

With or without the veto

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Some recent statements of Nikki Haley, the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, suggest, in a somewhat befuddled manner, that the American position on an expansion of the [Security Council is evolving to favour India's permanent membership](#) without the power of the veto. But instead of exploring the idea further with the U.S., the Indian "government sources" which responded to Ms. Haley took a combative position and stated that there was no change in India's stand that it should have "the same obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives as the existing permanent members of the Security Council." India seemed unaware that it had, together with the others in G-4 (Brazil, Germany and Japan), conceded that veto should not be an issue, at least for the present.

In March, Ms. Haley had candidly admitted that she did not know much about Security Council reform. In June, she seemed more informed, but not fully. "We have told all members of the UN that we are in support of Security Council reform, as long as they don't take our veto away," she told members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee during a Congressional hearing. If the only issue was protecting the veto of the U.S., the expansion could have taken place long ago, as no one had ever suggested that veto of the permanent members should be taken away. The new candidates were only demanding the same veto power for themselves, and the U.S. and other permanent members were firm in rejecting such demands.

India can help U.S to keep an eye on Pakistan, says Nikki Haley

Ms. Haley's latest comment was even more specific about the veto: "So, the key to getting India on the Security Council would have to be not to touch the veto." She said the U.S. was already on board, but there was need to focus on Russia and China, the two permanent members of the Security Council who do not want to see any changes.

If Ms. Haley's statements indicate the present thinking of the Trump administration, it is a definite advance in the U.S. position. When India put forward the proposal for an expansion of the non-permanent membership of the Security Council in 1979, the U.S. opposed it vehemently. But after the end of the Cold War, when the pressure mounted for expansion of permanent membership, the U.S. took the position that it could live with "one or two" additions to permanent membership, without identifying the countries.

Between the two options that then Secretary General Kofi Annan had given in his report, "In Larger Freedom" in 2005, the permanent members had supported "Model B", which did not envisage any kind of expansion of permanent membership. It provided for no new permanent seats but created a new category of eight four-year renewable-term seats and one new two-year non-permanent (and non-renewable) seat, divided among the major regional areas. "Model A" was placed in the report at the insistence of the Indian representative, Gen. Satish Nambiar. It provided for six new permanent seats without the veto, and three new two-year term non-permanent seats, divided among the major regional areas.

During his visit to India in 2010, President Barack Obama had said he looked "forward to a reformed UN Security Council that includes India as a permanent member." This gladdened India, but the U.S. delegation did not take any follow-up action at the UN.

The compilation of the views of member states, published two years ago, clearly indicated that the

U.S. merely favoured a “modest expansion”, without supporting any formula under consideration and no alteration or expansion of the veto. Unlike France and the U.K., the U.S. made no mention of support to India as a permanent member. Among the permanent members, the opinion of France was closest to India’s in the sense that it supported the addition of five new permanent members, including India, without any objection to veto being extended to them. The U.K. supported the G-4 without the power of veto. Russia, an old supporter of India, was non-committal and China indicated that the time had not come for any serious negotiations on the subject.

Ms. Haley’s statement opens up the possibility of permanent membership for India without veto. A draft resolution circulated by the candidates had already conceded that they would not expect to have the veto at least for 15 years. Thus a meeting point has emerged between the U.S. and G-4. But since it appeared that she had framed her comment for the consumption of Indian Americans, it looks like a PR exercise, nothing more.

India should pursue the lead Ms. Haley has given. If nothing else, the present impasse in negotiations will end and there will be new vigour in Security Council reform.

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The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President’s plan

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