weaponisation.
 - b. UNSC resolutions have limited the progression of wars
 - c. International Court of Justice: a UN body that ensures accountability.
 - d. Sending peacekeeping missions in areas of conflict.
4. UN has been a spectator in wars.
 - a. Israel - Palestine conflict: blatant war crimes and UN's helplessness.
 - b. UN's ambiguous role in America's invasion of Iraq.
 - c. Failure of Peace keeping missions: Somalia civil war.

- d) Inability to prevent ethnic cleansing.
- e) Russia - Ukraine war: UN's role limited to humanitarian aid.
- f) Three Indo-Pak wars in the presence of UN.
- e) Failure to provide an impartial platform for political reconciliation.

5. Reasons of UN's failure in averting wars.

- a) Non-binding resolution of UNGA.
- b) Abuse of veto power in UNSC.
- c) Structural reforms have been stagnant.
- d) Hegemony of permanent members.

6. Conclusion.

Karl Marx opined that in large organizations, people rarely work for common interest. Instead, the members promote and protect their own vested interests through these groups. Similarly, United Nations has failed to deliver its aims as member states' interests are not aligned. Although UN has made efforts in peacekeeping, these efforts have not been fruitful. The world has witnessed many conflicts, wars, and even outright genocides in the presence of the organization. Since its inception in 1945 after the failure of League of Nations, it has faced many challenges regarding the subject of world security. To combat with these challenges, UN adopted many disarmament treaties and resolutions. It sent peacekeeping missions in the areas of conflict. Moreover, International Court of Justice, a body of UN, ensures accountability and transparency through fair trials of war crimes. This provides deterrence against the use of unfair war tactics. Despite these actions, UN's role in averting wars has been limited. This is evident through the wide spread clashes and conflicts in various parts of the world today. From Ukraine to Palestine, Rwanda to Kashmir and Syria to Somalia, the world is in a state of war. Many reasons have been stipulated

for this crisis. UN is a body of 193 countries, however only five members have permanent seats in United Nations Security Council. These members also possess the power of veto. This power is frequently abused in UNSC to protect their own interests. The resolutions which are passed by United Nations General Assembly are of non-binding nature. There is no method to ensure action on these resolutions. As a result, UN has been rendered almost useless in averting a war.

United Nations is a multilateral organization which was created in 1945. In the aftermath of world war II, the international community decided to create an authentic platform for political reconciliation. At that time, only 51 members were a part of UN. Since then, UN has grown a lot and today it is the largest global organization with a structured and systematic framework. One of the core objectives in its charter is the maintenance of peace and security in the world. It had to ensure that another Hiroshima does not become the target of a nuclear bomb. Yet, in November 2023, 12,000 tons of explosive material was bombarded on innocent civilians in Gaza and UNSC failed to adopt a

resolution for humanitarian crucel. UN's inability to surpass veto has made it helpless in this situation. UN has made ^{concrete} efforts on the socioeconomic front, but not very much on the subject of Peace and security.

To ensure peace, one important action taken by UN is the creation of International Atomic Energy Association [IAEA]. Under IAEA, many non-proliferation treaties and disarmament programs have been made. Majority members of the UN have accepted these programs. UN has also provided financial aid to countries for civil nuclear programs in order to prevent the creation of nuclear weapons. Non-proliferation treaties have remarkably limited the production of nuclear weapons. In the whole world, there are only nine nuclear weapon states. These actions have significantly contributed to ensure peace in the world.

Along with this, United Nations has used the platform of UNGA and UNSC for limiting the progression of wars. Just after an year of independence, Pakistan and India fought their first war. If that war had continued, it could put the lives of millions in danger.

UN passed a resolution for resolving the issue of Kashmir. At that time, both India and Pakistan agreed to resolution no-48 calling for an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal of troops and Plebiscite in Kashmir. Later on, India refused to follow it, however it did prevent the conflict from further escalation.

In case of conflicts, International Court of Justice provides unbiased, impartial and independent decisions that are binding on both parties. When an Indian spy Kulbhushan Yadav was caught in Pakistan, Indian authorities appealed in ICJ regarding access to a councillor. ICJ gave its verdict which was accepted by both countries. Similarly, ICJ has given many other verdicts for the resolution of conflicts between various states. Furthermore, this esteemed court consisting of 15 international judges can hold people accountable for war crimes and unfair battleground tactics. This has positively contributed in preventing conflicts.

To maintain peace and security in the world, UN also sends peace keeping missions. One such example is the peacekeeping mission UNOSOM sent to Somalia. Such missions were

also sent to Syria, Rohingya and Sudan.
Not only that, UN also sends their workers
in areas of conflict for assessing onground
situation. These missions meet with political
parties and security establishment along
with the opposition as well and try to
come up with an acceptable solution. These
missions helped in creating a favourable environment
for peace keeping.

Despite these efforts, UN
has not been able to prevent wars.
In fact, UN has been a spectator in such
times. A contemporary relevance is the
ongoing Palestine - Israel conflict. Thousands
of innocent people including children
have been killed. UN's two state solution,
as proposed in the UNSC resolution of 1948, has
made little to no difference ~~has made no~~
~~difference~~ in the lives of the people living
across the disputed border. Israel is
committing war crimes, targeting hospitals
and using phosphorus bombs on civilians.
Israel is backed by US and USA is a
permanent member of UNSC, therefore, UN
is helpless in this matter.

In the Israel - Palestine
conflict, United Nations tried to
pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire.
However, in the past, UN has also

played the role of an accomplice. In 2003, US invaded Iraq accusing Saddam's regime of possessing weapons of mass destruction. UN passed a resolution to declare this invasion legitimate. Millions of Iraqis were killed including women and little children. UN watched silently as a massacre occurred because of a false accusation.

UN has not been this silent always. At times, it did make efforts for averting war atrocities. However, these acts could not bear fruit. In Somalia, UN sent the UNOSOM peacekeeping mission. However, the forces were not sufficient in number and they lacked adequate resources. They were trapped by the rioters and some of them died in civil war. 1.5 million people have been killed in civil wars in Somalia till now. Such half hearted moves often backfire and result in further escalation of critical situations. Consequently, a whole generation had to endure the damage and destruction of war.

The methods of war have not changed in a few aspects in the 21st century. Although the world

a more literate and more technically advanced, ethnicity still remains the prime reason of conflict. Ethnic cleansing, which was condemned in the strongest words in the Geneva Convention, still continues in the world. UN has failed to secure the people of ethnic minorities. Rohingya genocide is one example of this atrocity. The resolution passed against Myanmar govt. in the UNSC was vetoed by China. Yet again, UN failed to avert conflict.

One of the largest conflicts of the contemporary era is the Russia-Ukraine war. In Feb 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, violating the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine. Although Kyiv was backed by US, both politically and ~~geograph~~ militarily, UN could not stop Russia. The war resulted in loss of many lives. The economic impact was felt by people all over the world. Despite all of this, UN could not avert this war. Even today, this conflict is going on. Moscow and Kyiv have failed to reach a middle ground. The sharp divide of global community also reflects the bipolarity of world order along with UN's inability to provide a solution.

UN has also been unable to keep peace in the subcontinent. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been in three wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971 respectively. Kashmir has been the bone of contention in between the two neighbours.

Although Pakistan agreed to the UN resolution, India violated this. UNSC has the power to impose sanctions including economic sanctions on countries. Despite India's blatant violations of UNSC resolutions, no action has been taken. This has given India further leverage over the comparatively smaller states in the neighborhood. Both India and Pakistan are nuclear weapon state and this poses a huge risk to the subcontinent region. UN could not avert war between India and Pakistan and also failed to implement its resolution.

The reason that UN has not been successful in averting war are manifold. One reason is the non-binding nature of the UNGA resolutions. In October 2023, UNGA finally adopted a resolution calling for a humanitarian truce. 114 countries voted in the favour of this resolution.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres himself called for a ceasefire multiple times. However, no concrete action is taken.

UN needs to formulate a process for the implementation of these resolutions. Otherwise, they have no more worth than an ordinary piece of paper.

A reform that is immediately needed is the restriction of veto power. In 2015, France introduced a resolution in United Nations which said that veto power should not be used for the cases in which there is an indication of a massive atrocity or an ethnic cleansing. However, the resolution could not get the approval of many countries. In Palestine and Ukraine, war could have been averted if there was a restriction on the use of veto power. One powerful country who is a member of the P-5 can overrule the decision of 14 other countries which are the members of UNSC. This creates an imbalance which shifts the equilibrium towards those who yield greater power.

To make a fair and unbiased environment, it is imperative to increase the numbers of permanent and non-permanent members of Security Council. Piecemeal initiatives have been taken such as explaining the use of veto power within 10 days in front of all members of UNGA, however, no pragmatic action has been taken to make reforms in the structure of the

council. The initiatives by G-4, African Union and UfC were rejected.

Consequently, the council is being run by a few members. These P-5 countries are economically very strong and they steer decision making in the direction of their choice.

In a nutshell, it can be said that UN is the single largest multi-lateral organization working for peacekeeping and socioeconomic well being of the world. However, it has failed to deliver on the peace and security front. It has not been able to succeed in averting wars. Lack of political will, vested personal interests and abuse of power are the main reason behind these failures. Structural changes in the framework and functioning of United Nations is the need of the hour.