



The Big Picture - UN Security Council Reforms

The French envoy to the UN has recently said that India and nations like Germany, Brazil and Japan are “absolutely needed” as permanent members of a reformed and enlarged UN Security Council to better reflect contemporary realities. India has always remained at the forefront of efforts at the UN to push for the long-pending reform of the Security Council, emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.

Drishti Input:

United Nations Security Council

- Established by the United Nations charter in 1945, the Security Council has primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.
- The Security Council has **15 members**.
 - There are **five permanent members**: the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom.
 - The non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected for a term of two years.
- **Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions of the Security Council on matters are made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members. A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution.**
- Any member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected.

Need for UN Security Council Reforms

- **UN represents a larger world** and the irony is that it has **only 5 permanent members** in its such an important body.
- Current composition of the Security Council represents the post World War II realities and thus is **not in pace with the changing balance of power** in the world.
 - At the time of the formation of UNSC, big powers were given privileges to make them part of the council. This was necessary for its proper functioning as well as to avoid the failure like that of the organization ‘League of Nations’.
- The **regions like far East Asia, South America, Africa have no representation in the permanent membership** of the council.
- **Rise of fora like G4** (India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan) as important economies and emerging world powers are pushing after quick UN Security Council reforms.

Impediments in the expansion of UN Security Council

- The **five permanent members** themselves **don't want anyone to come on board with them**. The world has no evidence in the history where countries have given up such a status quo on their

own.

- In the year 2005, when G4 came with a resolution for the expansion of the council, U.S. and China lobbied very hard with African countries to ensure that they do not vote for the resolution.
- **One country opposing another country's bid** for the permanent membership from a region. For example:
 - Pakistan does not want India to be the permanent member of the council.
 - China has serious objections to Japan being there in the Security Council.
 - Italy trying to compete with Germany in Europe for a place in the Security Council.
 - Argentina does not agree with the fact that Brazil should represent South America in the UNSC as a permanent representative.
- **In Africa, there is still no consensus** on which country should represent the region as a permanent member.
- There are **no parameters** in the UN Security Council **for considering** the countries for **permanent membership**.
- There is a **concern** that expansion of the council may lead to a **decline in its efficiency and functioning**.

Coffee Club/Uniting for Consensus

An informal "**coffee club**", comprising 40-odd members states, has been instrumental in holding back reforms to the United Nations Security Council. Most members of the club are middle-sized states who oppose bigger regional powers grabbing permanent seats in the UN Security Council.

The prime movers of the club include **Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina** and **Pakistan**. While Italy and Spain are opposed to Germany's bid for Security Council's permanent membership, Pakistan is opposed to India's bid.

Similarly, Argentina is against Brazil's bid and Australia opposes Japan's. Canada and South Korea are opposed to developing countries, often dependent on their aid, wielding more power than them at the UN.

India and its demand for permanent membership

- For the first 40 years of the UN Security Council formation, India never asked for the permanent membership.
- Even in 1993 when India submitted its written proposal to the UN as response to the General Assembly resolution related to reforms, it did not specifically state that it wants permanent membership for itself.
- It is only from the last few years that India has started asking for a permanent membership in the council.
- India deserves a permanent place in the council considering the size of its economy, population and the fact that it is the largest democracy in the world.
 - India has become a major player not only in the Asia but also in the world.
 - The Security Council would be a more representative body if India would be there in it as a permanent member.

Benefits for India

- By having a veto power, one can enjoy **enormous powers**.
 - This is clear from the recent case of Masood Azhar. Since 2009, India was trying to get him designated as a global terrorist. One veto power of China kept delaying it.
- India will be able to **work better for its interests**.
 - There was a time when USSR actually started boycotting the UNSC and that was the time when US managed to get the resolution passed for the Korean War. From that time onwards USSR realized that it doesn't make sense to boycott the UN. It **needs to keep veto if at all resolution is against them**.

- India's presence as a permanent member will be an **acknowledgment of its rise as a global power**, ready to play a key role in the council's objectives of international peace and security.
- India will be able to enjoy the '**prestige**' associated with the permanent membership of the council.

Is India ready?

- By remaining silent on contentious issues, **India has always remained in a safe zone**. Once India becomes a permanent member, it has to give its views on every issue.
- India's foreign policy machinery is not geared with the kind of deal making that permanent five do all the time.

Besides expansion, issues like whether a country having a veto power should be allowed to lock a motion or not, should be taken into consideration. As far as India's membership is considered, all five permanent members including China are more or less on board. India just needs to prepare itself for the permanent position in the council.

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