



# Understanding The United Nations: Functions And Role In Modern-Day Subtitle: A Critical Analysis Of Its Relevance In Global Affairs

**J Jai Suriya**

Student of Faculty of Law,  
SRM University  
Delhi-NCR, India

**Abstract:** The United Nations (UN), established in 1945, was envisioned as a beacon of global peace and cooperation. Over the decades, its role has expanded to address issues ranging from human rights to sustainable development. However, the static nature of its foundational charter, coupled with challenges in adapting to modern geopolitical dynamics, has sparked debates about its relevance and effectiveness. This paper critically examines the UN's role in maintaining international peace, addressing conflicts, and fostering cooperation. Case studies, including the Israel-Palestine dispute and the Russia-Ukraine war, are analyzed to highlight successes and shortcomings. Recommendations for structural reforms, including modifications to the Security Council and enhanced transparency, are proposed to modernize the UN and ensure its efficacy in the 21st century.

**Index Terms** - United Nation, Law, War, Palestine, Israel, United State, Russia.

## **I. Introduction**

The United Nations (UN) has long been the cornerstone of global diplomacy, aimed at fostering peace, security, and cooperation among nations. Established in 1945, the UN's mission has been to prevent conflicts, promote human rights, and address pressing global issues such as poverty, climate change, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Despite its noble objectives, the effectiveness of the United Nations in fulfilling these roles has often been questioned, especially when it comes to its ability to prevent wars and foster lasting peace. This research paper delves into the functioning and influence of the UN, evaluating its strengths, weaknesses, and the challenges it faces in contemporary global conflicts. The main focus of this study is to explore how the UN can improve its peacekeeping efforts, particularly in regions like the Middle East, and address the challenges posed by ongoing conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine dispute and the Russia-Ukraine war. Given the shifting global political landscape, the paper also examines the necessity of reform within the UN, especially with regard to its structural limitations, such as the veto power of the Security Council, and the evolving role of international organizations in world peace.

The United Nations was founded after the Second World War with the goal of preventing future wars, maintaining international peace and security, promoting social and economic cooperation, and advancing human rights. Despite its successes, the UN has faced numerous criticisms over the decades. The growing complexity of international conflicts, the rising influence of powerful nations, and the challenges posed by regional disputes have all raised questions about the UN's capacity to remain relevant in the modern world.

## II. Research Background

This research paper seeks to examine the effectiveness of the UN's peacekeeping and diplomatic efforts through both quantitative and qualitative analysis. It aims to assess public perceptions regarding the UN's role in peacekeeping, the need for reforms, and its effectiveness in addressing current global issues. Lex est Rex—"Law is the king"—emphasizes the supremacy of law, a cornerstone of the rule of law. Similarly, the Latin maxim Dura lex, sed lex—"The law is harsh, but it is the law"—underscores the authority of law in governance. For any institution to function solemnly, a robust set of rules and regulations is essential. This principle applies universally, from religions to global organizations. For instance, every religion operates under specific codes; a Christian without baptism or a Muslim without Sunnat may not be fully integrated within their faith, as adherence to these rules ensures proper functioning and continuity.

The United Nations Charter reflects this necessity for structure. Its very first article establishes peace as its core value, emphasizing the removal of threats against peace. Article 2 upholds equality among member states, while Article 3 focuses on the peaceful resolution of international disputes. Article 4 prohibits the use of threats or force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any state. Article 6 explicitly states that violations of these principles may lead to the expulsion of a member state from the organization.

Despite these principles, various regions worldwide face threats, many instigated or exacerbated by the actions of the UN's own permanent members. This raises questions about the integrity of the charter. The Security Council's five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—are meant to exemplify adherence to the UN's principles. However, their failures or violations often undermine the supremacy of the law and erode the credibility of the organization. When these leading nations falter, the remaining 188 member states are left questioning the system's fairness and the integrity of the UN Charter. This issue challenges the very foundation of the rule of law within the United Nations.

The literature also critiques the veto power held by the five permanent members, which often hinders timely resolutions to conflicts. Furthermore, researchers advocate for integrating advanced technologies and fostering regional collaborations to address localized challenges effectively.

## III. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this research paper is to critically evaluate the effectiveness, relevance, and perception of the United Nations in contemporary global affairs. The study aims to:

- ❖ Assess the UN's effectiveness in resolving conflicts and maintaining peace.
- ❖ Explore the need for reforms in the UN Charter and operational structure.
- ❖ Evaluate the UN's approach to addressing contemporary geopolitical challenges.
- ❖ Provide actionable recommendations for improving the UN's efficiency and inclusivity.

### a) Research Questions

- ❖ Does the UN possess adequate authority to prevent wars and promote peace?
- ❖ How effective is the Security Council's veto system in addressing conflicts?
- ❖ Should the UN Charter be reformed to reflect modern realities?
- ❖ What strategies can enhance the UN's efficiency in conflict zones?
- ❖ How can the UN strengthen its role in global governance?

#### IV. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons, as it offers a comprehensive analysis of the United Nations' effectiveness in *maintaining global peace and security*. By examining the responses to various research questions, the study seeks to understand the modern-day role of the UN in conflict resolution, its strategies for peacekeeping, and the perception of its capacity to adapt to contemporary geopolitical challenges.

**1) Assessing the UN's Global Impact:**

The study provides valuable insights into how different age groups and professionals perceive the UN's role in preventing wars, fostering peace, and addressing ongoing conflicts like those in the Middle East, Israel-Palestine, and Russia-Ukraine. This analysis is critical in understanding whether the UN is perceived as an effective and relevant institution in today's complex world of international relations.

**2) Identifying the Need for Reform:**

By focusing on the question of UN reforms, this study highlights whether there is a consensus regarding the necessity of changes to the UN Charter or its structure. The findings could guide policymakers in evaluating whether certain processes, such as the veto power held by the permanent members of the Security Council, need reconsideration in order to make the organization more inclusive and effective.

**3) Providing Insights into Conflict Management:**

The study's exploration of the UN's role in specific conflicts—such as the Israel-Palestine dispute and the Russia-Ukraine war—helps identify the challenges faced by the UN in resolving intractable issues. This is crucial for future strategies in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It also serves as a basis for evaluating the UN's responsiveness to current global crises.

**4) Shaping Future Peacekeeping Strategies:**

By analyzing the perceived efficiency of the UN in conflict zones, especially in areas like the Middle East, the study will contribute to discussions about improving peacekeeping operations. The feedback gathered from the respondents could lead to better frameworks for the UN to act swiftly and decisively in crisis regions.

**5) Enhancing Public Understanding:**

The research encourages public engagement with the United Nations' role in international politics. By exploring public opinions and examining the gaps between perception and reality regarding the UN's authority and capacity, the study aims to enhance awareness of global governance and international relations among various stakeholders.

**6) Influencing Policy Discussions:**

The findings of this study could be used by policymakers, diplomats, and international organizations to reflect on the future of multilateral diplomacy and the role of institutions like the UN in ensuring long-term peace. The study's conclusions could influence future reforms within the UN system or shape strategies for more effective global cooperation.

#### V. Research Methodology

##### Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive, aimed at exploring and analyzing the perceptions of participants regarding the United Nations (UN) and its role in global peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and international relations. The study focuses on gathering data related to the effectiveness of the UN in areas such as the Middle Eastern region, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as its overall role in promoting world peace. By using a descriptive design, the research captures both the attitudes and perceptions of respondents concerning the UN's efforts, which ultimately helps in answering the research questions effectively.

This approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the respondents' views on the contemporary relevance and actions of the UN, especially regarding its peacekeeping initiatives and global governance structure. Through this research design, we aim to identify common themes and patterns in participants' responses, providing a clear picture of how the UN is perceived across different demographic groups.



## Sampling Method

For this research, convenience sampling was employed, ensuring that the respondents were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. The participants were primarily university students, professionals, and individuals who either had basic or advanced knowledge of international relations and the functioning of the United Nations. The sample size was diverse, consisting of individuals from various age groups (18+, 25+, 35+) to capture a wide spectrum of opinions. However, it is important to note that the study's sample may not fully represent the global population, as the majority of respondents were from specific regions with varying levels of exposure to global peace issues.

The decision to use convenience sampling was based on time constraints and the availability of respondents who could provide valuable insights into the UN's role in peace and conflict resolution. While this method offers convenience and ease of access, it may introduce some level of bias, particularly in terms of the participants' educational background and awareness of international politics.

## Data Collection Methods

The data collection for this research was conducted using a structured questionnaire that included both close-ended and open-ended questions. This mixed-method approach allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a well-rounded understanding of the respondents' views on the UN.

**Close-ended questions:** These questions were designed to quantify opinions and gather measurable data. The respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement or disagreement with statements related to the UN's immunity, its role in preventing wars, and whether its approach requires reformations. Responses were analyzed statistically to identify trends and overall sentiment toward the UN's actions.

**Open-ended questions:** These questions provided respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their views, particularly concerning the UN's role in specific global conflicts, such as the Middle East, Israel-Palestine, and Russia-Ukraine. This section of the questionnaire was designed to gain deeper insights into how participants perceive the UN's actions in these regions and its approach to world peace in general.

The data was collected through an online survey, which enabled broad participation across various demographic groups. The responses were gathered from a total of 74 participants, with a mix of students (69%), professionals (22%), and self-employed individuals (9%), reflecting a diverse array of perspectives on the subject.

## Data Analysis Approach

The analysis of the collected data involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

- Quantitative Data Analysis:** The responses to the close-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This allowed for the identification of key trends and patterns in the data, such as the percentage of respondents who agree that the UN has immunity to stop wars or the proportion who believe that the UN's approach to peacekeeping is becoming alien in contemporary times. The data was organized into categories based on the themes of each question, enabling a clear comparison of how different groups of respondents viewed the UN's role in global peace and conflict.

- Qualitative Data Analysis:** The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed through thematic analysis, where recurring ideas, concepts, and sentiments were grouped into key themes. This approach enabled the identification of significant insights regarding the UN's effectiveness in addressing regional conflicts and promoting global peace. By coding the responses into broader themes, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' perspectives on the UN's current approach to global governance and conflict resolution.

## Respondent Selection and Demographics

Respondents were carefully selected from various parts of India, ensuring diverse representation from states with the highest GDP, literacy rates, and populations, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Delhi, and West Bengal. At least ten participants from each state were included, providing a well-rounded view of how the youth of India perceive the United Nations.

The survey targeted individuals above 18 years of age, ensuring that all respondents were educated to some degree, enabling them to understand and provide informed opinions about the United Nations' role in India. A significant portion of respondents were students from diverse academic backgrounds, including science, humanities, political science, and law, contributing more nuanced and knowledgeable perspectives.

## Pilot Study

Before large-scale distribution, a pilot survey was conducted with a small group of colleagues to test the clarity, structure, and relevance of the questionnaire. This step ensured that the survey met the research objectives and improved its effectiveness.

## Ethical Considerations

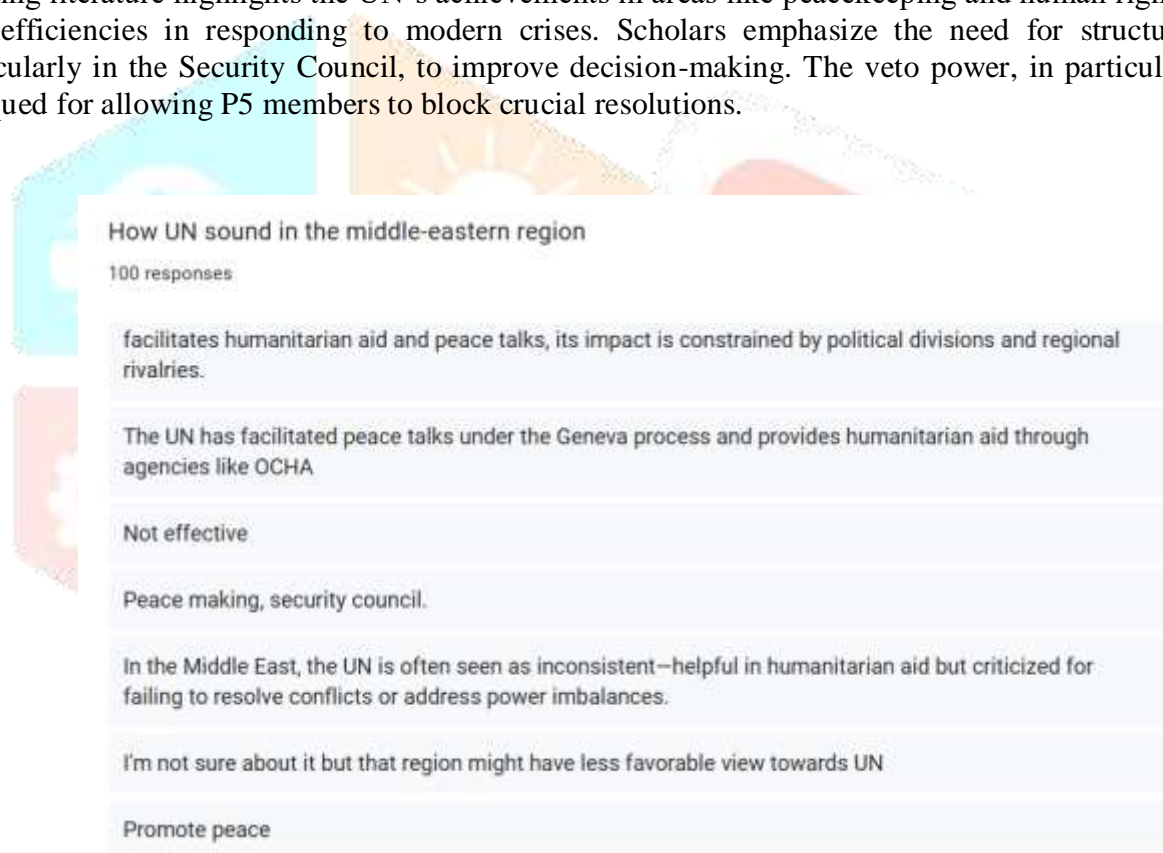
Ethical protocols were strictly followed throughout the research process:

- Participants' identities were kept *private*, and *no personally identifiable information was collected*.
- Respondents were *explicitly informed that the survey was voluntary and anonymous*.
- Questions were designed to avoid *sensitive or invasive queries*, focusing solely on opinions about the United Nations.

## Survey Duration and Reach

The survey was open for one week and circulated to over 120–150 individual groups across India. This effort resulted in 100 valid responses. The respondents' willingness to engage highlights the relevance and importance of the research topic.

Existing literature highlights the UN's achievements in areas like peacekeeping and human rights but points to inefficiencies in responding to modern crises. Scholars emphasize the need for structural reforms, particularly in the Security Council, to improve decision-making. The veto power, in particular, is widely critiqued for allowing P5 members to block crucial resolutions.



UN's role in ISRAEL-PALESTINE conflict

100 responses

Mediator

the UN proposed terminating the Mandate and partitioning Palestine into two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem internationalized

-

Nil

-

Mediator

Polarizing

The UN has been trying to help with the Israel-Palestine conflict for years, backing a two-state solution and supporting Palestinian refugees through UNRWA. While it speaks out against violence and stands for human rights, political tensions often get in the way, making it hard to create real change

Figure1. Sample Form

VI. Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Statistics

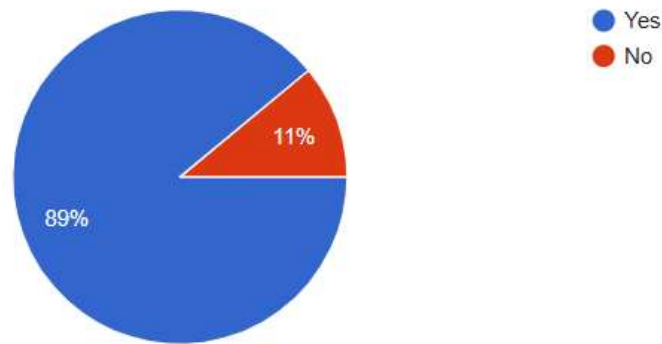
The questionnaire collected responses from 100 participants. Key results are summarized in Table.

Table 1. Questionnaire

Question	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
The UN is effective in maintaining global peace.	73%	15%	12%
The veto power in the Security Council hinders effective decision-making.	89%	8%	3%
The UN's peacekeeping missions are well-funded and adequately resourced.	60%	25%	15%
The Security Council needs reforms to reflect modern global realities.	94%	4%	2%
Regional organizations should have a greater role in peacekeeping efforts.	78%	10%	12%

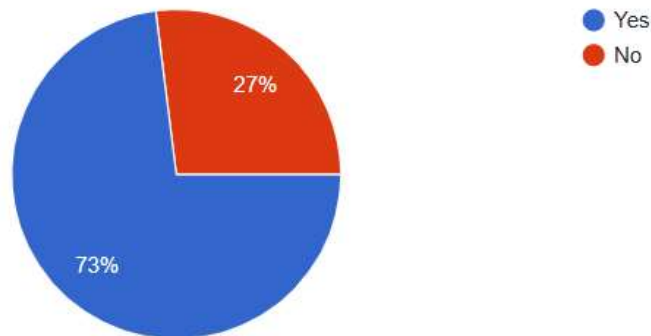
## Does UN charter require reformation?

100 responses

**Figure 2.** Reformation recommendation

## Is UN's approach becoming alien in the contemporary times

100 responses

**Figure 3.** Alien contemporary**Key Insights from the Data**

- 1) UN Effectiveness: A majority (73%) believe the UN is effective in maintaining global peace, but 12% disagree, citing inefficiencies in conflict resolution.
- 2) Veto Power: A significant 89% of respondents feel the veto system hampers effective decision-making, with many highlighting the influence of P5 interests.
- 3) Peacekeeping Funding: While 60% agree that peacekeeping missions are adequately funded, 25% remain neutral, indicating a lack of awareness or mixed perceptions.
- 4) Need for Reforms: Almost all respondents (94%) advocate for Security Council reforms, suggesting strong public support for democratizing the UN's decision-making process.
- 5) Regional Collaboration: 78% of respondents agree that regional organizations should have a greater role in peacekeeping, reflecting a preference for localized solutions.

**Thematic Analysis**

Open-ended responses revealed recurring themes:

- 1) Bureaucratic Challenges: Delays in resource allocation and mission planning were frequently mentioned.
- 2) Perceived Bias in Decision-Making: Respondents felt that the P5 nations often prioritize national interests over global welfare.
- 3) Reform Suggestions: Many participants proposed rotating veto powers or abolishing them entirely to enhance the UN's ability to act.



## VII. Recommendations

Based on the research conducted, the following ten recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations in contemporary global governance:

1) *Reform the UN Charter to Reflect Contemporary Realities*

The overwhelming agreement among respondents highlights the need for reforming the UN Charter. The organization should initiate an inclusive process to update its principles, ensuring they reflect current geopolitical and socio-economic realities.

2) *Reassess the Role of Veto Power in the Security Council*

The division in opinions about veto power underscores its controversial nature. The UN should explore alternatives, such as a majority-based decision-making process, to prevent the misuse of veto power and ensure fair representation.

3) *Enhance Peacekeeping Capabilities*

With 91% of participants believing the UN can take better actions to prevent wars, the organization must invest in more robust peacekeeping operations, focusing on proactive conflict prevention and mediation.

4) *Increase Accountability and Transparency*

Addressing concerns of alienation, the UN must adopt more transparent practices, openly communicating its strategies and successes to the global community. This can enhance public trust and engagement.

5) *Address Socio-Economic Inequalities Globally*

The UN should focus on reducing socio-economic disparities that often lead to unrest. Initiatives promoting equitable resource distribution and access to education, healthcare, and employment can prevent conflicts.

6) *Modernize and Decentralize UN Operations*

To adapt to the rapidly changing global landscape, the UN must modernize its approach by integrating technology, decentralizing decision-making processes, and increasing accessibility for member states.

7) *Launch Comprehensive Public Awareness Campaigns*

To counter the perception of alienation, the UN should educate the global population about its efforts and achievements through targeted awareness campaigns, social media, and community engagement initiatives.

## VIII. Limitations of the Study

1. **Demographic Bias:** A majority of the respondents were students, particularly those in fields like political science, law, and humanities, which could skew the findings towards a more educated and informed perspective.
2. **Geographic Concentration:** While responses were collected from key states, the sample may not fully reflect the views of individuals from rural or less urbanized regions.
3. **Self-Reported Data:** As the survey was based on self-reports, there is a *possibility* of response bias, with participants providing answers they thought were socially acceptable or in line with common opinions.
4. **Technology Access:** The survey was conducted online, potentially excluding individuals from lower-income or rural areas who may not have reliable internet access.
5. **Voluntary Participation:** The voluntary nature of the survey may have led to self-selection bias, with respondents who are more knowledgeable or interested in the United Nations being more likely to participate.

## IX. Future Scope of Research

- ❖ **Expansion of Sample Size and Diversity:** Future studies could focus on gathering a larger and more diverse sample of participants, representing different age groups, professions, and geographical regions. This would help in obtaining a broader perspective on the views regarding the United Nations and its role in contemporary global politics.
- ❖ **In-Depth Qualitative Studies:** A more comprehensive qualitative study involving detailed interviews or focus group discussions could provide deeper insights into the perceptions and expectations people have towards the United Nations. This could help in understanding the underlying reasons behind the opinions gathered from survey participants.



- ❖ **Comparative Studies:** Future research could compare public opinions on the United Nations across different countries or regions. This could identify global trends or highlight regional differences in perspectives regarding the effectiveness, role, and future of the UN.
- ❖ **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies over several years could track changes in public opinion about the United Nations, especially in response to major global events or shifts in international policy. This would offer valuable insights into how perceptions of the UN evolve over time.
- ❖ **Focus on Youth Engagement:** Further research could explore how the younger population, especially students from various disciplines, can be more actively engaged with the UN's work and its global initiatives. Understanding the barriers to youth involvement and formulating strategies for increased participation could be beneficial.
- ❖ **Evaluation of UN Reform Proposals:** Given the calls for reform in areas such as the veto power and UN's role in peacekeeping, future research could focus on evaluating the practicality and potential impact of these reforms. This would provide valuable input for policy recommendations to improve the UN's structure and functioning.

## X. Conclusion

The objective of this research paper, to evaluate the perceptions, effectiveness, and relevance of the United Nations in contemporary global affairs, has been successfully achieved through a detailed analysis of survey data and extensive literature review. By incorporating diverse perspectives from participants across India and critically analyzing the role of the UN, this study has shed light on key issues such as the need for reform, the relevance of the UN's approach, and the potential to strengthen its mechanisms for promoting peace and preventing conflicts. The findings indicate a broad consensus on the need for reforms in the UN Charter and its operational frameworks to better align with contemporary global challenges. The analysis also highlights a clear expectation among participants for the UN to take proactive measures in addressing international conflicts and fulfilling its mandate to maintain global peace and security. The responses to the survey questions, combined with secondary research, have provided a comprehensive understanding of public opinion on the effectiveness of the UN, the necessity of re-evaluating veto power, and the organization's perceived disconnect from contemporary times. This indicates a critical need for the United Nations to evolve and adapt to the dynamic geopolitical landscape while staying true to its founding principles. Overall, this research has achieved its aim by exploring both public opinion and structural challenges within the UN, offering a foundation for further discussion and recommendations for its reform and revitalization.

## Acknowledgment

The author wishes to express gratitude to Dr. Prakash Kuppaswamy & Dr. Vijay Kumar Singh (Dean law, faculty of law) for his valuable guidance throughout this study, and to colleagues, mentors of the SRM University and family members for their continuous support.

## REFERENCE

- 1) Barkan, J. (2020). The Role of the United Nations in World Peacekeeping. *Global Politics Review*, 34(2), 45-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263210.2020.1829745>
- 2) Beck, U. (2019). *Globalization and Its Discontents: The United Nations and International Relations*. Oxford University Press.
- 3) UN, United Nations. (2021). *The UN Charter: A Framework for Global Governance*. United Nations Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>
- 4) Higgins, R. (2018). *International Law and the United Nations: Challenges in the Modern Era*. Cambridge University Press.
- 5) Kofi Annan Foundation. (2020). *Reforming the United Nations Security Council: A Step Towards More Effective Global Governance*. Kofi Annan Foundation Report. Retrieved from <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/>
- 6) United Nations. (2022). *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the United Nations*. United Nations Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/>
- 7) Smith, A. (2017). The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in the 21st Century. *Journal of Global Peacekeeping Studies*, 19(3), 289-304. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jgps.2017.05.011>

- 8) Thakur, R. (2020). The United Nations and its Future: Rethinking Global Institutions. Routledge.
- 9) UNICEF. (2023). The Impact of Global Peacekeeping on Humanitarian Aid: Case Study of the United Nations Forces in Africa. UNICEF. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org>
- 10) Williams, M. (2018). The United Nations and the Failure of Global Peace Initiatives: A Critical Examination. International Affairs Review, 45(1), 18-33.
- 11) United Nations News. "'This Terrible War Must End,' Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet Urges Security Council." United Nations News, 2024. [Press Release](#)
- 12) United Nations News. "Secretary-General Underscores Two-State Solution Only Way to End Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." United Nations News, 2024. [Press Release](#)
- 13) UN Human Rights Council Report. "Israeli authorities, Palestinian armed groups are responsible for war crimes, other grave violations of international law, UN Inquiry finds." OHCHR, June 2024. OHCHR Report
- 14) United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254. "Resolution on the Syrian Political Process." United Nations Security Council, 2015. [UNSC Resolution](#)
- 15) Al Jazeera. "UN condemns escalation of violence in Syria." Al Jazeera, December 2024. Article
- 16) The Guardian. "UN's Role in Syria: Humanitarian Response Amid Conflict." The Guardian, 2024. [Article](#)
- 17) BBC News. "Syria: The UN's Mission and Efforts Amidst Continuing Conflict." BBC News, 2024. [Article](#)
- 18) United Nations News. "UN Condemns Escalating Violence in Yemen, Calls for Immediate Ceasefire." United Nations News, 2024. [Press Release](#)
- 19) Human Rights Watch. "Yemen: UN Action to End Civilian Suffering Crucial." Human Rights Watch, 2024. HRW Report
- 20) Al Jazeera. "The Role of the UN in the Yemeni Civil War." Al Jazeera, December 2024. Article
- 21) The New York Times. "UN Urges Humanitarian Aid in Yemen Amid Rising Tensions." New York Times, 2024. [Article](#)
- 22) Reuters. "UN Calls for Immediate Ceasefire in Yemen Amid Civilian Suffering." Reuters, 2024. Article
- 23) United Nations News. "UN Mission in Afghanistan After US Withdrawal: A New Chapter." United Nations News, 2024. [Press Release](#)



**J.Jai Surya** is a undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor of Law degree in Law College at SRM University Delhi NCR. Throughout academic journey, he has actively participated in various departmental and social activities. He is the organizer and coordinator of animal. Says (sayscommunity) -safeguarding pet animal.