Multilateralism and International law

Why is in News?

Recently the Disengaging Entirely from the United Nations Debacle (DEFUND) Act was introduced in US congress to enable the President to terminate U.S. membership in the United Nations (U.N.) and all affiliated bodies.

Why has the USA been withdrawing from international organizations?

- **Protective nationalism** - "America First" Policy doctrine prioritizes U.S. interests, leading to a perception that international organizations are ineffective or biased against American values and allies, particularly Israel.
- This perspective has driven decisions to exit organizations like the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Criticism of international organizations** - The U.S. has criticized the WHO for its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, accusing it of being overly deferential to China and mishandling information during the crisis.
- **Perceived bias against allies** - The UNHRC's perceived bias against Israel has also been a significant factor in U.S. withdrawals.
- **Economic self-interest** - Concerns over financial contributions have led to a reevaluation of U.S. participation in international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord, which was seen as economically burdensome for American industries.

What are the implications on multilateralism and international law?

- **Weakens global governance** - The U.S. has historically played a crucial role in global governance.
- Its withdrawal from key institutions undermines their effectiveness, leading to reduced coordination on critical issues such as health, human rights, and climate change.

- **Affects international order** - Attack on multilateral political cooperation, weakening the rules-based international order.
- **Threat to the UN's legitimacy -** The DEFUND Act threatens the UN's role as a key institution of post-World War II international cooperation and revokes immunity of UN officials in the U.S., making their work difficult.

The headquarters of United Nations itself, is located in New York, USA.

- **Weakens international justice system -** Despite not being an International Criminal Court (ICC) member, the U.S. played a key role in setting up post-WWII tribunals like Nuremberg and undermining the ICC's mission of accountability and justice.

- **Rise of alternative powers** - With the U.S. stepping back, countries like China have sought to fill leadership vacuums in these organizations, positioning themselves as champions of global governance despite their own human rights records.
- **Affect global funding** – It will affect the significant funding from US for global issues such as poverty, health, migration.
- **Affects global peace** – Withdrawal of U.S. participation from UN peacekeeping operations, will affect global military operation against terrorism.
- **Undermines rules-based global trading order** - The WTO faces an existential crisis due to U.S. blockade on Appellate Body appointments in the WTO Dispute Settlement system.

What are the significances of multilateralism and international order?

- **Strengthening global governance** - Multilateralism helps maintain order in international relations by providing guidelines that promote accountability and transparency among nations
- **Collective problem-solving** - Multilateralism enables countries to collaboratively address global challenges that transcend national borders, such as climate change, terrorism, and pandemics.
- **Efficient solutions** - By pooling resources and expertise, nations can achieve more effective solutions than they could individually.
- **Promotion of peace and security** - Multilateral frameworks, such as the United Nations, provide platforms for diplomacy and collective security measures, reinforcing a commitment to peaceful resolutions.
- **Inclusivity and equality** - Multilateralism fosters inclusivity by giving smaller or less powerful nations a voice in international affairs.
- **Economic cooperation** - Through multilateral trade agreements and economic partnerships, countries can enhance their economic prospects.
- **Global growth** - These arrangements often lead to increased trade flows and investment opportunities, benefiting all participating nations.

What lies ahead?

- Both multilateralism and international law are essential for fostering a cooperative international environment.
- They enable countries to work together effectively to tackle shared challenges while promoting peace, security, and justice globally.
- Their significance is increasingly relevant in an interconnected world where global issues require collective action and adherence to established norms.

Reference

[The Hindu | The assault on multilateralism and international law]



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