

Bharat and the UNSC Question: Power, Legitimacy, and the Fear of Change

The debate about Bharat's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is often framed as a procedural reform issue. This framing is misleading. The real issue is political power—who holds it, who is unwilling to share it, and who benefits from keeping things as they were in 1945.

The UNSC is not just outdated; it is also misaligned with current power dynamics. Its unwillingness to change has turned it from a global security mediator into a place paralyzed by vetoes. India's exclusion is not a mistake; it is a deliberate choice made to preserve existing privileges.

The Structural Illegitimacy of the UNSC

The legitimacy of the UNSC relies on two key factors:

- Representation
- Effectiveness

It is failing on both counts.

Representation Failure

The permanent members (P5) represent:

- Less than 30% of the world's population
- A Euro-Atlantic bias from World War II outcomes
- No permanent representation for:
 - Africa
 - Latin America
 - The Islamic world
 - The Indic civilization

This is not diversity; it is exclusion by design. A council that claims to govern global security while leaving the Global South out of permanent decision-making cannot claim moral authority.

The veto system strengthens hierarchy, not consensus. It rewards historical conquest, not present contributions.

Effectiveness Failure

From Syria to Gaza, Ukraine to Myanmar, the UNSC has become:

- Paralyzed by competing vetoes
- Selective in its outrage
- Transactional in humanitarian efforts

The uncomfortable truth is that the UNSC no longer prevents wars; it waits until after they happen to debate them.

Why Bharat Terrifies the Status Quo

India's candidacy is resisted not due to a lack of merit but because it threatens established norms.

Bharat is Not a Client State

India does not depend on alliances. It follows a path of strategic autonomy, which unsettles power blocs used to compliant partners.

- It works with the Quad without being a military proxy.
- It trades with Russia without endorsing aggression.
- It collaborates with the West without giving up its policy sovereignty.

A permanent India brings unpredictability, which is unacceptable to dominant powers.

Bharat Is a Civilisational Power, Not a Tactical One

India does not think in terms of election cycles or alliances. It thinks in centuries.

This long-term view allows India to:

- Absorb global shocks without collapsing
- Provide stability without forcing ideologies
- Balance pragmatism with restraint

Such a power cannot be easily pressured and, therefore, cannot be easily controlled.

From Rule-Follower to Rule-Shaper

For decades, India was expected to follow global norms it had little role in creating. That era has ended.

India now:

- Shapes digital governance through DPI models
- Influences narratives on development finance
- Rewrites South-South cooperation frameworks
- Challenges Western control over “norm entrepreneurship”

The question is no longer whether India follows the rules. The real question is why a rule-shaper is kept out of the rule-making process.

Diplomatic Capital: India's Silent Strength

Unlike many other hopefuls, India does not demand loyalty. It builds trust.

Peacekeeping as Statecraft

India's contribution of over 200,000 peacekeepers is more than symbolic. It reflects:

- Risk acceptance
- Ethical restraint
- Ground-level legitimacy

India strives for peace without wielding veto power. This discrepancy highlights the moral contradiction of the current UNSC.

Vaccine Maitri: Strategic Compassion

When vaccine nationalism peaked, India took action.

This was not purely altruistic; it was soft power based on strategic empathy. India showed that true leadership during crises doesn't require domination.

G20 Presidency: Agenda Reframing

India's G20 leadership did something groundbreaking—it shifted the focus.

Instead of abstract climate discussions, India addressed:

- Development justice
- Debt distress
- Digital inclusion
- Energy transitions without economic harm

This is diplomacy aimed at the majority world, not just elite gatherings.

The Political Reality: Reform is Blocked by Design

Let's be honest.

UNSC reform requires:

- P5 consensus
- A voluntary giving up of veto privileges

No dominant power in history has willingly given up control.

The pushback against India's seat is not just procedural; it is a matter of existence. Allowing India a permanent seat could set a precedent. Africa might follow. Latin America may demand entry. The monopoly would end.

So, delays become a strategy.

Reform or Replacement: The Emerging Order

Institutions that resist change do not survive; they are bypassed.

We are already seeing:

- BRICS+ expanding economic collaboration
- G20 replacing G7 as the main steering group
- Regional security frameworks gaining importance

The UNSC risks becoming a symbolic relic, simply issuing statements while real decisions are made elsewhere.

India understands this transition better than most because it is both a part of the system and a challenger to it.

The Final Political Truth

India does not want a UNSC seat for prestige.

It seeks it to ground global order in demographic reality, moral balance, and strategic restraint.

Excluding India does not weaken India. It weakens the idea that global governance can be

legitimate.

Mic Drop

The UNSC can continue to protect the past of 1945.

Or it can embrace the realities of 2025.

Bharat will rise either way.

The only question is whether the United Nations rises with it or watches its relevance fade away.