

Received on 24.05.2016  
Accepted on 30.05.2016

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## Restructuring the UN: India's Claim for Permanent Membership in the Security Council

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### Abstract

The United Nations Security Council, created in the post-war context, doesn't actually reflect the changes that have occurred in the international system after the end of the cold war. In the past fifty years or so, the global order has been changed massively. The developing nations including India now play a larger role in both the international economy and politics. But these changes are not reflected in the United Nations, where all decisions are still being taken by the five permanent members of the Security Council who wield the veto power. The UN Security Council reform has been lingering since 1992. If the UN still shies away from reforming the Security Council, the possibility of the institution being sidelined by emerging powers cannot be ruled out. The present Council does not reflect contemporary power realities and should therefore be reformed to reflect the new realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** United Nations; Security Council; Veto Power; Permanent Member; Restructuring.

### Introduction

The membership and structure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have been one of the most controversial and intractable issues among the UN member-states since the establishment of the organization in the mid -1940s. The importance of the UNSC particularly the Council's permanent seats stems from the status and prestige associated with its decision making authority on questions of global peace and security. In fact, permanent membership is equated with "great power" status in the international political system.

As a consequence, it is perhaps not surprising that the number of emerging global and regional powers throughout the world-including Japan, Germany, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt-have sought permanent seats in the UNSC during the past few decades. Despite a tremendous amount of discussion and debate, there has been little

consensus on the matter of UNSC restructuring, including to what extent the council ought to be enlarged, how many new permanent and non permanent members ought to be added, whether the new members ought to be extended the veto privilege, and which specific countries ought to be added as permanent members.

#### *Need for UNSC Reforms*

Even though the geopolitical realities have changed drastically since 1945, when the setup of the current council was decided, the Security Council has changed very little during this period. The victors of the second world war shaped the charter of the United Nations in their national interests, dividing the veto power pertinent to the permanent seats amongst themselves [1]. With the enlargement of the United Nations membership and increasing self confidence among the new members, going hand in hand with the process of decolonization, old

structures and procedures were increasingly challenged. The imbalance between the number of seats in the security council and the total number of member states become evident and the only significant reform of the Security Council came to pass in 1965 after the ratification of two-thirds of the membership, including the five permanent members of the Security Council (that have a right to votes on charter changes). The push from decolonized countries for better representation on the council both in numbers and in interest was a key driver of the decision to reform the council in 1963 [2]. Countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America worked together and drafted the resolution that ultimately expanded the council and came into force on 31st of August 1965 [3]. The reforms included an increase of the non permanent membership from 6 to 10 members [4]. Since then the membership of the United Nations has increased from 113 to 193 without any change in the composition of the UNSC.

The current composition of the council also gives undue weight to the balance of power at least a half century ago. Europe, for instance, which accounts for barely 5percent of the world's population, still controls 33percent of the Security Council seats in any given year.

There is no permanent member from Africa, despite 75 percent of work of United Nations Security Council focused on Africa.

United Nations is unable to respond effectively to situations of international conflicts as of Iraq and Syria.

The current Council members deny opportunities to other states that have contributed through participations in peace keeping operations. India and Brazil are notable examples of this.

The current Security Council is widely seen as a 'mouth piece' of the G-7 nations. Its decisions cannot, therefore, inspire the confidence and credibility among the vast majority of developing countries. The Security Council needs restructuring and reconstitution, so as to reflect the changed post-cold war power equations. Reform of the United Nations have a direct bearing on the established principles of the international system, the world order and the fundamental interests of humanity. Thus, it deserves active participation, vigorous support, collective wisdom and due contribution of the entire international community.

For meaningful and widely accepted reforms of the Security Council, it is essential to grant reasonable and equitable representation to the developing countries which form a majority in the United

Nations. A number of developed and developing countries from different regions have shown their enthusiasm in applying for a permanent seat of the Security Council. The restructuring of the Security Council should also take into account the effects of global terrorism. The nations like India which have been adversely affected by this tormentor should have adequate representation in the world body in order to enable them to contribute effectively in countering this menace.

The five permanent members hardly represent the power realities of the 21st century. Japan and Germany are the second and the third largest financial contributor to the United Nations, yet they are not represented in the Security Council. India is a rising power with booming economy but still without a permanent Security Council seat. The entire continents of Africa, South America and Australia have no representation in the Council. More and more countries are questioning the legitimacy and creditability of the Security Council. They wonder why old colonial powers like Britain and France have voice but their former colonies do not.

Hence reforms of the United Nations Security Council encompasses five key issues: categories of membership, question of the veto held by five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working method and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship. Member states, regional groups and other member state interest groupings developed different positions and proposals on how to move forward on this contested issue.

The framers of the UN Charter made the amendment procedure so complex that there are only three amendments in seventy years- two to expand the Economic and Social council (ECOSOC) and one amendment to enlarge the Security Council.

The most important aspect of the UN Charter was the provision dealing with the effective collective measures in order to maintain international peace and security. The framers decided to establish a powerful body called the UN Security Council. It was expected to play an effective role in mobilizing the world community to repel aggression, manage conflict and maintain peace. Whether or not the Security Council has been able to perform the assigned functions adequately, has become a subject of debate in many quarters. There are those who argue that the very composition of the Security Council hampers its effectiveness while others stress that the single most effective impediment in the smooth functioning of the Security Council is the veto power that is exclusively enjoyed by the five permanent

members of the Council. Another argument advanced is that the very structure of the Security Council does not reflect the realities of the post cold war international order. While there seems to be a consensus over the need to reform the Security Council, divergent opinions are continuously expressed over the nature, scope and function of the organization.

The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council were given veto power with a view to avoid injustice and to make the organization more potent and effective. Following the end of the Second World War, the world was bipolarized into communist and capitalist camps. Instead of employing veto in order to avoid injustice, the permanent members began to use the veto powers to block the resolutions that were likely to adversely affect their own interest as well as of their partners. Thus, the Security Council was unable to take effective measures to deal with threats to peace and acts of aggression. There are many suggestions that have been advanced by various quarters to reform the Security Council in general and veto power in particular. Three suggestions directly dealing with veto's power needs to be commented upon:

First suggestion is that the number of permanent members should be increased. The permanent membership of the Security Council needs to be allocated to those states that have consistently contributed towards the maintenance of international peace and security. At the same time the ability to influence other members of the international community also needs to be undertaken into consideration.

The second most important suggestion in this regards is introducing a mechanism of rotating veto. This implies that veto power is given to various deserving power for a period of four years and after the expiry of their tenure then the veto is given to another set of states. This also means that veto power must only be given to those states that are already elected members of the Security Council.

The third suggestion, that nobody should be invested with veto power, is more practicable and suitable in the light of existing circumstances [5]. Indeed the veto power itself contradicts the very essence of democratic pursuits why should anybody be accorded a privileged position when under the operative international system all states are supported to be equal? Some consider that the exercise of veto powers robs the Security Council of its democratic legitimacy.

Compared to other organs of the UN, Security

Council upon which hopes were pinned down for the maintenance of international peace and security has not really lived up to the expectations. Some countries have frequently disregarded UN resolutions with unnecessary disdain while there are other countries like US and Soviet Union that have exploited their privileged position. When the veto was introduced; it was hoped that the powers that have played an important role in bringing the Second World War to an end would employ this power judiciously but unfortunately it did not happen. On the contrary, individual country's national interest began to guide the application of veto. Hence the world experienced the gross misuse of the veto power. To avoid the somewhat continuous misuse, perhaps the best way out is to strip all the give permanent members of their veto powers.

#### *Proposed Models for the Restructuring the Security Council*

The voices to reform the UN are continuously increasing. There exists a widespread impression that the UN is doing poor job and therefore it must be reformed. Reforming the Security Council appears to be central to the reforming of the UN.

With Boutros-Boutros Ghali elected as Secretary General in 1992, the discussion on the reform of the UNSC was launched. He started his new term with the first ever summit of the Security Council and thereafter published "An agenda for Peace"[6]. His motivation was to restructure the composition and anachronistic procedures of the UN organ recognizing the changed world.

#### *UN Working Group's Proposal (Razali Plan)*

This proposal was the product of the UN Working Group's effort and work. This group was charged with the tasks of formulating proposals for the restructuring of the UNSC. A report was issued by Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia who was the chairman of the group which spelled out the proposal in 1997. This proposal implied increase in the Council's membership from 15 to 24 by adding 5 more permanent members (01 each from Asia, Africa, South America including Caribbean plus Germany and Japan) and 4 additional non-permanent members from Africa, Eastern Europe, South America and Caribbean.

A major weakness of this model is that it will not significantly alter the balance of power in the Security Council. While this model does provide for geographical representations but the control still

remain with the permanent members critics also highlighted the point that increased members may make the UNSC unmanageable in terms of decision making process. Although eventually unsuccessful this innovative proposal deserves mentioning because its use of an intermediary structure, inspired later proposals.

*'In Larger Freedom' By Kofi Annan*

On 21 March 2005, the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on the UN to reach a consensus on expanding the council to 24 members, in a plan referred to as "In Larger Freedom". He gave two alternatives for implementation. The two options mentioned by Annan are referred to as Plan A and Plan B.

- Plan A calls for creating 6 new permanent members as well as 3 new non-permanent members. The likely candidates for permanent membership are India, Japan, Brazil, Germany, Egypt and either Nigeria or South Africa
- Plan B would create a new tier of 8 semi permanent members chosen for renewable four years term and add one non-permanent seat.

Neither option, however, extends veto power beyond the existing five permanent members [7].

The reform and expansion of permanent membership of security council has been in the agenda of UN since the special summit of UN convened in 1992, But no tangible progress has been made in this regard so far due to number of factors. The reform process is slow and tardy. Most of the permanent members are not inclined to share to special privilege enjoyed by them.

Four countries - Brazil, Germany, Japan and India are currently seeking permanent membership of the Security Council and they are known as a G-4 group. According to their proposal the UN Security Council should be expanded beyond the current 15 members to include 25 members. The G-4 members supported Plan 'A' of Kofi Annan and also urged that the new permanent members should be given veto powers.

The membership of the Security Council has become a political issue. Regional rivals of the G-4 opposed their permanent membership with a veto power. They favoured the expansion of the non permanent category of seats with members to be elected on a regional basis. These countries have organized under the banner of Coffee Club. Its members are Italy, Spain, Argentina, Canada, Mexico, South Korea & Pakistan. Thus Pakistan is opposed to India's membership; Spain and Italy oppose

Germany; Argentina and Mexico are opposed to Brazil, and South Korea is opposed to the membership of Japan. The 'Coffee Club' is also known as 'Uniting for Consensus'.

*Contestants for Permanent Membership: G-4 Nations*

The G-4 nations: Brazil, Germany, India and Japan support one another's bid for permanent membership, though they are strongly opposed by certain regional rivals [8].

*Brazil*

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America in terms of population, GDP and land area. It has the fifth largest population, seventh largest GDP, eleventh largest defense budget and has the fifth largest land area. It is one of only five countries that rank among the top ten globally in terms of physical size, population and GDP, the other four being the United States, Russia, China and India. Furthermore with Africa and Oceania, South America is one of three inhabited continents without a permanent representation on the Security Council.

Brazil has been elected ten times to the Security Council. It has contributed troops to UN peace keeping in Middle East, Congo, Cyprus, Mozambique, Angola, East Timor & Haiti [9]. Brazil is one of the main contributors to the UN regular budget [10]. Prior to the UN's founding in 1946, Franklin D. Roosevelt lobbied for Brazil to be included on the Security Council but U.K. and Soviet Union refused [11].

The United States sent strong indicators to Brazil that it was willing to support its membership but without a veto [12]. Brazil has received backing from other permanent members of the Security Council and from Chile, Indonesia, Finland, Australia, South Africa as well as from the other G-4 nations, who mutually support each other [13].

*Japan*

Japan is the world organization's second largest contributor after the United States, the largest aid donor, a non nuclear economic giant and a potential contributor of troops to peacekeeping operations. Thus Japan is the most likely candidate for new permanent seats. Japan has been elected to the Security Council for 10 years as a non permanent member. Japan has earned its honorable place among the nations of the world by its own efforts and its own character. That's why United States supports a permanent seat for Japan on United Nations Security

Council.

Some other Asian nations have expressed support for Japan's application, including Mongolia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Philippines and Vietnam. The other G-4 countries, Germany, Brazil and India who are also bidding for Security Council seat along with France and UK also back Japanese bid but China is the main opposition to Japan's candidacy

#### *Germany*

Germany is the third largest contributor to the UN regular budget next to Japan, and as such, argues for a permanent Security Council seat. Germany has been elected to the Security Council as a non permanent member three times as a unified state as well as three times when it was divided. Italy and Spain opposes Germany's candidature.

#### *India's Case*

India has been one of the founding 51 members of the United Nations which signed the UN Charter in 1945. Since that time India has been actively participating in all the activities of the UN and other international agencies. India is well qualified by any objective criteria for permanent membership of the Council. Some of the reasons which support India's appointment as a permanent member include:

- India has more than a billion people, representing about 1/6th population of the whole world, and it is the largest functional and stable democracy in the world .
- India's Gross Domestic Product is the 5th highest in the world. It is one of the fastest growing economies in the world as a result of liberalization of trade policies. Now India has emerged as a leading global player in economic terms. It is now the third largest economy of the world in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).
- In last 20 years or so, India has emerged as a leading player in the management of global affairs. She is now the member of G-20 group, IBSA and BRICS among others and represents the interest of developing countries in these form Separately, India is spearheading a group of around 42 developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America-called the L-69 group which demands urgent action on the UNSC reforms.
- India with its ancient civilization, rich heritage,

deep rooted democratic system and growing economic potential has the credentials to champion the cause of developing nations, which need proper representation in the Council.

- India has been one of the few countries, which had participated in all military operations the Council has undertaken thus far. Presently, India is ranked as the second largest troop contributor to the UN. It shows its strong commitment to the UN charter, international leadership and contribution to the world peace.
- India is and will be a major player of the world in helping the UN's effort to eliminate nuclear arms from the face of the earth.
- India has the third largest standing army in the world. India is potent military power and the Indian armed force is considered one of the most disciplined in the world. This will become important to the United Nations and Security Council, as it will be called upon to play a major role in resolving the future conflicts.
- India has made a huge contribution to the fulfillments of the aims and objectives of the UN. India has opposed colonialism and racialism and supported the peaceful settlement of international disputes and the cause of global peace and disarmament. India has been elected seven times as non permanent member of the Security Council. India's performance as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council during 2011-12 has also significantly strengthened India's claim to permanent membership. India has again put forth its candidature for the 2021-22 terms.

To sum up, the Council expansion is essential to make it more representative. The fact that India with a population over a billion, representing about one-sixth of the whole world, not being a permanent member of the Council seriously undermines the representative nature of the Council. Indeed, as the world's largest democracy, ancient civilization, a rapidly growing economic power and a major contributor to peace keeping operations, India has a natural claim to the permanent seat in the Council.

India's bid for permanent member of UNSC is backed by permanent members namely France, Russia, the United Kingdom and United States, although the United States initially opposed India's candidacy on grounds of nuclear proliferation as India has acquired nuclear weapons and not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [14]. Recently China has also expressed its support for India's candidacy as a permanent member of the Security

Council and revoked its support for Japanese candidacy, thus making India the only candidate that has received support from all permanent members and most nations as well.

#### *Obstacles in the Way of India's Permanent Membership*

- China-China vehemently opposed to India's permanent entry in the UNSC as it doesn't want to lose its covered status as the only Asian country in UNSC permanently. Secondly China opposes Japan's bid for permanent UNSC membership while India supports Japan and China is not likely to support India as long as India supports Japan. Moreover, China itself wants India not to become a bigger global player particularly when Indo-US relations are getting better.
- The United States-The official American policy has been, for some time, opposed India's permanent membership on the Security Council as India is not a signatory of the Nuclear Non proliferation Treaty and possess nuclear weapons- a source of great annoyance to the US.
- Pakistan-Pakistan opposes India's bid of permanent member.
- The structure of the Security Council itself-This is by far the biggest problem. India is already on the verge of having the verbal support of all the five permanent members, yet there is a slim chance that it will gain a permanent seat anytime soon. This would mean an amendment of the UN charter, which requires a two-third vote of general members and the support of the five permanent members. But whatever lip service the permanent five members may pay to supporting India, they will likely keep tabling the issue because allowing the country to join the permanent member sets a precedent that might open a floodgate and upset the power balance.

India is possibly the most obvious and least controversial option to add as a permanent member and probably long overdue for a seat. During his visit to India, the US president Obama has offered his support for India to become a permanent member of the Council but the reform of UNSC appears a distant possibility due to lack of political will on the part of leading global actors.

#### *Challenges in Restructuring the UNSC*

Security Council reform has been on the agenda for more than a decade. But member nations have

failed to agree on how big the Council should become and whether other nations should be given veto powers. No single proposal has ever won majority support. However the reluctance of the five permanent members to entertain any change undermining their states remains a major stumbling block. The existing five permanent members are keen to keep intact and perpetuate the prevailing status quo as it suits them. They argue that expansion, particularly involving the increase in the number of permanent member would make the decision making difficult and render the Security Council ineffective. USA is conscious that a larger body would be more unwieldy and a bigger collection of permanent members more difficult to manage. USA of course likes a council which it can dominate.

The lack of criteria for determining the eligibility of various countries is again given as an argument for neutralizing the demand for the expansion of the Security Council. The western powers are not willing to accept the rationale being the demand.

Some of the countries which do not qualify to be considered like Pakistan, are opposing the demand of reforming the Security Council. Pakistan has opposed, in particular, the Indian demand for grant of a permanent membership in the Council.

China is also reluctant to see its stature diminished. The thought of sharing permanent status with India and Japan is not one that evokes much joy in Beijing. Though, she has supported India's bid as a permanent member, with a rider that India does not associate its bid with Japan.

The acceptance of such a demand would require our amendment in the UN which cannot be made without the concurrence of the existing five permanent members. They are, however, not willing to concede the demand.

#### **Conclusion**

The UN has to operate today in a global environment that is complex, vastly more challenging and demanding than the world of 1945. The configuration of the Security Council not only mirrors the political and economic reality of 1945, but it is increasingly delegitimized center of power. Therefore this global institution urgently needs to reform its backward and obsolete interpretation of power that only perpetuates the status quo [16]. It must anticipate and embrace changes. If the existing institutions fail to keep pace with the changing world around us and the expectations of citizens, they will fall by the

wayside and will be replaced by new forms of association. The price of continued relevance and survival of the United Nations is thus continual change, adaptation and learning by the organization. The issues and preoccupations of the new millennium present new and different types of challenges from those that confronted us in 1945. The number of actors in the world affairs has grown enormously, the type of actors have changed very substantially, the interactions between them have grown dense and intense and the agenda of the international public policy has been altered quite dramatically with the changing temper of time. Hence UN needs to be modern and relevant. It must face the challenges of the 21st century more comprehensively & more effectively. Working in accordance with the need of time in 2015, during the 70th birth anniversary of UN, in a significant development, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a negotiating text for the Security Council reform, setting the stage for talks on the long pending reform process.

At a time when faster growing economies, more youthful populations and the concentration of natural resources are mainly in the developing world, a reform of global political management system to respond to crises and violence is even more imperative. If UNSC includes India and Brazil and also represents Africa and west Asia, it will infuse the council with deeper understanding and enable a wiser response to the world's cascading political crises.

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