

A Seat at the UN Security Council for India?

How the Indian Diaspora in the US may be key...

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Abstract



Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed his role as India's Head of Government in May 2014. **One of his initiatives has been his appeal for United Nations reform with a specific focus on India assuming a broader role, including a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.** While President Obama announced both in April and in September 2015 that he would support India having a permanent seat at the UN, the road to permanent Security Council membership for India, in spite of many reasons why this would make sense, will face obstacles because of the processes required to effect UN reform. The Indian diaspora notably in the United States may play a key role in allowing this to happen in the coming decade.

Main Arguments

Why should India be considered for a Security Council Seat?

1. It is the largest functioning democracy in the world and thus a potential model for the developing world.
2. It is the second most populated country in the world at 1.2 Billion+.
3. It is the seventh largest economy in the World in terms of nominal GDP, already exceeding the nominal GDP of one of the Permanent members of the Security Council (Russia). It is projected to exceed the nominal GDP of another Permanent member (France) by 2020.
4. It has the third largest military in the world and its military arsenal includes nuclear weapons.



*US President Woodrow Wilson,
"Creator of the League of Nations"*

The United States Senate voted 49-35 against Wilson's League of Nations in March 1920 and the US never joined. They voted 89-2 in favor of the United Nations. UN Reform of the Security Council will probably also require a Senate Vote

What are the obstacles that India faces in its effort to advance its efforts to gain a permanent seat at the Security Council?

1. While India is increasingly a major player in world events, its annual contribution to the the UN budget is still small compared to many other countries.
2. India will face resistance because of unsettled issues including the dispute between Pakistan and India over Kashmir.
3. India must also deal with the reality that P5 members do have veto power over any resolution of this type.
4. There is also the need to understand the particular relationship that exists between approval of such a resolution and the internal mechanisms for approval by each member state. In the case of the United States, for example, UN Reform, and most particularly Security Council Reform, will probably require approval of the United States Senate because the UN Charter constitutes a treaty and the original document required 2/3 Senate approval in 1945. In that case, the Resolution did receive support by a vote of 89 to 2. However, the League of Nations resolution when brought before the Senate in 1922 was roundly defeated by a vote of 35-49.

Conclusion

What does India need to do to make its effort more likely to succeed?

1. Do an overall assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of India's bid as outlined in the Main Argument. Strategize based on this.
2. Look at other factors that can also bolster India's position, for example, bringing on active support from those countries with a large Indian population to support India. These would include:

Guyana
Surinam
Trinidad and Tobago
Belize
Canada
Seychelles
Fiji
Mauritius
Singapore
Myanmar
Sri Lanka

3. Mobilize the Indian diaspora in the United States to lobby the Senate and the House of Representatives. There are almost 4 million people of Indian heritage in the United States. Learn from the diasporas of other immigrant populations in the US.

4. Identify potential allies among other countries that, like India, are seeking to have a permanent seat at the Security Council. There can be more than one country that is added to the SC:

Germany
Japan
Brazil
Nigeria
Iran
South Africa

5. PATIENCE. Await the moment of ripeness. **Indian Economist Raghavan Jagannathan points out that by 2025 India should have a GDP of between 4 and 5 trillion and in a position of power.**

Key Questions



- Why would it benefit India to make this a priority in its national strategic plan?
- What are India's key arguments in favor of assuming a Permanent Seat at the UN?
- What are the key obstacles that challenge those arguments?
- Who are the primary actors who will determine whether or not India is able to join the Security Council?
- What types of spoilers exist that may prevent this from happening?
- What strategy should India pursue in its efforts to gain permanent membership?
- What is the most reasonable timetable to set in pursuing this objective?

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