



UNSC REFORMS: A PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a key organ of the UN body, but has been under the spot light when it comes to the issue of reform and expansion. The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members, Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States and 10 non-permanent members that are elected in groups of five to two-year terms. Questions regarding the democratic credentials of the council have often arisen and there has been a lot of debate about the unfair advantage of the five permanent members with the veto power.

The issue is about more representation and more democracy and Pakistan has reiterated its concerns about these issues time and again at the UN forum. Pakistan has been unvarying in its stance that UNSC reforms should make this vital organ for peace and security more democratic, effective and responsive to the aspirations of the member states, and a reformed UNSC should reflect interests of the wider membership of the UN.

In the past, the US had advocated a “criteria-based approach under which potential members must be well qualified, based on factors such as: economic size, population, military capacity, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contributions to the UN and contributions to UN peacekeeping. For instance, former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama wanted India to be included in the UNSC. Pakistan had always stressed the point that India does not qualify to become a full member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), given its record of violations of

UN resolutions, particularly pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir.¹ Pakistan has taken the position that non-permanent members' representation be increased and given to several other regions, which would help democratize the UN. The gist of the matter is that India has reprehensible record of showing utter disregard to the UN and its resolutions, apart from violation of human rights. Therefore, Pakistan and other South Asian countries would not feel comfortable if India is provided an opportunity to further its interests and designs.

The misuse of the veto power in the past by the permanent members has been the reason for the Security Council's inability to maintain international peace. A clear example is the use of veto-power on various resolutions on Kashmir and Palestine by former Soviet Russia and the US respectively. During the Cold War era, the veto power was used for advancing interests of the super-power to the disadvantage of a nation like Pakistan.

Time and again, Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations, Dr. Maleeha Lodhi has outlined Pakistan's perspective, which is also reflected in the stance adopted by numerous other states, supportive of opposition to any kind of reform agenda, which would undermine smaller states.

The main flaw in the UNSC's distribution of power is the inequitable distribution of permanent seats, as well as the under representation of most of the world's populace. A lack of transparency has made the UNSC ineffective during serious crises and the failure to act in times of conflict has been a major factor, reflecting an ineffective organ of the United Nations Organization.

Opposing the proposal that seeks expansion in permanent membership of the UNSC, Pakistan's envoy has often argued that this runs contrary to principles that all member states agree to, to make the Council "more representative, democratic, accountable, transparent and effective".² Dr. Maleeha Lodhi has reinforced Pakistan's stance by saying that the principle of sovereign equality of states demands equal opportunity for all states to seek membership of the Council. Only additional electable seats, on the basis of periodic elections and fixed rotation, would allow equal, fair and increased opportunity for all states to aspire for Security Council's membership.

The Pakistani perspective on this matter also reaffirms that Pakistan has a very firm principled position against increase of permanent members and that Pakistan, as part of the Uniting for Consensus group, has always advocated an effective and feasible reform of the Security Council

¹ Mohammad Jamil, *Pakistan's Stance on UNSC Reforms*, Pakistan Observer <https://pakobserver.net/pakistans-stance-on-uns-c-reforms/>

² Masood Haider, *Pakistan wants UNSC reform to reflect 'aspirations of all'*, Dawn, May 4, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1256138>

reform based on consensus among the UN membership.³ The reason behind the rigorous positions taken by countries in relation to the reform of the Security Council is the importance of this Council compared to various other organs of the United Nations. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining global peace and security and it undertakes this role in a number of ways, and that is why Pakistan is of the view that the UNSC reforms, must not be detrimental to the interests of smaller countries.

³ Taimur Malik and Bilal Ramzan, *UN Security Council reform and Pakistan*, March 7, 2015, Pakistan Today, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/03/07/un-security-council-reform-and-pakistan/>