India's Push for Security Council Reform: The G4 Model

For Prelims: United Nations Security Council**,** G4 nations**,** UN General Assembly, India's participation in the Security Council.

For Mains: Need for UN Security Council Reforms, Procedure of UN Security Council Reforms.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Participating in the **Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform,** India has presented a detailed model on behalf of the **G4 nations** for **United Nations Security Council Reform.**

- The model includes new permanent members elected democratically by the **UN General Assembly** and shows flexibility on the veto issue.
- The G4 (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) was created in 2004 and has been promoting Security Council reform.

What are the Key Features of the G4 Proposed Model?

- **Addressing Under-representation:** The model highlights the **"glaring under-representation and un-representation"** of key regions in the Council's current composition, which hampers its legitimacy and effectiveness.
- **Membership Expansion**: The G4 model advocates for increasing the Security Council's membership from the **current 15 to 25-26 members.**
  - This expansion includes adding 6 permanent and 4 or 5 non-permanent members.
  - Two new permanent members each are proposed from **African states and Asia Pacific states, one from Latin American and Caribbean states**, and one from Western European and Other states.
- **Flexibility on Veto:** In a departure from the existing framework where only the five permanent members hold veto powers, the G4 model offers flexibility on the **veto issue.**
  - New permanent members would refrain from exercising the veto until a decision on the matter is taken during a review process, demonstrating a willingness to engage in constructive negotiations.
- **Democratic and Inclusive Election:** The proposal emphasizes that the decision on which member states will occupy the new permanent seats will be made through a **democratic and inclusive election by the UN General Assembly.**
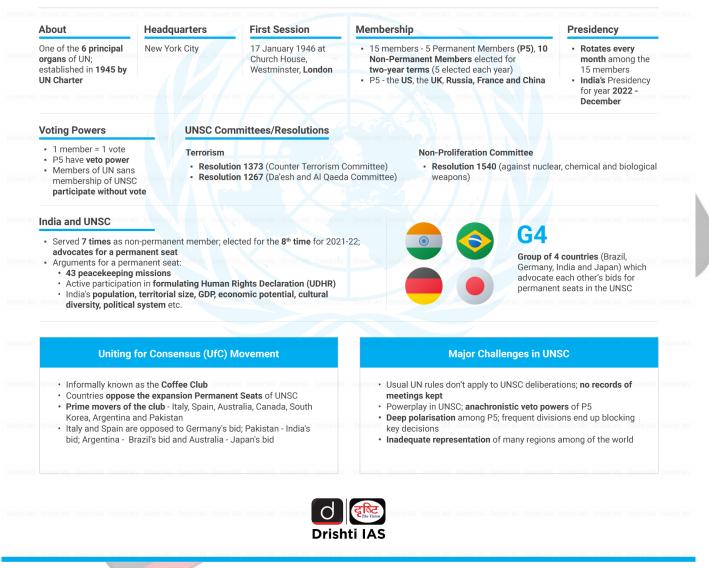
What is the United Nations Security Council?

- The **United Nations Security Council**, established under the **UN Charter in 1945,** constitutes one of the UN's six principal organs.
- Comprising 15 members, it includes **5 permanent members (P5)** and **10 non-permanent** members elected for two-year terms.

- The permanent members are the United States, Russian Federation, France, China, and the United Kingdom.
- According to Oppenheim's International Law : United Nations, "Permanent membership in the Security Council was granted to five states based on their **importance in the aftermath of** World War II."
- India's participation in the Security Council has been as a non-permanent member during the periods of 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, and 2021-22.

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

Drishti IAS

Why does the UN Security Council Need to be Reformed?

- **Representation and Legitimacy**: The Security Council plays a crucial role in peacekeeping and conflict resolution, with binding decisions that impact all member states.
  - To ensure these decisions are respected and implemented universally, the Council must possess the necessary authority and legitimacy, which requires **representation reflecting the current global landscape.**
- **Outdated Composition**: The current composition of the Security Council, based on the geopolitical situation of **1945** and expanded marginally in **1963/65**, no longer accurately represents the world stage.
  - With 142 new countries joining the United Nations since its inception, regions like **Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean** lack adequate representation, necessitating

adjustments to the Council's composition.
- **Recognition of Contributions:** The UN Charter acknowledges that countries making substantial contributions to the organisation should have a role in the Security Council.
  - This recognition underscores the candidacy of nations like **India, Germany and Japan for new permanent seats**, reflecting their meaningful contributions to the UN's mission.
- **Risk of Alternative Decision-Making Forums:** Without reform, there's a risk that decision-making processes could shift to **alternative forums, potentially diluting the Security Council's effectiveness.**
  - Such competition for influence is counterproductive and not in the collective interest of member states.
- **Misuse of Veto Power:** The utilisation of veto power has consistently faced **criticism** from numerous experts and the majority of states, labelling it as a "**self-selected group of privileged nations**" that lacks democratic principles and hinders the Council's ability to take essential decisions if it conflicts with the interests of any of the P-5 members.
  - In today's global security landscape, relying on **exclusive decision-making frameworks is deemed unsuitable.**

What is the Procedure of UN Security Council Reforms?

UN Security Council reform requires an amendment to the Charter of the United Nations. The relevant procedure as set out in **Article 108** involves a two-stage process:

- **First Stage:** The General Assembly, where each of the 193 member states holds one vote, must endorse the **reform with a two-thirds majority,** equivalent to at least 128 states.
  - This stage **does not grant the right of veto**, as per Article 27 of the Charter.
- **Second Stage:** Upon approval in the first stage, the United Nations Charter, considered an international treaty, undergoes amendment.
  - This amended Charter requires ratification by at **least two-thirds of the member states, including all five permanent Security Council members**, adhering to their respective national procedures.
  - In this stage, the ratification process can be influenced by the parliaments of the permanent members, potentially affecting the entry into force of the amended Charter.

Note

A negative vote from permanent members in the General Assembly does not prevent them from later ratifying the amended Charter.

- For instance, during the 1963 vote to enlarge the Security Council, **only one permanent member voted in favour.**
- However, within 18 months by 1965, all five permanent members had ratified the amended Charter.

Way Forward

- **Engagement and Consensus Building:** Fostering inclusive dialogues and consultations among member states, particularly focusing on the perspectives of underrepresented regions like Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.
  - Seek common ground and build consensus on the principles and objectives of Security Council reform, **emphasising the importance of representation, legitimacy, and effectiveness.**
- **Amending the UN Charter:** Encourage cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders, including the five permanent members, to **facilitate the ratification process** and ensure the amended Charter reflects contemporary global realities.
- **Addressing Veto Power:** Exploring avenues for reforming the use of veto power within the Security Council, considering proposals that **balance the need for decisive action with**

concerns about fairness and inclusivity.
- Encouraging transparency and accountability in the exercise of veto power, ensuring that it aligns with the Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security.
- **Strengthening Council Effectiveness:** Enhancing the Council's capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging global challenges, including conflicts, humanitarian crises, and threats to international security.
  - Promoting cooperation and coordination with other UN bodies, regional organisations, and relevant stakeholders to leverage expertise and resources for peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts.

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)**

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