

Reshaping the UN Security Council

Synopsis: Being a result of wartime thinking of a few victorious nations, the U.N.O does not reflect the wishes and aspirations of majority of the nations of the world. In essence it has been, more or less, like an exclusive club of a handful rich nations led by the U.S. they are permanent members with veto powers in Security council, the all-powerful decision-making U.N. Organisation. These 5 have been virtually dictating terms to the world body to serve their own ends and neglect of the Third World nations. The need to change the structure of the Security Council was being felt for a long time to make it democratic and more representative. Now, it has been agreed to expand and reshape the council and to increase the number of its permanent members from 5 to 10, and that of non-permanent members from 10 to 14. India has agreed to the proposal. Only time will tell how meaningful and effective this restructuring proves.

The United Nations Organisation was raised on the ruins of the League of Nations. Thus, it was an outcome of wartime thinking which has hardly changed in spite of the lapse of 51 years of its existence. The U.N. has failed on so many fronts mainly because of the West's hegemony and because the U.S. Foots the UN bill to the extent 25 percent. Besides, the U.S. owes UN 1.3 billion dollars. Obviously, the U.S. and its satellite powers have been calling the shots to a great disadvantage to several countries. They have a big clout and are using this premier world body to suit their own narrow ends.

As the premier world organisation, the U.N. should represent all the nations of the world. It should reflect the hopes, aspirations, wishes and concerns of its member-nations without being dictated by a few wealthy and developed countries. It should form its policies, programme and priorities in keeping with the wants and wishes of the developing half of the world. But the consideration of a chosen few as more equal than the rest has resulted in glaring lopsidedness and imbalances. Consequently, many nations have had been feeling discriminated against. Countries like Cuba, Iraq and North Korea etc. have been direct victims of this discrimination.

Addressing the 12th NAM Ministerial Conference in New Delhi in April, 1997 the then Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda expressed his concern about interpretation of globalization as serving the interests of the powerful economies and corporations. He said that globalization, to be meaningful be accompanied by the empowerment of all economies. The NAM countries want to be equal partners in this process and want to protect their right to manage their

right to manage their vital interests. Pleading strongly for an equitable restructuring of the U.N., he urged that UN reforms must meet the aspirations of the Third World countries.

Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, expressing the identical views, said in the conference that he was seeking to make the “UN more responsive to the needs of its membership and more able to tackle the real issues of the world today.” The world body stands today at the cross-road of old wartime thinking and the geopolitics realities of 1947 on the one hand and restructuring and reshaping reflects the democratic norms on the other hand. The comprehensive restructuring of the U.N. is the need of the hour. The discriminatory policies, programme and their implementation to the disadvantage of several members have now reached their extreme limits and cannot be tolerated any further. The U.N. can play more effective, meaningful and widely acceptable role only if it is adequately modernised, changed and made relevant commensurate with changed situation and priorities of the world.

It has been felt for many years that the U.N. setup needs change and reform to make it really representative and democratic. Now time has come when these changes and transformation are effected to respond to the present-day world realities.

The Security Council of the U.N is the most powerful organ of the world body. It is this body which is mainly responsible for the maintenance of world peace and security. Its decisions are of vital importance and of far-reaching consequences. It is powerful because there is centralization in decision making and policy-framing in the matter of peace and security. It consists of 15 members -5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members are elected for a term of 2 years by the General Assembly by a two-thirds majority.

The Security Council is so important and powerful and yet there is no representation to the Third World Countries. As a result, the chosen few, led by America, have been dictating terms in regard to policies, programme and priorities. As such, a wide gap between the UN's objectives of equity, justice, peace, disarmament and their implementation become inevitable. There has been threefold increase to 184 members in the UN's general membership since it came into being and yet the permanent membership of the Security Council is confined to the original 5 and to top it all they have veto power. This is not justifiable at all in the new world scenario. India is the second largest populous country after China and yet, she has no place in the Council. China could get a permanent seat because it was an independent country in 1945 when U.N. was formed and India could not be because it was British colony and in the chains of

slavery. America, Britain, France and Russia got their coveted seats because they were the victors and masters of the world they surveyed. This situation smacks of post-World War II diseased monopolistic mentality. This has already done much harm to the cause of world, peace, harmony and security. However, now some wisdom has dawned on its members and they have agreed to restructure and expand the Security Council to make it more representative and reflective of the wishes and aspirations of the community of nations.

The General Assembly President, Ismail Rizali of Malaysia on March 20, 1997 put on the Assembly's agenda the expansion and reconstruction of the Security Council. Accordingly, the number of permanent members would now be increased to 10 from 5 and that of non-permanent members to 14 from 10. Thus, the total strength of the Security Council would rise to 24 from 15. The expansion of the Security Council has been in the air for the last several years, but it dispensation; the new permanent members will be without veto power. The resolution proposes 5 new Council permanent members to be elected, one from Africa, Asia and Latin America respectively and two from the industrialized world. Under the second category, the selection of Japan and Germany is a foregone conclusion.

India has agreed in principle to support the U.N. Draft resolution seeking to expand the Council. India hopes to find a place in the Council as one of the new permanent members on its own merit and strength, however, some kind of opposition cannot be ruled out from her traditional arch rival Pakistan which may try to master support from other Muslim countries.

Only the time will tell how this expansion is able to remedy the various ills the council has been suffering from. Will this reshaping make the Security Council more democratic, balanced, representative and fair or just unwieldy, cumbersome and indecisive?