



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

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A CONTESTED UNSC SEAT POSES A TEST FOR INDIA

Context

- India faces a diplomatic challenge in securing a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028–29 term, as Tajikistan has also announced its candidature for the Asia-Pacific seat ahead of the 2027 election.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- It is one of the **UN's six main organs** and is aimed at maintaining international peace and security.
- It held its first session on **17th January 1946** in Westminster, London.
- Headquarters:** New York City.
- Membership:** The Council is composed of 15 Members.
 - ♦ **Five Permanent members with veto power:** China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
 - ♦ **Ten** Non Permanent members.

Election of Non Permanent members

- 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.
- To be elected to the Council, candidate countries need a **two-thirds majority** of ballots of the Member States that are present and voting in the Assembly.
 - ♦ The elections were held with each of the **193 member states casting its vote in a secret ballot**.
- More than 50 United Nations Member States have never been Members of the Security Council.
 - ♦ **India has served eight terms** on the UNSC, most recently in 2021–22, and is seeking its ninth term for 2028–29.

Significance of India's UNSC Candidature

- Reform of the United Nations:** India could renew its demand for restructuring the UNSC to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities and the interests of developing countries.
- Representation of the Global South:** India could raise concerns relating to development, sovereign equality, climate finance, food and energy security, and equitable representation in international institutions.

Need for the Reforms in the UNSC

- Non-representative Council membership:** When the UN was founded in **1945**, the Council consisted of **11 members out of 51 members** of UN; around **22%**.
 - ♦ Today, there are 193 member-states of the UN, and only 15 members of the Council — **fewer than 8%**.
- Inability to Address Conflicts:** The current composition of the council has an **inability to address critical conflicts** and maintain international peace and security.
- Changes in World Order:** The world has undergone significant **changes since 1945** and the **new realities need to be reflected** in the permanent membership.

- **Veto Power:** Currently, **only the five permanent members** hold veto powers and through its use have stalled action in the Council to address global challenges and conflicts such as in Ukraine and Gaza.
 - ♦ The remaining 10 nations in the Council are elected to sit as non-permanent members for two-year terms and **do not have veto powers.**
- **Im-balance of Power:** The composition of the Council also gives undue weightage to the balance of power of those days.
 - ♦ Europe, accounting for **5%** of the world's population, controls **33%** of the seats in any given year (and that does not count Russia, another European power).
- **Legitimacy:** The disproportionate power held by the five permanent members, particularly their veto power **lead to a perception of unfairness and lack of legitimacy.**

India's Case for Permanent Membership of the UNSC

- **Strategic influence:** Membership would offer India greater diplomatic visibility at a time of intensifying geopolitical competition and shifting global alliances.
- **Demographic Weight:** India, as the world's largest democracy, represents one-sixth of its total population.
- **Economic Powerhouse:** India ranks among the **top three** in purchasing power parity, with estimates placing its 2026 GDP PPP around **\$20 trillion.**
 - ♦ It influences global trade flows, technology supply chains, energy markets, and developmental finance.
- **Military advancement:** India's armed forces are among the world's largest, and it is among the top defence spenders, with its 2026 defence budget reaching a record **\$86 billion.**
 - ♦ India is currently among the few countries with a credible **nuclear triad.**
- **Contribution to international peace and security:** Its troop contribution has been one of the largest since **1948**, despite suffering one of the highest numbers of fatalities among UN peacekeeping contributors.
 - ♦ This reflects India's commitment to **multilateralism** and its willingness to support UN mandates at all costs.
- **Voice of the Global South:** India demonstrated its leadership in the **International Solar Alliance, Global Biofuels Alliance, G20 presidency, and the AI Impact Summit in the Global South** etc.
- **On maritime security,** its role in the Indian Ocean shows a strong commitment to freedom of navigation and adherence to the **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea** and its institutions, such as the **International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.**

Challenges to Reform

- **Complex Amendment Process:** Any reform requires approval by two-thirds of the UN General Assembly and ratification by all five permanent members. This makes institutional reform extremely difficult.
- **Coffee Club: Uniting for Consensus (UfC)** or Coffee Club, is a movement that developed in the 1990s in opposition to the possible expansion of permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council.
 - ♦ **Under the leadership of Italy,** it aims to counter the bids for permanent seats proposed by **G4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan).**
- **Question of veto for new members:** There is no consensus on whether an expanded permanent membership should also receive veto rights.

Way Ahead

- India should adopt a pragmatic approach to its candidature, **balancing its ambition for a UNSC seat with its longstanding partnership** with Tajikistan and its credibility among the Global South.

- It should also continue to **champion the concerns of developing countries**, including equitable representation, development finance, climate justice and reform of global governance institutions.
- Further, India should sustain its efforts to **secure permanent UNSC membership by building broader international consensus** for a more representative, inclusive and effective Security Council that reflects contemporary geopolitical realities.

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] The existing structure of the United Nations Security Council reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945 rather than the contemporary world order.” Discuss the need for UNSC reforms and examine India’s case for permanent membership.

Source: TH

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