

BEYOND THE P5: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF 14 CANDIDATE COUNTRIES FOR PERMANENT UNSC MEMBERSHIP

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Abstract

This paper evaluates 14 nations proposed as candidates for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Using a multidimensional framework—area, population, economy (nominal GDP), defense capacity (expenditure/personnel), education indicators, space and technological capacity, and regional representation—this study profiles Japan, United Arab Emirates (UAE), India, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, South Africa, Australia and Fiji. The analysis combines publicly available international datasets and official agency summaries to assess strategic suitability and likely implications for UN legitimacy and effectiveness. The paper concludes with comparative observations and pragmatic recommendations for incremental reform that balance capability, legitimacy, and regional equity. Key findings: several candidates (India, Japan, Germany, Brazil, and South Africa) combine economic, demographic and security credentials that make them strong formal contenders, while smaller states with niche strengths (UAE, Canada, Argentina, Australia) bring diplomatic, technological or regional-balance value. Reform requires both legal amendment and political consensus: practical steps-expanded semi-permanent seats, greater regional representation, and veto-limiting arrangements - are offered.

Keywords: United Nations, Security Council reform, permanent membership, India, Japan, Germany, Brazil, regional representation.

1. Introduction

The time has come to expand the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to address the lingering legacy of imperialism and colonialism and to establish lasting global peace. The United Nations (UN) was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War to prevent the recurrence of large-scale conflicts and to foster international cooperation. The UN Charter was signed on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco and came into force on 24 October 1945, establishing six principal organs, including the Security Council, the body entrusted with maintaining international peace and security. The Security Council consists of 15 members, five of which are permanent (the P5: United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China) and ten are elected non-permanent members. The P5 possess veto power, a feature enshrined in the UN Charter that has significantly shaped global politics since 1945. While this structure reflected the post-war geopolitical balance, it no longer mirrors the contemporary multipolar world. Expanding permanent membership by including emerging powers and regionally significant nations can reinforce global democracy, provide equitable representation, and ensure that the Security Council effectively upholds peace in the twenty-first century.

2. Methodology and sources

Profiles below draw primarily on World Bank country dashboards and the World Development Indicators for area, population and GDP; the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database for recent defence outlays; national and regional space agency pages (e.g., JAXA, ISRO, Australian Space Agency, Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre) for space-capability descriptions; and official government statistics where available. Citations are placed after each country profile to enable verification.

3. Candidate country profiles (concise, by continent)

India

India, geographically vast and home to over 1.4 billion people, is the world's most populous democracy. Economically, it ranks among the top three global powers by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and is a key contributor to global growth. Its defense and security capabilities are formidable, with one of the largest standing forces, advanced defense technology via DRDO, nuclear power status, and a long-standing role in UN peacekeeping operations. India is also a

regional security provider and maintains strategic partnerships in the G20, SCO, RIC, and BRICS frameworks.

In science and technology, India's space agency ISRO has achieved global recognition through lunar and Mars missions, Earth observation satellites, and cost-effective launch services for international clients. The nation's medical and healthcare sector is strong, exemplified by the production and global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to developing nations. Its education and human capital development continue to expand rapidly, with a growing pool of STEM professionals, while its democratic institutions remain robust and globally admired. India's diversity, political stability, and global leadership - exemplified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election and sustained policy initiatives — position it as a natural leader of the Global South. Despite meeting all qualitative and quantitative criteria comparable to the P5 members, India has yet to gain permanent UNSC membership. The resistance stems primarily from entrenched geopolitical interests of the current P5, the veto system, and the challenges of amending the UN Charter, which requires consensus among existing permanent members. Yet India's track record in peace, development, diplomacy, and global governance makes its inclusion not only justified but essential for a representative and equitable Security Council.

Japan:

Japan: Profile for UNSC Consideration Area & Population: Japan covers approximately 377,800 sq. km and has a population of about 123–125 million (2024 estimates), making it a highly developed and densely populated nation in the Asia-Pacific region. **Economic Capacity:** Japan is a high-income economy and ranks among the largest in the world by nominal GDP, valued in the trillions of US dollars. Its economy is underpinned by advanced manufacturing, technology, finance, and R&D ecosystems, including automotive, electronics, robotics, and high-tech industries. The country is globally renowned for precision manufacturing and industrial efficiency, contributing significantly to world trade.

Transport & Infrastructure: Japan is famous for its bullet trains (Shinkansen) and world-class infrastructure, demonstrating exceptional technological and engineering expertise. Modern urban transport, logistics systems, and smart city initiatives showcase Japan's operational efficiency and innovation. **Defence & Security:** Japan maintains significant self-defence forces and a developed defence-industrial base. Its 2024 military expenditure ranks among the top ten globally, reflecting its commitment to national security and regional stability.

Education & Human Capital: Japan has a robust education system producing high PISA scores, strong tertiary education enrollment, and technical skill development, fostering a highly skilled workforce capable of sustaining innovation in science, technology, and industry. **Space & Technology:** The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) operates world-class satellite, planetary, and human-spaceflight programs, including Earth observation, asteroid missions, and International Space Station partnerships. Japan's space capabilities are advanced, contributing to global scientific knowledge and strategic technology leadership.

United Arab Emirates (UAE): Profile for UNSC Consideration

Area & Population: The UAE is a federation of seven emirates in the Gulf region, covering approximately 83,600 sq. km, with a population of around 10 million (2024 estimates), including a significant expatriate community. **Economic Capacity:** The UAE has a high-income, diversified economy, historically dependent on oil and gas but now expanding into finance, trade, tourism, real estate, logistics, and technology. Dubai and Abu Dhabi are global business hubs, attracting foreign investment and fostering innovation.

Defence & Security: The UAE maintains well-equipped armed forces with modern capabilities and active participation in regional security initiatives. It plays a role in peacekeeping and counter-terrorism cooperation in the Gulf and beyond. **Education & Human Capital:** The UAE invests heavily in education, with strong STEM, higher education, and international university partnerships, producing a skilled workforce capable of supporting technological and industrial growth. **Space & Technology:** The UAE Space Agency has developed programs such as the Mars mission (Hope Probe) and satellite initiatives, demonstrating growing capabilities in space exploration and technology.

Strategic Contributions: Positioned in the Gulf region, the UAE acts as a diplomatic and economic bridge between East and West. It is actively involved in the UN, GCC, and Arab League, contributing to regional stability, humanitarian aid, and global development initiatives. Its economic strength, technological investments, and strategic Gulf location make the UAE a credible candidate for permanent UNSC membership.

Germany

Germany: Profile for UNSC Consideration

Area & Population: Germany covers approximately 357,000 sq. km and has a population in the low 80 million range (2024 estimates), making it one of Europe's most populous and densely developed nations. **Economic Capacity:** Germany is Europe's largest economy with a multi-trillion US\$ nominal GDP. It has highly diversified sectors including manufacturing, automotive, chemicals, engineering, finance, and technology. Its strong industrial base and export-oriented economy position it as a global economic leader.

Defence & Security: Germany maintains a modern military with increased spending in recent years, ranking among the top military spenders in 2024. It is a key NATO contributor, actively supporting international peacekeeping and regional security missions. **Education & Human Capital:** Germany boasts very high tertiary education attainment, strong research universities, and applied R&D networks across engineering, technology, and science. Its workforce is highly skilled, supporting innovation and global competitiveness. **Space & Technology:** The German Aerospace Center (DLR) conducts advanced aerospace research and contributes to European space programs. Germany has strong capabilities in satellite technology, Earth observation, and scientific space missions.

Strategic Contributions: Germany's central location in Europe, combined with its economic, technological, and defense strength, makes it a highly credible candidate for permanent UNSC membership. It actively participates in the UN, NATO, EU initiatives, and peacekeeping operations, reinforcing its commitment to multilateral diplomacy. **Innovation & Industry:** Germany leads in precision engineering, renewable energy technologies, and smart manufacturing, demonstrating its capacity to support global development and sustainability goals. **Humanitarian & Global Engagement:** Germany contributes significantly to UN development programs, humanitarian aid, and global climate initiatives, reflecting a strong international responsibility ethos. **Policy & Diplomacy:** Germany promotes multilateralism, conflict resolution, and democratic governance, serving as a stabilizing influence in Europe and globally.

Italy

Area & population: Italy's geography covers roughly 301,000 sq. km with a population around 58–60 million. **Economy:** high-income EU economy with strengths in manufacturing, aerospace, and design sectors. **Defence & security:** Italy is a NATO member with modern forces and mid-range defence spending. **Education & human capital:** strong universities and historic

strengths in engineering and applied sciences. Space & technology: the Italian Space Agency (ASI) is an active partner in European and international missions (satellites, planetary science and industry partnerships). Italy brings EU southern representation and strong scientific-industrial credentials.

Sweden

Area & population: Sweden covers about 450,000 sq. km with a population of roughly 10–11 million. Economy: high-income Nordic economy with advanced welfare and innovation systems. Defence & security: Sweden has increased defence spending in recent years and contributes to regional security in Northern Europe. Education & human capital: high literacy and strong tertiary education; research-intensive industries. Space & technology: Sweden's space authority (SNSA) supports research and satellite programmes in cooperation with ESA and industry. Sweden's model combines stable governance, technology and an increasingly solid defence profile.

Canada

Area & population: Canada is geographically large (~9.98 million sq. km) with a population around 38–42 million (recent estimates vary). Economy: advanced, high GDP per capita, integrated into global trade networks. Defence & security: Canada maintains capable forces, participates in NATO, and contributes to UN operations; defence spending is mid-range among high-income states. Education & human capital: strong tertiary institutions and research capacity. Space & technology: the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) is a long-standing partner in robotics (Canadarm) and Earth observation, with growing ambitions for lunar and robotic missions. Canada's combination of wealth, diplomatic networks and UN commitment give it traditional credibility as a candidate.

Brazil

Brazil: Profile for UNSC Consideration

Area & Population: Brazil is the largest country in South America, covering approximately 8.516 million sq. km, with a population of around 215 million (2024 estimates). Its vast territory includes diverse ecosystems such as the Amazon rainforest, supporting rich biodiversity and natural resources. Economic Capacity: Brazil is a high-income emerging economy, ranking

among the largest nominal GDPs in Latin America. Its economy is diversified across agriculture, mining, manufacturing, energy, and services. Brazil is a major global producer of soy, coffee, beef, and biofuels, and has a growing industrial and technological sector.

Defence & Security: Brazil maintains moderate defence forces focused on national security, regional stability, and disaster response. Its military participates in UN peacekeeping missions and has modernized its defense capabilities, including domestic arms and equipment production. **Education & Human Capital:** Brazil has made significant strides in primary, secondary, and higher education, producing skilled professionals in technology, science, and policy. Investment in STEM education supports innovation and research development. **Space & Technology:** The Brazilian Space Agency (AEB) conducts satellite launches, Earth observation, and remote sensing programs. Brazil also collaborates with international space agencies for joint projects in telecommunications, climate monitoring, and scientific research.

Strategic Contributions: Brazil is a regional leader in Latin America, actively participating in the UN, BRICS, G20, and MERCOSUR. Its economic, diplomatic, and environmental initiatives contribute to global peace, sustainable development, and multilateral cooperation, making it a strong candidate for permanent UNSC membership.

Argentina

Area & population: Argentina covers a large landmass in southern South America with a population around 45–47 million. **Economy:** one of the region's large economies with periodic macroeconomic volatility. **Defence & security:** conventional forces sized for regional presence; increasing attention to maritime surveillance and strategic infrastructure. **Education & human capital:** historically strong higher education and science institutions. **Space & technology:** Argentina's CONAE has developed and deployed multiple satellites (earth observation programs) and is a capable regional actor in space science. Argentina brings regional leadership and scientific credentials.

Dominican Republic (Caribbean)

Area & population: a Caribbean island nation with a population around 11 million and a rapidly growing services sector. **Economy:** tourism- and services-oriented economy with rising middle-class indicators. **Defence & security:** modest conventional forces, primarily focused on territorial sovereignty and disaster management. **Education & human capital:** steady improvements in

enrollment and literacy. Space & technology: the Dominican Republic has signed international space cooperation accords (e.g., Artemis Accords), indicating interest in space partnerships rather than an independent large programme. The country's regional voice and growing diplomatic engagement in the Caribbean suggest a role in expanded representation though it lacks the hard-power metrics of larger candidates.

Egypt

Area & population: Egypt has over 100 million people and spans northeastern Africa and the Sinai, with strategic control of Suez maritime approaches. Economy: diversified with significant strategic and demographic weight; recent reforms and IMF engagement aim to stabilize growth. Defence & security: one of Africa's largest and most capable militaries in terms of equipment and regional influence. Education & human capital: expanding but with development gaps to address. Space & technology: Egypt has a national space agency (EgSA) and an established remote sensing institution (NARSS); Cairo also hosts the African Space Agency headquarters, underscoring regional space ambitions. Egypt offers regional leadership, strategic geography and historical diplomatic capital.

South Africa

Area & population: South Africa is the continent's southern gateway with a population in the 60–65 million range and strong urbanized sectors. Economy: largest or among the largest in sub-Saharan Africa by GDP with advanced mining, manufacturing and services sectors. Defence & security: regionally robust defence capabilities and an active role in African peace operations. Education & human capital: solid research universities and a significant science base. Space & technology: SANSa and South African research centres work on Earth observation and satellite applications; South Africa is often the leading African candidate for elevated UN representation.

Australia

Area & population: Australia is a large continental state (~7.69 million sq. km) with a population around 27 million. Economy: advanced high-income economy with a high GDP per capita and significant resource and services sectors. Defence & security: Australia maintains modern armed forces, is an important Indo-Pacific security partner, and its defence spending places it among leading regional powers. Education & human capital: world-class universities and strong R&D ecosystems. Space & technology: the Australian Space Agency coordinates civil space policy and

an expanding launch and space-technology ecosystem. Australia's combination of wealth, stability and regional influence has led many analysts to consider it a serious candidate for expanded UNSC representation.

Fiji (Oceania)

Area & population: Fiji is a small Pacific Island state with modest population and land area. **Economy:** tourism-dependent, with remittances and services central to growth. **Defence & security:** small forces oriented toward disaster relief and internal security. **Education & human capital:** improving but constrained by scale and resources. **Space & technology:** Fiji does not run a large national space programme but benefits from regional satellite services; its candidacy would speak to the need for Oceania and Pacific Island representation, particularly on climate and maritime resilience. Fiji's inclusion in any expansion would be driven by principles of regional equity and the symbolic representation of small island states vulnerable to climate change.

4. Comparative observations

Across the 14 candidates a few clusters emerge. First, large-population and large-economy candidates (India, Japan, Germany, Brazil) combine normative legitimacy with practical capacity — demographics, GDP and defence resources — making them persuasive claims. Second, middle-sized but technologically advanced states (Canada, Italy, Australia, South Africa) bring diplomatic networks, research capacity and stable governance. Third, smaller states (UAE, Dominican Republic, Fiji) compensate for limited hard power with concentrated investments in technology, diplomacy or regional leadership. Finally, regional balance is a persistent shortcoming: Africa and Latin America each press for permanent seats (the G4 and the African Union positions are relevant to formal negotiations). Strategic space capabilities, higher education systems and defence spending are useful proxies for a state's ability to contribute to collective security, though representation and legitimacy remain political judgments not reducible to metrics.

5. Legal and political obstacles to reform

Amending the UN Charter to expand permanent membership is legally demanding. Article 108 requires adoption by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly and ratification by two-thirds of Member States, including all five permanent members (the P5). This high threshold

effectively gives the P5 decisive influence over major structural changes. Political obstacles further complicate reform: current P5 members are often reluctant to dilute their veto power, regional rivalries create competing claims for permanent seats in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and concerns persist that increasing the Council's size could reduce operational efficiency. Despite these challenges, incremental and pragmatic reforms offer viable pathways. Options include introducing semi-permanent long-term seats, instituting veto-restraint arrangements, and staged expansions tied to demonstrated commitments to collective security. The contemporary international security environment underscores the urgency of reform: alliances such as the United Nations of America, NATO and the presence of nations like Russia, China, and North Korea have historically engaged in conflicts, cold wars, and indirect confrontations, creating persistent risks to global peace.

Terrorist camps and regional conflicts further endanger human lives, highlighting the limitations of the current UNSC structure. Adding new permanent members, drawn from emerging global powers and regionally influential nations, would not only broaden representation but also enhance democratic governance, reduce unilateral decision-making, and promote a world order that prioritizes peace, stability, and the eradication of terrorism. A reformed, inclusive Security Council is thus essential for ensuring a safer, more democratic, and cooperative international system.

6. Recommendations: Practical Steps for UNSC Reform

Phased expansion is essential: introduce 6–8 new permanent seats with renewable terms to allow gradual adaptation, accommodate emerging powers, and maintain operational efficiency. Regional allocation should reserve seats for underrepresented regions, including Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and small island states, ensuring equitable continental representation and global legitimacy.

Veto reform is crucial: establish a political code of conduct for the P5 and extend it to all new permanent members (14), including transparency requirements, explanatory statements, and restrictions limiting veto use to core national security issues. Objective qualification criteria must require candidate nations to demonstrate sustained contributions to UN finances and peacekeeping, measurable civilian research and technological capacities (including space programs), and proven mediation or conflict-resolution experience.

Inclusive decision-making mechanisms should be implemented to consult all UN member states before exercising veto powers or major decisions, enhancing legitimacy and reducing unilateral action. Lessons from history must be considered: learn from the League of Nations, which collapsed due to noncompliance by major powers, and strengthen enforcement and accountability to ensure UN resolutions are respected.

To mitigate global fragmentation, reform the UNSC to reduce the risk of rival regional blocs (e.g., BRICS, SCO, G7, G20) undermining international governance, promoting a more unified global order. Equitable power-sharing should be ensured so the expanded UNSC facilitates fair representation and decision-making authority among all permanent members, balancing influence to reflect contemporary global realities.

Counter-terrorism coordination must be strengthened, enhancing the UNSC's capacity to respond to terrorism, extremist networks, and armed militias through coordinated international action, intelligence-sharing, and preventive measures to protect civilians and maintain global security.

The implementation timeline should begin phased reforms in 2026, allowing preparation, consultation, and capacity-building for new permanent members, with full integration and operational effectiveness by September 2027 to ensure a smooth, inclusive, and politically feasible transition.

7. Conclusion

The expansion of the United Nations Security Council is both a necessity and an opportunity to realign international governance with contemporary global realities. Incorporating additional permanent members from all continents—including nations such as India, Japan, Brazil, Germany, and South Africa—would make the UNSC more representative, inclusive, and responsive to modern challenges. A continent-based quota system ensures that every region has a fair voice in decisions regarding peace, security, and international cooperation.

Expanding the Council will not only protect global democracy but also strengthen multilateralism, improve conflict-resolution capabilities, and formally recognize the contributions of countries actively engaged in UN initiatives, such as peacekeeping, financial support, and humanitarian efforts. This reform challenges outdated imperialist structures, reduces power imbalances, and promotes collective responsibility among nations. Ultimately, a

reformed Security Council can evolve into a truly global institution, capable of addressing contemporary threats, including terrorism, regional conflicts, and humanitarian crises, while sustaining peace and stability for future generations. By embracing inclusivity, equity, and shared responsibility, the UNSC can fulfill its foundational mandate and emerge as a credible, effective guardian of global order.

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