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Q20

"The reform process in the United Nations remains unresolved, because of the delicate imbalance of East and West and entanglement of the USA vs. Russo-Chinese alliance." Examine and critically evaluate the East-West policy confrontations in this regard.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS II · 15 marks · International Institutions

Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their structure, mandate.

Core demand of the question

- State why UN reform, especially the Security Council, is stuck
- Examine East-West confrontation and the USA versus a Russia-China pairing
- **Critically evaluate:** not only P5 vanity, but also Global South claims (including India's)
- Keep the text honest about deadlock

Revision summary

UNSC reform needs P5 ratification (**Article 108**); Intergovernmental Negotiations still lack an agreed text.

G4, Uniting for Consensus and the Ezulwini African claim block one another.

US vetoes and Russo-Chinese blocking on Ukraine, Gaza and other files show East-West (and North-South) entanglement.

The quote is right on deadlock; it underplays African and Latin American vetoes on who joins.

- **Practical movement:** longer elected seats, veto restraint on atrocities, GA strength - not a speech about imminent permanency.

Introduction

The United Nations was built in **1945** with a **Security Council that can bind the world** and a **veto for five winners of a war**. Reform has been 'imminent' for thirty years. It remains unresolved because those who hold the veto **will not vote to dilute it**, and because the rest of the world does not agree **who should join**. East-West conflict is the daily proof that the 1945 map still sits on 2025 crises.

Body**The unresolved process**

Intergovernmental Negotiations on UNSC reform have no negotiating text with numbers. **G4** (India, Japan, Germany, Brazil) want permanent seats. The **Uniting for Consensus** (Italy, Pakistan and others) group opposes new permanents. The **African Ezulwini Consensus** wants two permanent African seats with veto. The **P5** smile in speeches. **Article 108** of the Charter needs the P5 to ratify any amendment - a legal catch.

Working methods, peacekeeping money, and General Assembly **Uniting for Peace** (Resolution 377) are side doors. They do not replace an unrepresentative Council on Ukraine or Gaza.

East-West and the USA vs Russo-Chinese pairing

Cold War East-West was US-USSR. Today the Council's paralysis on **Ukraine** is Russia's veto plus Western arming of Kyiv. Paralysis on **Gaza ceasefire** texts has often been the **US veto**. **China** shields North Korea files and draws red lines on Taiwan language. A **Russo-Chinese diplomatic pairing is real in the Chamber: not a single army, but a shared interest in blocking US-led diktat**. The US and its allies still dominate finance, sanctions architecture, and many special-political missions. That is the "delicate imbalance": **Western operational weight, Eastern blocking power**, and no umpire.

- **Calling it only "East versus West" misses** North-South: debt, climate finance, and Palestine's GA majority. India votes with the South on some files and with the West on others. That is why India's permanent-seat case is both **equity** and **a problem for every existing P5 member**.

Critical evaluation

The quote is **right** that US-Russia-China entanglement freezes Charter change. It is **incomplete** if it implies that a warmer East-West would automatically admit India. **Japan** still meets a Chinese (and, historically, some regional) wall. **Brazil** meets a Mexican and Argentine frown. Africa has not named its two. Even a polite P5 would bargain **veto restraint** rather than veto extension.

- **Reform that could actually move: longer-term elected seats, a written veto-restraint** on mass-atrocity files (France has proposed; others have not agreed), **GA empowerment** on budget and on **Uniting for Peace**, and **a more honest Indian campaign** that builds African and Latin American numbers, not only Quad communiqués.

Until then, the UN will **work below the Council** - specialised agencies, humanitarian law, climate COP - and **fail at the Council** when a P5 interest is live. That is not a mystery of culture. It is **Article 27 plus Article 108**.

Flow diagram

Charter 108 -> P5 must agree must agree
 East-West crises -> Veto
 G4 India India -> No text
 Uniting for Consensus -> No text
 Ezulwini -> No text

Conclusion

UN reform is stuck because the veto-holders must consent to their own dilution and the rest cannot agree on new permanents. US, Russian and Chinese confrontations make that consent harder. India's case is just and still insufficient without a coalition that can live with a Charter the P5 will actually sign.

Facts & figures

Article 108 UN Charter

Amendments require two-thirds of the General Assembly including all permanent members of the Security Council.

Ezulwini Consensus

African common position demanding two permanent UNSC seats for Africa with the veto.

Uniting for Peace (Res. 377)

Allows the General Assembly to consider threats when the Security Council is deadlocked - a workaround, not a reform of the veto.

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