

UNSC & Permanent Seat for India: RSTV – Big Picture

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Context:

- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu expressed that **India has a rightful claim** to the **permanent membership of the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC)**.
- The latest **UNSC meeting on Kashmir** which was initiated by **China** showed that India will have to show more strength to stop China from using UNSC against India's interest.

India's Claims:

India's claims to a permanent seat in the UNSC are based on the following grounds:

- Represents **one sixth of the global population**.
- Among the **founding members** of the U.N.
- Always **upheld its principles and credentials** while some other countries consider the organisation as merely a talk shop.
- Impressive contribution towards the **N Peace Keeping Force (UNPKF)**.
- An **emerging economic power**.
- An **independent foreign policy** which is very often **not in sync with that of the five permanent members of UNSC (P5)**. Ex.: At first, India opposed authorising the use of force in **Libya** and then abstained from voting on the matter.
- A substantially increasing **international clout**.
 - Victory at the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** election in which the **K lost** for the first time.
 - **International day of Yoga** which was celebrated by 177 countries including several Islamic countries.

Other Candidates:

- **G4** was created in the mid-2000s to voice a collective campaign of **India, Germany, Japan and Brazil**.
 - Even though India perceived herself a weak campaigner, it came out to be the strongest.
 - In 2016 Delivering a **joint G4 statement**, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, **Syed Akbaruddin**, stated that the grouping was **eager for a forward discussion** on UNSC permanent membership and reforms.
- **Japan:**
 - A 'fanatic' **opposition from China** combine with a recent **decline of the economic clout** weakens the claims of Japan.
 - **Chinese** diplomats have informally **urged India to leave G4** so that they would be able to support India alone (and not along with Japan).
- **Germany:**
 - Opposition from the **UK, France**, and other European powers such as **Spain and Italy**.
 - A **declining economic clout** within Europe.

- Opposition from Africa, Latin America and Arab countries **against the entry of another European country.**
- **Brazil:**
 - Opposition from **Argentina and Mexico** (a country with a GDP comparable to that of Brazil).
- **Africa:**
 - One of the biggest **stumbling block** in terms of UNSC expansion, since there are **internal divisions** over who should be the candidate.
 - **South Africa** is economically powerful but **Nigeria** tops in terms of population. **Egypt** also wants to be a candidate.
 - With an African counterpart on board, G4 would have been **G5**.

China's Opposition:

- Diplomats have blamed China for having quietly carried out a **campaign to stop India's efforts** at the UNSC.
- **Pakistan Factor:**
 - China perceives Pakistan as an **all-weather friend** and equally important as India.
 - Since the **GDP of Pakistan** is around **one-tenth that of India**, it is impossible for them to survive without Chinese support.
 - China recently came up with the issue of **Kashmir at UNSC** because Pakistan made a hue and cry over it.
 - However, China-Pak relationship is **weakening** off late
 - China is finding it **difficult to continue bailing out Pakistan** because it keeps on returning to economic instability.
 - China even told Pakistan to move to **IMF** to take the **hard course on economic recovery**.
 - **Xi Jinping** had informally requested **Narendra Modi** to have a dialogue with Pakistan in order to reduce the tensions.
 - Even at the **UNSC**, China might have reached a level of saturation with respect to supporting Pakistan, as demonstrated by a change in stance over the **Hafiz Sayeed** and **Kashmir** China is more concerned more about **Ladakh** than Kashmir, in a **geopolitical perspective**.
 - Further, China is more or less **isolated in the UNSC** as **13 to 14 members continue to support India** in such matters. Even a statement was not released by UNSC over the Kashmir issue.
 - Xi's **upcoming visit to India** will probably continue to maintain a **diplomatic agility** with India, except for an uncertainty over the Kashmir issue.
 - However, China would try to **continue the conversation** with India, because if Kashmir is the defining issue, the very conversation will stop.
 - China may even **put pressure on Pakistan** to continue dialogues with India.
 - India can leverage such **opportunities**.
- **Wuhan Warmth:**
 - In 2018, a landmark summit at Wuhan increased **confidence** in the relations between India and China.
 - However, it was only a **temporary truce**.
 - It was called an **informal summit** and **did not address** any differences over issues related to **Dalai Lama, border dispute, Pakistan**
 - It was effectively an attempt to **lower the heat** contributed by the **Doklam crisis**.
 - It also helped to concentrate more on **elections** (with respect to India) and an imminent **trade war with U.S** (with respect to China). China also reached a temporary settlement on the less important **Senkaku island** dispute with Japan by allowing a meeting in the Chinese soil for the first time.
 - Clearly, **Wuhan was not about the two countries getting along, but about agreeing to not get into each other's hair.**

- The temporary truce will probably continue because both the countries have other issues of priority; **Kashmir issue and economic slowdown** (for India) and **trade war with U.S** (for China).
- Even during the Wuhan summit, there were **proxy struggles at Maldives, Sri Lanka**, etc., regarding the affiliation (towards India and China) of the incumbent Governments in those countries.
- To conclude, Indo-Chinese relationship is **not strong enough to build a trust and convergence** that is required by matters such as UNSC reforms.
- China will **continue to oppose** India's entry and probably be the last one to agree, if a consensus is reached.

Views of Other P5 Members:

- **France** views that it is a **strategic need** that India be a part of the permanent circle of UNSC.
- **Russia** also **never refused** support to India.
- **USA** generally holds the view that **bigger countries with bigger population** need to be present in the permanent council.
- US never said that they wouldn't support India.
 - They support **Japan and Brazil**.
 - However, they would like India to be **on their side rather than being independent**.
 - **Trump** would not have any particular problem since the **Republicans** are **hostile to UN as a whole** and not interested in investing in such organizations.
 - **Democrats**, on the other hand, are more interested in the idea that **multilateral structures like UNSC should reflect the existing power structure**.
 - So, instead of wasting resources on ensuring Trump's support in the context of UNSC reforms, it is better to invest the same on **ensuring India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**, etc.
- However, when it comes to the **actual processing**, **none of the P5 want to expand the UNSC**. They only **entangle every candidates** into the webs of **passive statements of support and opposition**.

Balance of Power:

- International institutions reflect the balance of power **at the time of their creation**.
 - Composition of P5 reflects the **power structure of 1945**.
- According to the P5 members, the **original premise of the UN charter** is **idealistic and realistic**.
 - It gave power to the five powerful countries of that time.
 - Without such an arrangement, UN would not have **succeeded or even functioned**.
- Ironically, multilateral institutions are forced to **rely on status quo powers to actually change the status quo**.
- They will not change the status quo because it will **undermine their power itself**.
 - At present, **global power hierarchies are changing** or experiencing an **inflection point**.
 - The west is facing an **economic decline**, which **they are not confirming**.
 - Historically, declining powers had never given up their advantages easily.

Other Challenges:

- Apart from bilateral dialogues, and committee recommendations, there is **no actual movement** in the direction of UNSC reforms, even though the parent organization, UN, had reformed in the past few years.
- The process must go through a systematic way which is **time consuming**.
- There are problems within **different groups of candidates**.
 - **Group of 77** (a coalition of 134 developing countries within UN) prefers **text based negotiations** but other countries do not agree. However, out of the 122 countries who gave

- their comment on text negotiations, 113 supported reforms in the UN and the UNSC.
- **Uniting for Consensus (Coffee Club)** members counter the claims raised by the G4 countries.
- The issue of expanding the UNSC and the Text Based Negotiation is expected to come up in the next **UN General Assembly session** in September.
 - Like every year, those countries with a direct stake will take up the issue of UNSC reforms forward.
 - But, the issue is **not generating as much enthusiasm** as it used to be.
 - Countries have gone through a number of motions and they have realised that it will be a much more **complicated task** than expected.

Way Forward:

- India has to continue its demands by **mobilising a favourable public opinion** at the global level.
 - It is important to maintain the support we receive from the majority of the UNGA and UNSC members.
- As former Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh** expressed, our priority must be to achieve a **sustained growth rate of 10% for at least ten years**, so that we will be eventually invited to be a permanent member of the UNSC.
- Hence, instead of over-investing on our **diplomatic capital**, India need to devise strategies to become a more **economically, militarily and diplomatically** important power.
- The **P5 members** need to abide by the original premises of the UN charter and agree to **reflect the present global power structure** in the composition of permanent UNSC members.

Alternatives:

- India was also in favour of remaining **without a veto power for an initial period** of, say ten years, if her claim for permanent membership is accepted.
- An idea of a **combined European seat** emerged in the mid-2000s.
 - But, after the initiation of **Brexit**, UK is not keen to surrender the seat, which is one of their few remaining sources of international prestige.
 - France will not agree to merge a seat with Germany either.

Conclusion:

- **A time will come** when India will be a permanent member of UNSC, but there is **no immediate possibility** for things moving forward in our favour.
- Our intent should be based on leveraging the sheer heft of our **economic, political and military weight** to become an inevitable part of all significant multilateral conversations.
- **International community** has started to look towards India in a way much better from what it used to be.
- If the trend continues, India would eventually be a part of the **P6**.

