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Q5(a)

"India must strive to become a semi-permanent member of the UNSC, rather than a permanent member without the right to veto." Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · 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

- State India's long-standing UNSC permanent-seat claim (G4, **veto** politics)
- **Explain the alternative:** semi-permanent membership versus permanent seat without **veto**
- **Comment:** semi-permanent with real influence may be more attainable; a **veto**-less permanent seat is prestige without the core power

Revision summary

India's G4 line seeks a permanent UNSC seat; the P5 have no wish to multiply vetoes.

A permanent seat without **veto** is prestige without the instrument that makes permanence matter in crises.

Semi-permanent renewable long terms would increase India's presence and coalition practice, closer to elected-term diplomacy.

The comment is right as a ranking of second-best outcomes, not as a demand to abandon the public permanent-seat claim.

What India needs is a Council that cannot ignore it; recurrence plus coalitions may beat a mute nameplate.

Introduction

India has sought a **permanent seat** on the **United Nations Security Council** as part of a reformed Council that matches twenty-first-century power. The statement that India should instead strive to become a **semi-permanent member**, rather than a **permanent member without the veto**, is a comment on **what is worth having**. It should be taken seriously. It should not be read as a surrender of India's case.

Body

The existing Indian line

India argues from population, democracy, peacekeeping, and a nuclear-and-economic weight that the 1945 P5 does not reflect. The **G4** (India, Japan, Germany, Brazil) has asked for permanent seats. The **Uniting for Consensus** group, including Pakistan and Italy, has blocked easy expansion. African states want two permanent seats of their own. The **veto** is the core of P5 privilege. Existing permanent members have no incentive to multiply vetoes that could bind them. A 'permanent' Indian seat **without veto** has therefore appeared in some compromise talk. It would give a continuous presence and prestige. It would not give the

power that makes the Council oligarchic.

Semi-permanent as a design

Semi-permanent membership usually means **longer, renewable elected terms** - for example eight-year seats for a small set of major states, possibly with consecutive re-election, unlike the present two-year non-renewable elected six. India would sit more often, build chair-experience, and still need coalitions. That is closer to how India already operates when it wins an elected term: as a **voice of the Global South** on terrorism, development and Council working methods, not as a **veto** player.

Comment

A permanent seat without **veto** is **status without the instrument** that defines permanence. In crises - Ukraine, Gaza, Syria - the **veto** is the fact. India would be a distinguished non-P5 with a better chair. **Semi-permanent** membership, if the term is long and renewable, can yield more **practical influence** than a hollow permanent badge, and it is more negotiable with the Coffee Club and with Africa.

The statement is **too neat** if it asks India to drop the permanent-with-**veto** claim in public diplomacy. That claim is leverage. It is **right as a ranking of outcomes: veto-less permanence is a poor second prize**; a designed semi-permanent seat with real recurrence may be better than that prize. India's interest remains a Council that cannot ignore Delhi. Frequency plus coalitions can serve that interest more than a nameplate beside a mute gavel.

Flow diagram

India UNSC aim -> Permanent with veto

India UNSC aim -> Permanent without veto

India UNSC aim -> Semi-permanent renewable

Permanent without veto -> Prestige weak power

Semi-permanent renewable -> Usable recurrent influence

Conclusion

India should not treat a **veto-less** permanent seat as victory. The **veto** is the Council's hard currency. A well-designed semi-permanent, renewable seat could give more usable presence than an empty permanent title. The public claim for full permanence can still be kept as bargaining stock.

Facts & figures

G4

India, Japan, Germany and Brazil campaign for permanent seats in a reformed Security Council.

Uniting for Consensus

Group including Italy and Pakistan that prefers more elected seats over new permanent members.

Veto

Article 27 privilege of the P5; the practical core of 'permanence' in deadlocked wars.

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