



## Time to Reform UNSC

This editorial is based on [“Permanent membership of the UNSC is another story”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 28/09/2022. It talks about issues related to the United Nations Security Council and the need for reforms.

**For Prelims:** United Nations Security Council, Multilateral Institutions, 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Veto Power, Taiwan Issue, Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN), UN Peacekeeping Force

**For Mains:** Procedure for Amending UNSC Membership, Issues Related to UNSC Reformed Multilateralism, Global Consonance for Global Governance

The process of [decolonisation](#), in which the United Nation and its Security Council played an important role, radically changed the geopolitical landscape of the world. In the past quarter century, the **global order has seen massive changes, from American unilateralism to the rise of [multilateral institutions](#) and [multipolarity](#).**

Developing nations, including India, now **play a larger role in both the international economy and politics**. But **these changes are not reflected in the UNSC**, where all critical decisions are still being taken by the **veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council**.

In his address to the [77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly](#), the **Indian External Affairs Minister** highlighted the **anachrony and ineffectiveness** in the current architecture of the UNSC.

Hence, it is essential to go beyond **P5's prerogatives** and look for a more **democratic and representative security council**.

### What is the United Nations Security Council?

- The **United Nations Security Council** 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 been a non permanent member of the Council during **1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12** and for the **8<sup>th</sup> time**, has entered the UNSC in 2021 and will stay on the council for the term [2021-22](#).

### What is the Procedure for Amending UNSC Membership?

- Changing the membership of the UNSC requires amending the UN Charter.
  - This involves **consent of two-thirds of the total membership of the U.N, including the concurring votes of P-5.**
    - This means that each of the **P5 has a veto.**
- The **Charter was amended once in the 1960s** to enlarge the Council by additional **non-permanent seats.**

## What are the Issues Related to UNSC?

- **Lack of Adequate Representation:** It was argued by several speakers that 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 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 criticised 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 Should be the Way Forward?

- **Welcoming Voices Across the Globe:** It is perceived as deeply unfair, denying **entire continents (Africa) and regions a voice in a forum that deliberates their future.**
  - To decentralise UNSC governing power and authority over nations, it is essential that **all regions are represented equally in the UNSC.**
  - With this transformation, **nations of all regions will have the opportunity to raise concerns** affecting peace and democracy in their countries.
  - Also, introducing **decentralisation** to UNSC decision-making will make it more **representative, participatory, and democratic.**
- **Global Consonance for Global Governance:** UNSC should realise there are more pressing issues to be tackled at the global level than merely preserving the **prerogatives of P5 nations.**
  - There needs to be urgent **correction of the power imbalance between the P5 and the rest of the world.**
  - It is necessary for the UNSC **to be more democratic and more legitimate to govern,** ensuring the universal respect of **international peace, security, and order.**
- **Re-energizing Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN):** Serious negotiations on such critical matters should proceed sincerely. They must **not be blocked by procedural tactics.**
  - The **[IGN process,](#)** which is the principal framework through which UNSC reform is

discussed and debated, needs to be revised and **re-energised**.

- Recommendation of the President of the **76<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly** to gradually **move the IG process towards [text based negotiations](#)** is a **welcoming step**.
- **Towards Reformed Multilateralism:** Calling for **reformed multilateralism** with reforms of the Security Council at its core enjoys considerable support among UN members.
  - In order to **protect faith in the principles of the United Nations, in its charter**, and in reformed multilateralism as a key to achieving global goals, the core issues in UNSC must be critically examined and addressed with global cooperation.
- **India From the Lens of UNSC Reforms:** India's candidature for permanent seat in UNSC is legitimate and justified as it fulfils all the objective criteria for the permanent membership.
  - India has initiated the **[International Solar Alliance in 2015](#)** to reduce the exploitation of fossil fuels and encourage the use of solar energy and has been a frontrunner in **[Vaccine Diplomacy](#)**.
  - With one among the largest individual contributors to the **[UN Peacekeeping Force](#)**, India is prepared to take up greater responsibilities at the highest security cooperation forum.
    - As the same time, it also seeks **to ensure that the injustice faced by the Global South is decisively addressed**. India is **willing and able to contribute on both counts**.

### ***Drishti Mains Question***

Addressing the contemporary world realities requires comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council. Comment.

## **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)**