



Need For UNSC Reforms

This editorial is based on [“UNSC Reforms: India Needs To Take Charge”](#) which was published in Hindustan Times on 31/12/2021. It talks about the challenges associated with the functioning of the UN Security Council and the role that India can play as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

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

For Mains: Issues Associated to the Functioning of UNSC, Need to bring reforms in the UN Security Council, India's contribution to the UN and its peacekeeping missions, India's role as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, India's advocacy for a permanent seat in the UNSC, G4 Countries' mutual cooperation for securing permanent seats at UNSC.

The [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#), one of the main six organs of the **United Nations**, was established during the [World War era](#). The organisation gives **excessive powers to its five permanent members (P-5)** which emerged as supreme powers of that era. However, the realities of that time are completely incomparable to the present.

There is a **longstanding acknowledgement of the need to expand** the UNSC, both its permanent and non-permanent membership, to make it representative of the contemporary world, and not the world of its founding in 1945.

However, the Council has shown nothing in terms of what is called progress. Serious questions are being raised about its ability to serve the purpose of its existence.

In this context, India, now being in the second year of its two year tenure for UNSC non-permanent membership, can play a **bigger and important role in [bringing out UNSC reforms](#)**.

UN Security Council and India

- **About UNSC:** The UNSC, with a mandate to **maintain international peace and security**, is the **centrepiece of global multilateralism**.
 - It selects the [UN Secretary-General](#) and plays a co-terminus role with the UN General Assembly in electing judges to the [International Court of Justice](#).
 - Its resolutions, adopted under chapter VII of the UN charter, are binding on all countries.
 - The UNSC is composed of 15 members, 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent.
 - **Five permanent members:** China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - **Ten non-permanent members:** Elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.

- **India's Membership:** India has served seven times in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member and in January 2021, India **entered the UNSC for the eighth time.**
 - India has been [advocating a permanent seat in UNSC.](#)
- **India's Contribution:**
 - India took active part in the formulation of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#) in 1947-48 and raised its voice passionately against racial discrimination in South Africa.
 - **India has played its part in formulating decisions on several issues** such as admitting former colonies to the UN, addressing deadly conflicts in the Middle East and maintaining peace in Africa.
 - It has **contributed extensively to the UN**, particularly for the maintenance of international peace and security.
 - India has **taken part in 43 [Peacekeeping missions](#)** with a total contribution exceeding 160,000 troops and a significant number of police personnel.
 - As of August 2017, **India is the third largest troop contributor**, with 7,860 personnel deployed with 10 UN Peacekeeping Missions.
 - India's population, territorial size, GDP, economic potential, civilisational legacy, cultural diversity, political system and past and ongoing contributions to UN activities make **India's demand for a permanent seat in the UNSC completely rational.**

Issues Associated to Functioning of UNSC

- **Absence of Records and Texts of Meetings:** The current rate of progress in the UNSC raises serious questions about its ability to serve the purpose of its existence.
 - The **usual UN rules don't apply to the UNSC deliberations and no records are kept of its meetings.**
 - Additionally, there is **no "text" of the meeting to discuss, amend or object.**
 - The 'text' is a term used for a formal document containing proposals and options in diplomatic meetings.
- **Powerplay in UNSC:** The main problem with the current system is the **capturing of governing capacity** of international security relations **by the elite class of countries.**
 - The veto powers that the UNSC's five permanent members enjoy is an **anachronism** in this age.
 - The elite decision-making structure does not suit the current global security needs.
 - The UNSC in its current form has become a constraint in understanding the international changes and dynamics in the area of human security and peace.
- **Divisions Among the P5:** There is a **deep polarisation within the UN's membership**, so decisions are either not taken, or not heeded.
 - Frequent divisions within the UNSC P-5 **end up blocking key decisions.**
 - These issues can be manifested in the example of the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic where the UN, the UNSC, and [WHO](#) failed to play an effective role in helping nations deal with the spread.
- **An Underrepresentation Organisation:** The UNSC has been unable to act with credibility essentially due to its unrepresentative nature.
 - The **absence in the UNSC of the globally important countries** - India, Germany, Brazil and South Africa - is a matter of concern.
 - The existing gaps in terms of the **under-representation of regions** especially from **Africa, Asia and Latin America** is crippling the UNSC as a global institution governing international peace and security.

Way Forward

- **Democratisation of UNSC:** The imbalances in power relationships among P5 and the rest of the world needs to be corrected urgently.
 - This is necessary to **make the UNSC more democratic and give it greater legitimacy to govern**, ensuring that the principles of international peace, security and order are respected universally.
- **Expansion of UNSC:** The current needs of global governance for world peace and security are quite different and demand significant reforms in the UNSC's governance mechanisms.

- It is **“indispensable” to reform the Security Council through an expansion in permanent and non-permanent seats** to enable the UN organ to better deal with the “ever-complex and evolving challenges” to the maintenance of 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.
 - This transformation will enable equal chance for nations of all the regions to raise their concerns impacting peace and democratic stability in their respective countries.
 - The decentralization of the UNSC’s decision-making processes will enable its **transformation to a more representative, participatory body.**
- **India’s Role - Leveraging Non-Permanent Membership:** 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.
 - It can further **approach other like-minded countries** (like the [G4: India, Germany, Japan and Brazil](#)) and keep growing its circle of support till sufficient number of countries are together to reach out to the whole UNGA to **propose the resolution with a realistic chance of winning the vote.**
 - India needs to **revitalise its engagement with its traditional partners in the “global south”** by articulating their peace and security concerns in the UNSC.
 - In this context, two sub-groups of the global south should be of particular interest; the **Small Island States and Africa.**

Conclusion

The year 2022 will be the second and final year of India’s eighth non-permanent membership of the UNSC. It would be well spent if it was used to start a more meaningful and realistic process to reform the UNSC. There cannot be a more convincing demonstration of the clout of an emerging power.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the role that India can play as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in bringing out reforms within the organisation.