

NEXT IAS

**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**Reform of the
UN Security Council**

www.nextias.com

REFORM OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Context

- Recently, the Foreign Ministers of the '**Group of Four**' countries—India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan met on the margins of the 79th Session of the UNGA to assess the state of play and discuss prospects for a reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- It is one of the UN's six main organs and is aimed at maintaining international peace and security.

Current Composition

- The UNSC currently consists of **five permanent members (P5)**: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - ◆ These P5 members hold **veto power**, allowing them to block any substantive resolution.
- Additionally, there are **ten non-permanent members** elected for two-year terms.
- More than 50 United Nations Member States have never been Members of the Security Council.

UNSC Elections

- Each year the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of 10 in total) for a two-year term.
- The 10 non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis as follows:
 - ◆ Five for African and Asian States.
 - ◆ One for the Eastern European States.
 - ◆ Two for the Latin American and Caribbean States;
 - ◆ Two for Western European and other States

G4 Nations

- These, comprising **Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan**, are four countries that support each other's bids for permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council.
- Unlike the G7, where the common denominator is the economy and long-term political motives, the **G4's primary aim is the permanent member seats on the Security Council.**
- Each of these four countries have figured among the elected non-permanent members of the council since the UN's establishment.

Need For Reform

- **Categories of Membership:** The G4 Ministers emphasise the **need to expand both permanent and non-permanent categories** of UNSC membership. By doing so, they aim to enhance the participation of developing countries and those significantly contributing to international peace and security. This expansion would make the Council more representative and legitimate.
- **Regional Representation:** The G4 highlights the importance of better representation for various regions. **Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America** and the **Caribbean** deserve stronger voices in the UNSC.
 - ◆ The G4 reaffirms its support for the **Common African Position (CAP) based on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.**
- **Text-Based Negotiations:** The G4 Ministers express strong concern over the slow progress in intergovernmental negotiations (IGN). They call for urgent text-based negotiations to kickstart the reform process.
- **Global Imbalances:** India's Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN pointed out that recent geopolitical events have revealed the UNSC's limitations in **safeguarding international peace and security.**

- ◆ The realities of 1945, when the Council was established, no longer align with today's geopolitical landscape.
- ◆ The G4 nations firmly believe that any reform of the Council must address the lack of representation, especially in the permanent category. Failing to do so would exacerbate existing imbalances.
- **Urgency and Significance:** The G4 countries recognize that urgent reform is essential. Without it, the UNSC would remain ill-equipped to effectively address the pressing global challenges of our time. These challenges range from conflict resolution and peacekeeping to climate change and humanitarian crises.

India's Stance

- India has consistently advocated for UNSC reform. It believes that as a major global player, it deserves a permanent seat on the Council.
 - ◆ It emphasises the need for equitable representation, especially for developing countries.
- India rightly emphasises that UNSC reform is a collective effort, stating it's not solely the responsibility of a single powerful nation; all UN members must actively participate.

Proposed Reforms

- The G4 proposed expanding the Council's membership to include more permanent and non-permanent members.
- Africa's role is particularly crucial in shaping a more representative and effective UNSC.
- Without meaningful reforms, the Council risks being ill-equipped to address the pressing challenges faced by the international community.

Challenges in UNSC Reform

- Reforming the UNSC is not an easy process. Various countries have differing views on how to proceed. Some nations use procedural tactics to delay progress, hindering meaningful reform.
- **Procedural Hurdles:** Amending the UN Charter requires consensus among member states, which can be challenging given divergent positions.
- **Size and Terms:** There's no agreement on the acceptable size and terms for an enlarged Council.
- **Veto Provisions:** The current veto system held by the five permanent members (P5) remains a contentious issue. Extending veto power to new permanent members is a point of disagreement.
- **Effectiveness Uncertainty:** Even if the Council were enlarged to be more representative, doubts persist about whether it would improve its functioning.
- **Security Challenges and the Summit of the Future:** The UN General Assembly's seventy-ninth round of meetings, known as the 'Summit of the Future' took place recently. This summit was a unique opportunity to revive multilateral cooperation, but it faced significant hurdles due to ongoing security challenges.
- **Coffee Club:** It is an informal group comprising 40-odd member states, mostly middle-sized states who oppose bigger regional powers grabbing permanent seats, has been instrumental in holding back reforms to the United Nations Security Council over the past six years.
 - ◆ India, however, remains committed to pushing for change.

India's Preparedness

- As a current non-permanent member of the UNSC, India will complete its two-year tenure in December.
- India is ready to take on greater responsibilities but also seeks to address historical injustices faced by the Global South.

Conclusion and Road Ahead

- As the world faces complex challenges — ranging from conflicts and humanitarian emergencies to climate change and pandemics — the UNSC's effectiveness is crucial. The G4 countries' push for reform aims to ensure that the Council reflects the realities of our interconnected and dynamic global landscape.

- The G4's call for urgent UNSC reform underscores the need for a more inclusive, responsive, and effective United Nations — one that can truly address the multifaceted issues confronting humanity.

Source: TH

Mains Practice Question

[Q] Do you believe that reforming the United Nations Security Council is necessary to ensure more equitable global governance, or would such changes undermine the Council's effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security?

■■■■

