

A PUSH FOR REFORM: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON UN REFORMS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

As the United Nations commences the 75th session of the General Assembly, the need for internal reforms to suit the 21st century could not be starker. Volkan Bozkir, the Turkish diplomat and politician who is the incoming president of the UNGA, has [voiced concern that the structure of the 15-member Security Council ought to be more democratic and representative](#). But action has been long overdue on the demand, especially from the so-called Group of 4 (G4) countries — Brazil, Germany, India and Japan — which advocate a permanent seat for all of them. Meanwhile, the veto powers that the UNSC's five permanent members enjoy is an anachronism in this age. This instrument is often wielded as a blunt weapon to shore up their geopolitical interests, regardless of the disastrous consequences for the victims of armed conflict. The push for reform gathered momentum following the unilateral declaration of war by the United States and the United Kingdom, against Iraq, in 2003. The General Assembly's 122nd plenary meeting in 2008 decided to facilitate the reform process through the Inter-Governmental Negotiations framework (IGN) on equitable representation as well as expansion of the UNSC. Though the General Assembly's adoption of a 2015 resolution to allow the IGN on the basis of a framework document generated some enthusiasm, it was dampened by the U.S., Russia and China being opposed to serious reform of the Council. The G4 bemoaned earlier this year that the IGN process might have outlived its purpose given the absence of a negotiating document which alone could provide a structure to the deliberations. In any case, the exercise has been deferred in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

India's election in June as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, obtaining 184 votes, was a diplomatic triumph, notwithstanding that it was the lone contestant for the Asia-Pacific seat. But in a sign of the difficulties ahead to achieve New Delhi's ultimate objective, reforms to the UN figured no more than as part of a broader vision in the declaration to commemorate the organisation's 75th anniversary. The political and economic architecture of the emerging global order that the allied powers shaped at the end of World War II has been altered since then. The UN remains unreflective of the current trajectory, especially in the strategic and economic arenas. The multilateral framework now faces an unprecedented challenge — to fashion a collective response to humanity's biggest problems, which include global warming and the pandemic. Paradoxically though, the post-war order faces an existential threat to its stability from the revival of nationalism across the globe, with some of the powers that enshrined common principles and rules willing to discard them. All countries must have the voice to influence policy.

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