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Q1(e)

Discuss the structure and functions of UN Security Council.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · India and the UN System

India and the UN System: Role in UN Peace-keeping; demand for Permanent Seat in the Security Council.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the structure and functions of the United Nations Security Council
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

The Security Council has five permanent members with a veto and ten elected members for two years.

Nine votes including the P5 are needed on substance.

Chapter VI covers disputes; Chapter VII covers threats, sanctions, and force.

Peacekeeping is a Council practice that the 1945 text did not fully name.

The veto makes the Council a concert of major powers as well as a legal organ.

Introduction

The Security Council is the UN organ charged with primary responsibility for international peace and security. Its structure of five permanent members and ten elected members, and the veto, shape every function it performs.

Body**Structure**

- **Article 23 of the Charter provides five permanent members:** China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- Ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, with regard to contribution to peace and to equitable geography.
- Each member has one vote. **Article 27** requires nine affirmative votes, including the concurring votes of the permanent members, on non-procedural matters. That is the veto.
- The Council is so organised as to be able to function continuously. A member must be able to send a representative at all times.

Functions

- It investigates disputes and recommends adjustment under Chapter VI.
- Under Chapter VII it may determine a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of aggression, and decide on measures not involving force (**Article 41**) or force (**Article 42**).
- It authorises sanctions, arms embargoes, and most United Nations **peacekeeping** operations, which sit in practice between Chapters VI and VII.

- It recommends admission of new UN members and nominates the Secretary-General together with the Assembly's appointment.
- It may refer situations to the International Criminal Court where the Rome Statute allows, as a political-legal function added after 1945.

Working facts

- Subsidiary bodies include sanctions committees and the **Military Staff Committee**, which has never operated as the Charter's armed-force design intended.
- Reform debates, including India's claim treated in Paper II Section B, target the 1945 map of power, not the idea of a security council as such.

Flow diagram

UN Charter -> P5 veto
UN Charter -> Ten elected members
P5 veto -> Chapter VI and VII
Ten elected members -> Chapter VI and VII
Chapter VI and VII -> Sanctions PKO force

Conclusion

The Security Council's structure is P5 plus ten elected members, with a veto on substance. Its functions run from pacific settlement to sanctions, force authorisation, and **peacekeeping**. Effectiveness follows great-power agreement, not the text alone.

Facts & figures

Article 24

UN members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for international peace and security.

Article 27 veto

Non-procedural decisions require concurring votes of the permanent members.

Articles 41 and 42

Non-forcible measures and forcible measures after a Chapter VII determination.

Peacekeeping

Council-mandated operations with troop contributors; India has been among the largest historical contributors.

P5

China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, reflecting 1945 victors, with Russia as successor to the USSR seat.

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