Chapter 4: International Organisations

Exercises — Exercises

Q1 Mark correct or wrong against each of the following statements about the veto power. (a) Only the permanent members of the Security Council possess the veto power. (b) It's a kind of negative power. (c) The Secretary-General uses this power when not satisfied with any decision. (d) One veto can stall a Security Council resolution.

(a) Correct. Only the five permanent members (US, Russia, UK, France, China) hold it; non-permanent members do not. (b) Correct. It is a negative vote that blocks a decision rather than making one. (c) Wrong. The Secretary-General is the UN's representative head and has no veto. (d) Correct. If even one permanent member votes against, the decision stalls, however many others vote for it.

Q2 Mark correct or wrong against each of the following statements about the way the UN functions. (a) All security and peace related issues are dealt with in the Security Council. (b) Humanitarian policies are implemented by the main organs and specialised agencies spread across the globe. (c) Having consensus among the five permanent members on security issues is vital for its implementation. (d) The members of the General Assembly are automatically the members of all other principal organs and specialised agencies of the UN.

(a) Wrong. War, peace and differences between states are discussed in both the General Assembly and the Security Council. (b) Correct. Social and economic matters are handled by agencies such as WHO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO. (c) Correct. A negative vote by any permanent member can stall a decision, so their agreement is needed. (d) Wrong. Membership of the General Assembly does not automatically make a state a member of the other organs; for example, the Security Council has only five permanent and ten elected non-permanent members.

Q3 Which among the following would give more weightage to India's proposal for permanent membership in the Security Council? (a) Nuclear capability (b) It has been a member of the UN since its inception (c) It is located in Asia (d) India's growing economic power and stable political system

(d) India's growing economic power and stable political system. The proposed criteria for new members include being a major economic power, a democracy respecting human rights, a big population and representativeness. India's economic emergence and status as the largest democracy support its claim; nuclear capability is in fact a concern for some countries, and location or early membership are not criteria.

Q4 The UN agency concerned with the safety and peaceful use of nuclear technology is: (a) The UN Committee on Disarmament (b) International Atomic Energy Agency (c) UN International Safeguard Committee (d) None of the above

(b) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Q5 WTO is serving as the successor to which of the following organisations? (a) General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (b) General Arrangement on Trade and Tariffs (c) World Health Organisation (d) UN Development Programme

(a) General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The WTO was set up in 1995 as its successor.

Q6 Fill in the blanks. (a) The prime objective of the UN is ____. (b) The highest functionary of the UN is called ____. (c) The UN Security Council has ____ permanent and ____ non-permanent members. (d) ____ is the present UN Secretary-General.

(a) To prevent international conflict and facilitate cooperation among states. (b) The Secretary-General. (c) Five permanent and ten non-permanent members. (d) António Guterres.

Q7 Match the principal organs and agencies of the UN with their functions: 1. Economic and Social Council; 2. International Court of Justice; 3. International Atomic Energy Agency; 4. Security Council; 5. UN High Commission for Refugees; 6. World Trade Organisation; 7. International Monetary Fund; 8. General Assembly; 9. World Health Organisation; 10. Secretariat. Functions: (a) Oversees the global financial system (b) Preservation of international peace and security (c) Looks into the economic and social welfare of the member countries (d) Safety and peaceful use of nuclear technology (e) Resolves disputes between and among member countries (f) Provides shelter and medical help during emergencies (g) Debates and discusses global issues (h) Administration and coordination of UN affairs (i) Providing good health for all (j) Facilitates free trade among member countries

1 - (c); 2 - (e); 3 - (d); 4 - (b); 5 - (f); 6 - (j); 7 - (a); 8 - (g); 9 - (i); 10 - (h).

Q8 What are the functions of the Security Council?

The Security Council is the UN body mainly concerned with war, peace and differences between member states, so its core function is the preservation of international peace and security. It works towards the UN's objective of stopping conflicts between states from escalating into war and limiting hostilities if war breaks out. It has five permanent members (US, Russia, UK, France, China), who were the most powerful victors after the Second World War, and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms so that all continents are represented. It decides by voting, each member having one vote, but any permanent member can stall a decision through its veto. The Charter gave the permanent members this privileged position to bring stability to the post-war world. The Council's activities have also expanded greatly in recent years, which is why its structure and membership remain central to UN reform debates.

Q9 As a citizen of India, how would you support India's candidature for the permanent membership of the Security Council? Justify your proposal.

I would support India's candidature on these grounds, all drawn from India's own case. First, size and democracy: India is the most populous country, with almost one-fifth of humanity, and the world's largest democracy, both criteria proposed for new members. Second, record in the UN: India has taken part in virtually all UN initiatives, has a long and substantial peacekeeping role, and has paid its financial contributions regularly without faltering. Third, economic emergence on the world stage strengthens the claim. Fourth, representation: the Council was enlarged from 11 to 15 in 1965 with no change in permanent members, though most General Assembly members are now developing countries; India argues a broader Council would have more support in the world community. Permanent membership also carries symbolic importance and greater influence in foreign policy. I would acknowledge objections (Pakistan's opposition, India's nuclear capability, claims of other emerging powers, and the need to represent Africa and South America), and argue that India's merits and the need for a representative Council still justify its seat.

Q10 Critically evaluate the difficulties involved in implementing the suggested reforms to reconstruct the UN.

There is wide support for reform, but little agreement on what, how and when. On structure, choosing new Security Council members is contentious. Proposed criteria (economic power, military power, budget contribution, population, democracy and human rights, representativeness) each have merits and flaws: how big must an economy be, can a state buy a seat through contributions, is population an asset, and would a democratic state be effective? Representation is also disputed: by continent, region, level of development or civilisation, none of which divides the world neatly. Abolishing or modifying the veto is resisted because permanent members are unlikely to agree, and without it great powers might lose interest and act outside the UN. On jurisdiction, questions arise over which conflicts a Peacebuilding Commission should enter, who defines human rights violations, whether the ambitious SDGs are realistic for developing countries, and how to define terrorism. Countries also disagree on whether the UN should focus on peace and security or on development and humanitarian work. Because every proposal affects states' own interests, consensus is hard.

Q11 Though the UN has failed in preventing wars and related miseries, nations prefer its continuation. What makes the UN an indispensable organisation?

The UN is imperfect, but the world would be worse off without it. It gives countries a single forum to talk, as Shashi Tharoor says, so that disputes are argued over words rather than fought on battlefields; most conflicts are in fact resolved without war. Some problems, such as eradicating disease or checking global warming, can only be solved when all nations cooperate, and the UN supplies information, rules, mechanisms and a bureaucracy that build confidence that costs and benefits are fairly shared. Its agencies (WHO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO) work on health, development, refugees, children and education. In a unipolar world it provides an arena where US attitudes and policies can be challenged and compromises shaped, and even US leaders see it as bringing over 190 nations together. With growing interdependence among more than seven billion people, and technology increasing it further, the UN's importance will only grow.

Q12 'Reforming the UN means restructuring of the Security Council'. Do you agree with this statement? Give arguments for or against this position.

I only partly agree. For the statement: the biggest reform discussion has been on the Security Council. It no longer reflects present realities (the Soviet Union has collapsed, China and India are rising, many new states have joined), its decisions are seen as reflecting Western interests, and it lacks equitable representation. Its size has been static since 1965 while the General Assembly has grown, with demands for more members from Asia, Africa and South America. Against the statement: the text names two kinds of reform, one of structures and processes and one of the issues within the UN's jurisdiction. The 2005 summit agreed on a Peacebuilding Commission, a Human Rights Council, the responsibility to protect citizens from atrocities, condemnation of terrorism, a Democracy Fund and winding up the Trusteeship Council, none of which is Council restructuring. There are also demands for better budgetary procedures and administration, and debates over whether the UN should stress peace and security or development and humanitarian work. So Council restructuring is central but not the whole of UN reform.