



India and UNSC Reforms

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1 Introduction

India has been actively pursuing its quest to be included in the reformed United Nations Security Council for many years. The argument of including new members is that UNSC has to acknowledge the current geopolitical realities which are very different from the time when UNSC was formed. The current permanent members of the Security Council are the five nations that were made permanent members in the charter when the United Nations was founded. These countries were the victors in the World War II and China were their allies.

Recently the nearly 200 member countries of the United Nations have agreed that over the next year, they will negotiate the wording of a document that will call for reforming the Security Council, the top decision-making body, which has 15 members. This has led to the question that Is India close to getting into the UN Security Council. But first we should deal with one more important question which is, Is our demand to become UNSC permanent member is legitimate?

2 UNSC Reforms Agenda

UN reform is a long drawn process which encompasses five key issues: categories of membership, the question of the veto held by the five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship. Inclusion of new members is part of this reform process. Any reform of the Security Council would require the agreement of at least two-thirds of UN member states, and that of all the permanent members of the UNSC enjoying the veto right.

The General Assembly Task Force on Security Council Reform has delivered a Report on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council recommending a compromise solution for entering intergovernmental negotiations on reform.

The report builds on existing transitional/intermediary approaches to suggest a "timeline perspective". The "timeline perspective" suggests that Member States begin by identifying the negotiables to be included in short-term intergovernmental negotiations. Crucial to the "timeline perspective" is the scheduling of a mandatory review conference—a forum for discussing changes to any reforms achieved in the near-term, and for revisiting negotiables that cannot be agreed upon now.

In September 2015, for the first time different countries have submitted written suggestions for what the resolution should state in. In what was seen as an attempt to thwart Security Council's expansion bid, the US, China and Russia did not participate in that exercise. China has been strongly opposing the expansion of the Security Council; it reportedly wanted to force a vote on whether the UN should proceed with a one-year discussion on how the reform should be framed, but failed to muster enough support.

The draft resolution calls for next year's UN agenda to discuss the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council." Once the draft is agreed on, it will be put to vote at the General Assembly, where a two-thirds vote is needed to clear it. New permanent member proposal includes countries like Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. They comprise the group of G4 nations, mutually supporting one another's bids for permanent seats. The United Kingdom, France and Russia support G4 membership in the U.N. Security Council.

3 Changes in geopolitical realities since UNSC's formation

The U.N. Security Council reform, being debated since two decades is too long overdue and the necessary expansion must be made considering how much the world has changed- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

After World War II a bipolar world had emerged with two contrasting ideologies of Capitalism and Socialism. The United States was both a military power and an economic one; the Soviet Union had only brute force and the

intangible attraction of Marxist ideology to keep its own people down and manage its newly acquired empire in the heart of Europe. This fueled the cold War between US and USSR.

In a post-Cold War world, which is rapidly slipping again into local hot wars, including proxy wars that were characteristic of the Cold War period, the power balance is changing again with China replacing Russia as the pole opposite the US. India has also made great strides in terms of economic growth and concomitant military might. In contemporary time, World order is now multi polar and not bipolar.

4 Arguments for India's permanent membership

There are many arguments given for India's permanent membership. First is, we are the biggest democracy in the world and in the current geo politics our contribution and influence cannot be ignored. So we should be part of the decision making body at the UN level.

Second argument is, we are a growing economy and our influence has increased in the World economy and trade.

Another factor that works against India's attempts to gain permanent membership on the Security Council is the state of its military. India has always been one of the countries at the forefront of providing peacekeepers and their peacekeeping forces are often consider among some of the best, but it's a whole different ball game being a permanent member.

Some of the other arguments given are:

- It is part of an otherwise underrepresented region, with large unrepresented religions (Hinduism and Islam).
- It frequently serves as a non-permanent (rotational) member, and usually wins the votes of almost all member states in its bids for non-permanent positions.
- It has the backing of some major players (France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States), a number of European, Asian, and Latin American nations, and the African Union.
- It's relatively trusted by the Muslim states, and the Security Council could probably use someone other than China that can negotiate in the Middle East.

5 Expected impact of India's permanent membership

Here we will discuss the scenario where UNSC reform is expanded and India along with some other countries is included in the reformed UNSC.

New included members will get to say in the matters of war and peace, effectively UNSC move towards a democratic set up where nations like India can put up their matters more strongly and vehemently with support of their partner nations. India can represent or lead other countries to stop western forces from promoting their vested interests. Invasion of Iraq, bombing of Libya, non-recognition of Palestine state are few examples.

Currently, veto power is a unique privilege of the permanent members, in the regional context China can exercise this power in matters of war and peace in its own interest. With India getting veto power it will dilute China's elite status in Asia and will help India to put forward its interest in a better way.

With India's background of continued support of UN's peace keep missions since 1945 India can assert more productively its stand on various international issues. If India becomes a permanent member of UNSC it can shift focus on developing nation's interest which is the current demand due to visible shift in focus from west to Asia in world dynamics. Thus India will have leverage in geopolitics, military, economic and political groupings and negotiations as permanent member of UNSC.

6 Relevance of UNSC in contemporary time

UNSC being started as a council of victorious nations of WWII, it doesn't reflect interests of other Nations. There's a lot of criticism of the Security Council today, and its general ineffectiveness, its strong bent towards the already powerful P5, the veto power and the issue of geographic representation. As it stands, the permanent members of the Security Council have a heavy European bias. UNSC has lately become more and more irrelevant with the invasions of US in various nations, recently bombing in Iraq and Libya which were carried out without UNSC's assent.

The UN Security Council remains the supreme decision-making body in the area of international security. It is a forum where political understanding can be hammered out among major powers and then, if their national perspectives can be reconciled, codified in decisions that are published, affording a degree of transparency. Security Council decisions remain the most appropriate way to ratify and codify the appropriate major power responses. UNSC reforms will take certain time, till then flexible ways need to be found to sustain a continuous engagement with the new major powers, both regarding what constitutes a threat to international peace and security and in crafting a response.

7 Conclusion

India's claim for permanent membership is a genuine demand in the changed geo politics of 21st century as we have discussed before. India is possibly the most obvious and least controversial option to add as a permanent member, and probably long overdue for a seat.

UNSC is mandated to keep international peace and security.

However it is under constant criticism for its plans and actions. It is said to be performing in unilateral way with unquestioned authority, working only for vested interests and not making non-permanent members inclusive in their decision making. In this context, we can see that India's demand is not illegitimate as India does wield a certain influence in world affairs today due to its impressive economic growth and strong military base. South Asia being a victim of various repercussions of war, terrorism, and extremism India gains more say on its and neighbor's problems and will have power to challenge the ethos and working style of permanent members of UNSC.

In the contemporary period, if India has to make a strong claim to permanent membership, it has to single-mindedly focus on economic growth, with concomitant military might.

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