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India's UNSC 2028–29 Campaign: Strengthening Global South Representation and Advancing Reform of Multilateral Governance

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Recent Developments:

- India formally launched its campaign for a **non-permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) seat for 2028–29** on **13 July 2026** at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
- External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** launched the candidature under the **SHANTI** framework, meaning **Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity**, and presented India as a candidate committed to a secure, peaceful and equitable international order.
- The election for the **2028–29 term** is scheduled for **June 2027**, when India and **Tajikistan** are expected to compete for the single available seat from the **Asia-Pacific Group**.
- If elected, India will serve on the Security Council for the **ninth time**, having previously served during **1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, 2011–12 and 2021–22**. The official UN record confirms these eight previous terms.
- India's campaign is closely connected with its broader demand for **comprehensive UNSC reform**, including expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership categories.
- India's campaign priorities include **Global South representation, contemporary peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, maritime security, climate action, clean energy transition, responsible technology governance and effective multilateralism**.
- India has also received international support for its candidature. **Australia, Brazil and Fiji**, among others, have publicly supported India's candidature for the 2028–29 non-permanent seat, while also supporting India's claim for permanent membership in a reformed Council.

United Nations Security Council: Composition and Structure:

Composition:

- The **United Nations Security Council** is the principal organ of the United Nations responsible for maintaining **international peace and security**.
- The Council consists of **15 members**, comprising **5 permanent members and 10 non-permanent members**.
- The **5 permanent members**, namely **China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States**, possess the **veto power**.
- The **10 non-permanent members** are elected by the **United Nations General Assembly** for **two-year terms**, with five members elected every year.
- The non-permanent seats are distributed among regional groups to ensure geographical representation.
- **African States:** 3 seats.
- **Asia-Pacific States:** 2 seats.
- **Latin American and Caribbean States:** 2 seats.
- **Western European and Other States:** 2 seats.

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- **Eastern European States:** 1 seat.
- The regional allocation reflects the principle of equitable geographical representation within the Council.

Election Process:

- Non-permanent members are elected by the **United Nations General Assembly** through a **secret ballot**.
- A candidate must obtain a **two-thirds majority of members present and voting** to secure election.
- Non-permanent members cannot be immediately re-elected for another consecutive term.
- The elected members participate in all Council deliberations and possess voting rights, although they do not have the veto available to permanent members.

Core Functions of the UNSC:

Maintenance of International Peace and Security:

- The Security Council is empowered to address situations that threaten **international peace and security**.
- It can investigate disputes and recommend appropriate methods for their **peaceful settlement**.
- It can call upon parties to comply with provisional measures intended to prevent escalation of conflicts.

Enforcement Powers:

- Under **Chapter VII of the UN Charter**, the Council can determine the existence of a threat to peace, breach of peace or act of aggression and take measures accordingly.
- Such measures may include **economic sanctions, diplomatic restrictions and other non-military measures**.
- In appropriate circumstances, the Council can authorise **collective military action**.
- The Council also authorises and mandates **UN peacekeeping operations**, although peacekeeping itself is not explicitly mentioned in the UN Charter.

Wider Institutional Functions:

- The Council recommends candidates for the appointment of the **UN Secretary-General**.
- It participates in the process of recommending the admission of **new UN members**.
- Its decisions and resolutions influence international responses to **armed conflicts, terrorism, proliferation, humanitarian crises and threats to international peace**.

India and UNSC Membership:

India's Previous Terms:

- India has served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council **eight times** since independence.
- Its previous terms were **1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, 2011–12 and 2021–22**.
- The proposed **2028–29 term would therefore be India's ninth tenure** on the Council.
- India's repeated election reflects considerable diplomatic support for its role in multilateral institutions, although repeated non-permanent membership does not automatically translate into permanent membership.

Present Regional Contest:

- India is competing with **Tajikistan** for the single Asia-Pacific Group seat available for the 2028–29 term.
- The contest highlights the importance of **regional diplomacy, bilateral engagement and coalition-building**, because the election is ultimately decided by the wider UN membership.

SHANTI Framework: India's Campaign Priorities:

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Secure and Peaceful World:

- India has presented its candidature around the objective of building a **secure, peaceful and equitable world**.
- The approach emphasises **dialogue, diplomacy and consultation** rather than unilateral coercion.
- India seeks to project itself as a country capable of reconciling divergent interests within multilateral institutions.

Global South Representation:

- India intends to provide a stronger institutional voice to the **Global South** on issues of international peace and security.
- India's **Voice of Global South Summits** have provided a platform for developing countries to articulate common concerns and development priorities.
- India's campaign argues that international institutions should better reflect the **contemporary distribution of population, economic weight and geopolitical influence**.

Future-Ready Peacekeeping:

- India has historically been one of the major contributors to **UN peacekeeping operations**.
- According to the government's account at the campaign launch, India has contributed nearly **300,000 personnel to around 50 UN peacekeeping missions** since the organisation's inception and currently has more than **4,300 personnel deployed across 10 missions**.
- India therefore seeks to use its peacekeeping experience to promote peacekeeping that is responsive to **new security technologies, asymmetric threats and changing conflict environments**.

Technology and Emerging Security Threats:

- India has highlighted the need to maximise the benefits of technology while preventing its **misuse and harmful application**.
- Emerging technologies such as **artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and cyber capabilities** are creating new dimensions of international security.
- India's campaign therefore links technological progress with the need for **responsible governance and international cooperation**.

Maritime Security:

- India has identified **safe and secure oceans** as an important component of international peace and economic stability.
- Maritime security is particularly relevant for India because the country is located at the centre of the **Indian Ocean Region** and depends heavily on maritime trade and energy routes.
- Protection of maritime communication routes is also important for **food, energy and supply-chain security**.

Counter-Terrorism:

- India seeks stronger international action against **terrorism and terrorist financing networks**.
- Its campaign emphasises the need to restrict the financial, logistical and technological resources that sustain terrorist organisations.
- Counter-terrorism remains a major area where India seeks stronger and more consistent international cooperation.

Climate and Sustainable Development:

- India has linked international security with **climate action, climate justice, clean-energy transitions and sustainable development**.

- Climate-related disruptions can intensify food insecurity, displacement, resource competition and economic vulnerability.
- Integrating development and security perspectives can therefore strengthen the effectiveness of multilateral responses.

Why UNSC Membership Matters for India:

Greater Role in Global Governance:

- Membership provides India with a direct institutional platform to influence discussions on **war, peace, sanctions, terrorism, peacekeeping and international security**.
- It enables India to participate in shaping resolutions and international responses to major crises.
- Membership also strengthens India's ability to build **issue-based coalitions** with developing and developed countries.

Advancement of Global South Interests:

- India can use its Council membership to raise concerns relating to **development, food security, energy security, debt, climate change and equitable global governance**.
- India's development partnerships across Asia, Africa, the Pacific and other regions provide a broader diplomatic base for this role.

Support for Permanent Membership:

- Successful elections to the Council strengthen India's argument that it enjoys **broad diplomatic acceptability and has made sustained contributions to the UN system**.
- However, non-permanent membership alone cannot secure permanent membership because permanent expansion requires broader agreement on **UN Charter reform**.
- India therefore treats its 2028–29 candidature as part of a larger strategy for **reforming the Security Council**.

India's Case for UNSC Reform:

Changing Global Realities:

- The Security Council was created in **1945**, when the international distribution of political and economic power differed substantially from the contemporary global order.
- Major regions of the Global South remain underrepresented in the permanent membership structure.
- India argues that the Council must better reflect **contemporary geopolitical and economic realities**.

Expansion in Both Categories:

- India supports expansion of both **permanent and non-permanent membership categories**.
- India argues that merely increasing elected membership would not fundamentally alter the concentration of decision-making authority among the existing five permanent members.
- India works with the **G4**, comprising India, Brazil, Germany and Japan, in support of Security Council reform. India and Brazil have also coordinated through the **L.69 Group** on reform issues.

Representation of Developing Countries:

- India advocates greater representation for **Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean**.
- A more representative Council could enhance the legitimacy of its decisions and strengthen confidence in the multilateral system.

- India's position is therefore linked with the broader principle of **democratisation of global governance**.

Challenges Before India:

Regional Competition:

- India faces direct competition from **Tajikistan** for the Asia-Pacific Group seat.
- Regional support cannot be assumed merely on the basis of India's economic size or geopolitical importance.
- India must therefore sustain diplomatic engagement with **small states, developing countries and regional groupings**.

Geopolitical Rivalries:

- India's relations with major powers can influence voting behaviour within the UN.
- Divergent interests among the **United States, China, Russia, European countries and developing states** can complicate coalition-building.
- India must maintain strategic autonomy while simultaneously securing sufficient support for its candidature.

Divergent Global South Priorities:

- The Global South is not a homogeneous political bloc.
- Developing countries have different interests regarding **trade, climate finance, development finance, energy security, conflicts and strategic alignments**.
- India must therefore pursue an inclusive diplomacy that converts broad political goodwill into concrete electoral support.

Structural Limitations of the UNSC:

- The **veto power** of the five permanent members remains the most significant structural constraint on Council effectiveness.
- Major geopolitical disagreements can produce **deadlock or delayed collective action**.
- India's participation can improve representation but cannot independently overcome structural veto-based limitations.

India's Diplomatic Track Record:

Peacekeeping:

- India has a long record of participation in UN peacekeeping and has contributed personnel to numerous missions across different regions.
- This record provides India with an important credential for its claim to a greater role in **international peace and security**.

Global South Diplomacy:

- India's **Voice of Global South Summits** have attempted to institutionalise dialogue among developing countries.
- During India's **G20 Presidency**, India also supported the inclusion of the **African Union as a permanent member of the G20**, demonstrating its emphasis on broader representation in global institutions.

Development Partnership:

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- India's development cooperation extends across **Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean**.
- Such partnerships provide diplomatic capital that can support India's campaign for multilateral positions.

Way Forward:

Sustained Electoral Diplomacy:

- India should pursue an **early, sustained and inclusive campaign** rather than relying solely on its international stature.
- Bilateral outreach should be combined with engagement with **regional organisations, small island states and developing countries**.
- India should identify the specific development and security priorities of different voting groups and build issue-based partnerships.

Global South-Centred Diplomacy:

- India should continue presenting itself as a **bridge between developed and developing countries**.
- Its campaign should prioritise concerns such as **food and energy security, development financing, climate justice, terrorism and maritime security**.
- India should ensure that Global South advocacy produces concrete diplomatic outcomes rather than remaining primarily rhetorical.

Multilateral Reform:

- India should use the 2028–29 campaign to maintain momentum for **comprehensive UNSC reform**.
- Coordination with the **G4, L.69 and African partners** can strengthen the reform coalition.
- India should support a pragmatic, results-oriented reform process while resisting attempts to preserve the status quo indefinitely.

Credible Security-Council Contribution:

- If elected, India should focus on **consensus-building, preventive diplomacy and practical solutions** to international crises.
- Its tenure should demonstrate that greater representation can also produce **more effective and responsible decision-making**.
- A successful tenure would strengthen both India's immediate diplomatic influence and its longer-term claim for permanent membership.

Conclusion:

- India's campaign for the **2028–29 UNSC non-permanent seat** is more than a routine electoral exercise because it forms part of India's larger effort to reshape the architecture of global governance.
- The **SHANTI framework** combines India's traditional emphasis on peace and diplomacy with contemporary priorities such as **Global South representation, future-ready peacekeeping, maritime security, counter-terrorism, technology governance and climate justice**.
- India's principal advantage lies in its **large economy, diplomatic reach, peacekeeping record, Global South partnerships and long-standing commitment to multilateralism**.
- Its principal challenges include **regional competition, geopolitical rivalries, divergent interests among developing countries and the structural limitations created by the veto system**.
- A successful 2028–29 tenure, supported by sustained reform diplomacy, could strengthen India's case that the Security Council requires a **more representative, legitimate and effective institutional structure**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

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Constitutional and Institutional Linkages:

- **UN Charter, Chapter V:** Establishes the **Security Council** and defines its composition and functions.
- **UN Charter, Article 23:** Provides for the composition of the Security Council and elected membership.
- **UN Charter, Article 24:** Assigns the Council primary responsibility for maintaining **international peace and security**.
- **UN Charter, Article 27:** Establishes the voting procedure and the special position of the permanent members.
- **UN Charter, Article 109:** Provides a framework for consideration of amendments to the Charter, relevant to broader **UN reform debates**.

India's UNSC Tenures:

- **1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, 2011–12 and 2021–22.**
- **2028–29:** Proposed ninth tenure, with election scheduled for **June 2027**.

Key Groupings:

- **G4:** India, Brazil, Germany and Japan; advocates expansion of permanent and non-permanent UNSC membership.
- **L.69 Group:** A cross-regional coalition of developing countries supporting comprehensive Security Council reform.
- **Global South:** Developing and emerging countries seeking greater representation and influence in global governance.

Mains Analytical Framework:

- **Issue:** India's candidature for the 2028–29 UNSC term.
- **Opportunity:** Greater influence over international peace, security and global governance.
- **Strength:** Peacekeeping record, Global South diplomacy and growing geopolitical weight.
- **Challenge:** Regional competition, geopolitical rivalries and veto-based structural constraints.
- **Reform demand:** Expansion of both **permanent and non-permanent categories**.
- **Way forward:** Sustained coalition-building, inclusive diplomacy and outcome-oriented multilateral reform.
- **Core objective:** Transition from a **post-1945 power structure** towards a more **representative, legitimate and effective multilateral order**