



Time to Reform UNSC

This editorial is based on [“Permanent membership of the UNSC is another story”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 28/09/2022. It talks about issues related to the United Nations Security Council and the need for reforms.

For Prelims: United Nations Security Council, Multilateral Institutions, 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Veto Power, Taiwan Issue, Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN), UN Peacekeeping Force

For Mains: Procedure for Amending UNSC Membership, Issues Related to UNSC Reformed Multilateralism, Global Consonance for Global Governance

The process of [decolonisation](#), in which the United Nation and its Security Council played an important role, radically changed the geopolitical landscape of the world. In the past quarter century, the **global order has seen massive changes, from American unilateralism to the rise of [multilateral institutions](#) and [multipolarity](#).**

Developing nations, including India, now **play a larger role in both the international economy and politics**. But **these changes are not reflected in the UNSC**, where all critical decisions are still being taken by the **veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council**.

In his address to the [77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly](#), the **Indian External Affairs Minister** highlighted the **anachrony and ineffectiveness** in the current architecture of the UNSC.

Hence, it is essential to go beyond **P5's prerogatives** and look for a more **democratic and representative security council**.

What is the United Nations Security Council?

- The **United Nations Security Council** was established by the **UN Charter in 1945**.
 - It is one of the **6 principal organs** of the United Nations.
- UNSC has 15 members: **5 permanent members (P5) and 10 non-permanent members** elected for **2-year** terms.
 - The 5 permanent members are: **United States, Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom**.
- India has been a non permanent member of the Council during **1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12** and for the **8th time**, has entered the UNSC in 2021 and will stay on the council for the term [2021-22](#).

What is the Procedure for Amending UNSC Membership?

- Changing the membership of the UNSC requires amending the UN Charter.
 - This involves **consent of two-thirds of the total membership of the U.N, including the concurring votes of P-5.**
 - This means that each of the **P5 has a veto.**
- The **Charter was amended once in the 1960s** to enlarge the Council by additional **non-permanent seats.**

What are the Issues Related to UNSC?

- **Lack of Adequate Representation:** It was argued by several speakers that the UN Security Council is **less effective because it is less representative**, the most pertinent **[absence being that of Africa](#), a continent of 54 countries.**
 - Current global issues are complex, and interconnected. Lack of representation of **geopolitical and geo-economically important countries** is leaving out a large segment of global opinion to have a voice in the **highest security summit.**
 - Furthermore, It is matter of concern that globally important countries such as **India, Germany, Brazil, and South Africa** are not represented on the UNSC permanent members list.
- **Misuse of Veto Power:** Veto power has been always criticised by many experts as well as by most States calling it a **"self-chosen club of the privileged"** and **non-democratic** and **not allowing the Council to make necessary decisions** whenever it **displeases any one of the P-5.**
 - It is also **not appropriate for the current [global security environment](#)** to be guided by **elite decision-making** structures.
- **Geopolitical Rivalry within P5:** The geopolitical rivalry among the permanent members has **prevented the UNSC from coming up with effective mechanisms to deal with global issues.**
 - Taking the current world order as an example, the **P5 members: United States, Russia, and China** are **three poles on the periphery of the globe having several geopolitical issues revolving around them ([Taiwan Issue](#) and [Russia-Ukraine War](#)).**
- **Threat to State's Sovereignty:** As the principal organ of **international peacekeeping** and conflict resolution, the **UNSC** is responsible for keeping peace and managing conflict. Its **decisions (referred to as resolutions) are binding on all member countries, unlike the General Assembly's.**
 - This means that any state's sovereignty can be encroached upon if necessary by taking action, such as **[imposing sanctions](#).**

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Welcoming Voices Across the Globe:** It is perceived as deeply unfair, denying **entire continents (Africa) and regions a voice in a forum that deliberates their future.**
 - To decentralise UNSC governing power and authority over nations, it is essential that **all regions are represented equally in the UNSC.**
 - With this transformation, **nations of all regions will have the opportunity to raise concerns** affecting peace and democracy in their countries.
 - Also, introducing **decentralisation** to UNSC decision-making will make it more **representative, participatory, and democratic.**
- **Global Consonance for Global Governance:** UNSC should realise there are more pressing issues to be tackled at the global level than merely preserving the **prerogatives of P5 nations.**
 - There needs to be urgent **correction of the power imbalance between the P5 and the rest of the world.**
 - It is necessary for the UNSC **to be more democratic and more legitimate to govern**, ensuring the universal respect of **international peace, security, and order.**
- **Re-energizing Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN):** Serious negotiations on such critical matters should proceed sincerely. They must **not be blocked by procedural tactics.**
 - The **[IGN process](#)**, which is the principal framework through which UNSC reform is

discussed and debated, needs to be revised and **re-energised**.

- Recommendation of the President of the **76th UN General Assembly** to gradually **move the IGN process towards [text based negotiations](#)** is a **welcoming step**.
- **Towards Reformed Multilateralism:** Calling for **reformed multilateralism** with reforms of the Security Council at its core enjoys considerable support among UN members.
 - In order to **protect faith in the principles of the United Nations, in its charter**, and in reformed multilateralism as a key to achieving global goals, the core issues in UNSC must be critically examined and addressed with global cooperation.
- **India From the Lens of UNSC Reforms:** India's candidature for permanent seat in UNSC is legitimate and justified as it fulfils all the objective criteria for the permanent membership.
 - India has initiated the **[International Solar Alliance in 2015](#)** to reduce the exploitation of fossil fuels and encourage the use of solar energy and has been a frontrunner in **[Vaccine Diplomacy](#)**.
 - With one among the largest individual contributors to the **[UN Peacekeeping Force](#)**, India is prepared to take up greater responsibilities at the highest security cooperation forum.
 - As the same time, it also seeks **to ensure that the injustice faced by the Global South is decisively addressed**. India is **willing and able to contribute on both counts**.

Drishti Mains Question

Addressing the contemporary world realities requires comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council. Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. The Security Council of UN consists of 5 permanent members, and the remaining 10 members are elected by the General Assembly for a term of (2009)

- (a) 1 year
- (b) 2 years
- (c) 3 years
- (d) 5 years

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Discuss the impediments India is facing in its pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (2015)