

AIR Spotlight: UNSC - New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on ‘High Level Ministerial Meetings at UNSC - New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism (NORMS)’.

Participants:

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Context - The multidimensional crises that the world faces today demand a representative multilateral architecture that is reflective of contemporary global realities and is well-equipped to meet emerging challenges.

Introduction -

- India has presided over the Security Council during its two-year tenure as an elected member. UNSC rules of procedure say that the council presidency rotates between each of the 15 members of the UNSC in alphabetical order.
- India assumed the monthly rotating Presidency of the [UNSC](#) in December 2022. This is the second time India got the Presidency after holding the top spot in August 2021, during which the government focused on maritime security, UN peacekeeping and counter-terrorism.
- During India’s December Presidency of the UNSC, two high-level signature events took place. Meetings were held on Reformed Multilateralism and Counter-Terrorism.
 - A high-level open debate on the theme - Maintenance of International Peace & Security: New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism was held.
 - The open debate encouraged UN members to take the conversation forward on reforms in the current multilateral architecture with the UN at its centre to make it “more representative and fit for purpose.”

Time to Reform the UNSC

- Indian External Affairs Minister, Shri Jaishankar has asserted that the time has come for reforms and wider representation in the global bodies including the UNSC to be ensured. The world is not the same as it was 77 years ago. The 193 member states of the United

Nations are more than triple the 55 that it had in 1945. However, the composition of the Security Council, responsible for global peace and security, was last fixed in 1965 and is far from reflecting the true diversity of the wider membership of the [United Nations](#). Since 1945, the power balance has shifted, and the centre of economic gravity has shifted but the constitution and composition of multilateral organisations have not changed.

- New global challenges have emerged during the past seven decades such as terrorism, radicalism, pandemics and threats from new and emerging technologies. All of these challenges call for a robust multilateral response. The new orientation for reformed multilateralism envisages reforms in all three pillars of the current multilateral architecture – peace and security, development and human rights – with the United Nations at its centre.
- India (whose 2021-2022 term on the Council ends on December 31) has been at the forefront of efforts calling for urgent reform of the Security Council, which has remained deeply divisive in dealing with current challenges.
- India has asserted that the council, in its current form, does not reflect today's geo-political realities and its credibility is at risk if developing powers like India do not have a permanent seat at the table.
- The developing nations, including India, play a larger role in both the international economy and politics. But these changes are not reflected in the UN, where all critical decisions are still being taken by the veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council. Besides, the geopolitical rivalry among the permanent members has prevented the UNSC from coming up with effective mechanisms to deal with global crises. Even as a humanitarian tragedy is unfolding in Syria, there is no consensus in the Security Council on how to tackle it.

The champions of reforms — India, Japan, Germany and Brazil, or the G4 — should continue their multilateral diplomacy to build a democratically evolved global consensus on restructuring the UNSC.

The UNSC's permanent, veto-carrying members, chosen by virtue of being “winners” of World War II — the U.S., the U.K., France, Russia and later China — can hardly claim adequate representation of the world's leadership today. The UNSC does not include a permanent member from the African, Australian and South American continents, and the pillars of the multilateral order, such as the G-4 group of Brazil, India, Germany and Japan, have been ignored for long.

Multilateral Platforms being Misused to Justify and Protect Perpetrators of Terrorism

- During an open debate at the UN Security Council, EAM S. Jaishankar said that multilateral platforms are being misused to justify and protect perpetrators of terrorism (a veiled attack on China and its close ally Pakistan).

India - Voice of the Global South

- As India assumed the presidency of the [G20](#) group of countries for 2022 to 2023, S Jaishankar said that the country would be the “voice of the Global South, that is otherwise under-represented in such forums”. (pointing to the region’s historical exclusion from prominent international organisations – such as from the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. As bodies like the UN and the IMF are involved in major decision-making that affect the world in terms of politics, economy and society, the exclusion is seen by these countries as contributing to their slower growth).
- The ‘Global North’ refers loosely to countries like the US, Canada, Europe, Russia, Australia and New Zealand, while the ‘Global South’ includes countries in Asia, Africa and South America.