**UNSC reforms**

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At a time of global power shifts and strategic turbulence, India is trying to carve a larger niche for itself in the emerging power configuration. Seeking a permanent seat on the Security Council is an integral part of India’s broader strategy. Pakistan, on the other hand, continues to strive for a fair and equitable multilateral architecture of peace and security that safeguards the vital interests of smaller states. For over three decades, India has been endeavouring to gain a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), albeit without success. Under Narendra Modi, India has made this an issue of ‘the highest priority’. However, Pakistan’s successful diplomacy has effectively thwarted such Indian attempts.

During its ongoing month-long Presidency of the Security Council, India inscribed an item ‘Maintenance of International Peace and Security: New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism’ for an open debate in the Council on 14 December 2022. This also happens to be India’s last month on the UNSC for its current two-year term. The External Affairs Minister of India Jaishankar used the occasion to once again press India’s claim for a permanent seat on the Security Council wrapping it in terms of ‘economic prosperity, technology capabilities, political influence, and developmental progress’. Emphatically rejecting this claim, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan urged the ‘implementation of the resolutions of the UNSC’. He stated, ‘When it comes to the question of Kashmir, prove that multilateralism can succeed, prove that the UNSC can succeed and deliver peace in the region.’ The Security Council is entrusted with the all-important responsibility of the maintenance of international peace and security. The only previous expansion in the Security Council took place in 1963 when the original number of non-permanent members was increased from 6 to 10. This was necessitated by the growth in the membership of the United Nations to 117 as a result of the decolonisation process and the emergence of newly independent states. Today, the total number of UN members has grown to 193. In addition to several existing unresolved disputes, there are ever-increasing, new and complex threats to international peace and security making greater demands on the Security Council. Under these circumstances, the justification for the reform and expansion of the Security Council is broadly shared by the UN members. However, there are major divergences in the suggested way forward.

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The debate on UNSC reform and expansion gained traction in the early 1990s when India along with Japan, Germany, and Brazil—later known as G4—motivated by self-interest, began lobbying for permanent UNSC seats for themselves. Pakistan, Italy, and Argentina joined hands to create an informal coalition of like-minded countries from all regional groups to emphatically oppose G4 claims for permanent seats. This group came to be known as ‘Uniting for Consensus’ (UfC) or sometimes informally, the ‘Coffee Club’. It includes important countries like Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain, and Turkey. The UfC has consistently maintained that the Security Council should be reformed and expanded to make its representation fair, equitable, more democratic, more representative, more transparent, more accountable, and more effective. UfC opposes adding any new permanent members with or without veto but advocates more non-permanent seats on UNSC to correspond to current realities. UfC’s position enjoys the support of many other countries. Since 2009, talks of reform and expansion of the Security Council are taking place within the framework of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) with the participation of all Member States. Under the IGN framework, the negotiating sessions have allowed identifying important areas of convergence, as well as the persistence of differing views. Several ideas have been floated by interested countries, including permanent membership without veto power, two permanent seats for the African Group, additional non-permanent members with immediately renewable terms, etc. No consensus seems in sight. Pakistan backs increasing non-permanent members, from the present 10 to 20-21 to ensure equitable representation of the United Nations’ 193 member states. An expansion in the non-permanent category will give large, medium, and smaller states, especially from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, better representation in the decision-making process of the Security Council. Pakistan is resolutely opposed to creating any new centres of privilege in the UNSC. Regarding India’s claim for a permanent seat, Pakistan has repeatedly rejected such calls, drawing attention, inter alia, to India’s utter disregard for UNSC resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, atrocities perpetrated by it against innocent Kashmiris, and its illegal unilateral actions of 5 August 2019.

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Pakistan’s commitment to multilateralism is reflected by the fact that it has served seven times on the UN Security Council, the fifth most frequently elected country (along with Italy and Columbia), to the Security Council; Pakistan is among the largest troop-contributing countries to the UN Peacekeeping operations worldwide and is frequently represented in key intergovernmental organs and subsidiary bodies of the UN family. Each year, the United Nations General Assembly adopts dozens of resolutions sponsored or co-sponsored by Pakistan. In the current uncertain and turbulent times, Pakistan will continue to contribute towards strengthening the structure of constructive and cooperative multilateralism based on the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and seek reform of the UNSC that makes it more democratic, representative, non-discriminatory, and accountable.