



UNSC Reforms

Prelims: UNSC, Membership of UNSC, Peacekeeping missions of UN, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Mains: Issues Associated to the Functioning of UNSC.

Why in News?

Recently, the UN General Assembly president has said the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) has become “paralysed” and “dysfunctional” in its “present form”, as it has not been able to take any **decision since the Russia-Ukraine war started.**

What are the Hurdles in Reforming UN?

- The General Assembly has always been very much divided. Among the 193 countries, there are **five negotiating groups and they are neutralising each other.**
- The functioning of the General Assembly is as much important **as the permanent members of the UNSC in ensuring reform** of the United Nations system.
- The permanent members were **“historically not enthusiastic” about reform of the UN system** but they have all agreed that **it is necessary for introducing changes in the Security Council.**

What is the United Nations Security Council?

- The UNSC 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 served seven times in the UNSC as a non-permanent member and in January 2021, India entered the UNSC for the eighth time.

UN Security Council (UNSC)

The UN Charter vests the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the UNSC

About

One of the 6 principal organs of UN; established in 1945 by UN Charter

Headquarters

New York City

First Session

17 January 1946 at Church House, Westminster, London

Membership

- 15 members - 5 Permanent Members (P5), 10 Non-Permanent Members elected for two-year terms (5 elected each year)
- P5 - the US, the UK, Russia, France and China

Presidency

- Rotates every month among the 15 members
- India's Presidency for year 2022 - December

Voting Powers

- 1 member = 1 vote
- P5 have veto power
- Members of UN sans membership of UNSC participate without vote

UNSC Committees/Resolutions

Terrorism

- Resolution 1373 (Counter Terrorism Committee)
- Resolution 1267 (Da'esh and Al Qaeda Committee)

Non-Proliferation Committee

- Resolution 1540 (against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons)

India and UNSC

- Served 7 times as non-permanent member; elected for the 8th time for 2021-22; advocates for a permanent seat
- Arguments for a permanent seat:
 - 43 peacekeeping missions
 - Active participation in formulating Human Rights Declaration (UDHR)
 - India's population, territorial size, GDP, economic potential, cultural diversity, political system etc.



G4

Group of 4 countries (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) which advocate each other's bids for permanent seats in the UNSC

Uniting for Consensus (UfC) Movement

- Informally known as the Coffee Club
- Countries oppose the expansion Permanent Seats of UNSC
- Prime movers of the club - Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina and Pakistan
- Italy and Spain are opposed to Germany's bid; Pakistan - India's bid; Argentina - Brazil's bid and Australia - Japan's bid

Major Challenges in UNSC

- Usual UN rules don't apply to UNSC deliberations; no records of meetings kept
- Powerplay in UNSC; anachronistic veto powers of P5
- Deep polarisation among P5; frequent divisions end up blocking key decisions
- Inadequate representation of many regions among of the world



What are the Issues with Regard to UNSC?

- Lack of Adequate Representation:**
 - 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 a 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 criticized 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 can be the Solution?

▪ **Democratization of UNSC:**

- The power imbalance between the P5 and other countries in the **UNSC needs to be addressed urgently to make the council more democratic** and increase its legitimacy in governing international peace, security and order.

▪ **Expansion of UNSC:**

- The changing needs of global governance **for peace and security require significant reforms in the UNSC**, including expanding its permanent and non-permanent seats to better address the complex and evolving challenges **to international peace and security**.

▪ **Equitable Representation:**

- Equitable representation of all the regions in the UNSC is critical to **decentralizing its governing power and authority over nations**.
- The decentralization of the UNSC's decision-making processes will enable its transformation to a more representative, participatory body.

▪ **India's Role:**

- India as the current one of the non-permanent members of the UNSC can start by drafting a resolution containing a comprehensive set of proposals for reforming the UNSC.
- In September 2022, India made a **push for UNSC reform hosting a meeting of two separate groupings - G-4 and L-69** - in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.
- As India leads [Global South](#), it needs to revitalise its engagement with its traditional partners in the "global south" by articulating their peace and security concerns in the UNSC.

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 UN Security Council. (2015)

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