



# India as a Non-permanent Member of the UN Security Council in 2011-12

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- India's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2011/2012 is an acknowledgement of its growing importance in global governance and was made possible by the mature support extended by regional rivals such as Pakistan and China.
- During its UNSC membership India will stick to its traditional foreign policy values and goals: the non-use of force; respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states; and the peaceful settlement of disputes.
- India will assist the Council in focusing on existing and emerging, non-traditional threats, such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and piracy.
- India has always preferred to be part of the democratic majority helping in the adoption of broadly acceptable decisions and resolutions. In the past, India has not voted against any resolution, but it has resorted to abstentions only to signal its reservations. Even when it abstained, India had the company of other member countries.
- The presence of India, Brazil, and South Africa in the Council this year may yield meaningful team work on Iran and other issues of shared concern. They could become the nucleus of a coalition on salient issues, notwithstanding some differences in emphasis between them on some issues and approaches.

## Significance of India's Election to the UNSC

India's assumption of a non-permanent member's seat in the UN Security Council in January 2011 to serve a two-year term has been widely welcomed, for three reasons. First, relative to other candidates (such as Germany and Portugal) India won the seat this time with the highest number of votes polled in the General Assembly. Indeed, this impressive electoral popularity was made possible by the mature support extended by regional rivals such as Pakistan and China. Pakistan voted in India's favour setting aside its differences in bilateral relations on such issues as Kashmir. Equally notable is China's support because of the growing bilateral trade and the tranquil borders with India. However, one should not rush from this specific positive development to assume that these two countries (or others in the region) would extend ready support to India's aspiration to permanent membership in the Council. Of course, from within the Asian region, India did not have to face any competitor for the seat, thanks to Kazakhstan's gesture of withdrawing its candidature. Second, India's election is to be viewed as a well deserved acknowledgement of its growing importance in terms of global economic and security governance, especially in view of the fact that India is the second fastest growing economy in the world. Third, India has come back to the Security Council after a long wait of nearly 20 years; the waiting period represented, in fact, its long wait for an elusive permanent seat in an expanded Security Council.

### India's Past Track Record in the UNSC

In India's view, the need for an organ such as the Security Council, endowed with power matching its responsibilities, is beyond question. As an organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for the principal purpose of securing world peace, the Council is exceptional, in terms of its composition, mandate, powers, decision-making processes and relations with other UN organs. At the 1945 San Francisco conference, India showed a good deal of interest in matters relating to the Security Council's composition. Of the utmost interest to India at that time was the basis of election of non-permanent members. The Indian delegation advocated weightage for factors such as population, industrial potential, willingness and ability to contribute to international peace and security, and past performance, as well as the need for represen-

tation for various regions when selecting states to sit on the Security Council. India did not press for a vote on its amendment, since the Sponsoring Powers accepted the suggestion and modified their original proposals.

Previous to the present term, India was elected six times to serve a two-year period as non-permanent member of the Security Council. Except for the first time, when it occupied the seat earmarked for the Commonwealth group, it held the seat on every other occasion on behalf of the Asian group. One of those terms – 1984-85 – coincided with India's chairmanship of the Nonaligned Movement. The years it served coincided with »testing times« for the Security Council and the UN in general. Major conflict situations arose during periods in which India was a member: the Korean War in 1950–51, the two Arab-Israeli wars in 1967 and 1973, Israel's first invasion of Lebanon (1977), and the first Gulf War against Iraq (1991). On all these occasions, India's role was that of a mature and moderate member, helping the Council to meet the expectations of the international community in accordance with the spirit and letter of the Charter.

### Principles and Pragmatism of India's Approach in the UNSC

India will pursue its foreign policy values and goals in the Security Council, just as it does in other organs of the United Nations. During the time of its non-permanent membership of the Security Council, the Indian delegation has traditionally espoused certain fundamental principles that should govern relations among Member States. These are the principles of not resorting to use of force, respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The principle of the inadmissibility of territorial acquisition by force is absolutely fundamental to India's approach. It is these principles of non-use of force and non-intervention in internal affairs which guided India in the Security Council in responding to various proposals on the ongoing situation in Libya. While India expressed its reluctance to resort to enforcement measures such as the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya, it agreed to join the condemnation of the brutal use of force against the unarmed anti-regime protesters and supported the imposition of selected sanctions against Gaddafi's ruling clique, in deference to the views expressed by the accredited representatives of Libya.

As for the possible regional focus in India's role in the Security Council during its current term a number of nuances are worth mentioning here. On the one hand, India's stated position is that military action by regional organisations and arrangements cannot be construed as a desirable and viable alternative to the universal procedures of the Security Council, especially in terms of enforcement action. That does not mean, however, that India is insensitive to regional sentiments, especially in Africa. Quite rightly, India indicated in the February 2011 deliberations that the Council should be guided by the views of the regional consultative bodies, such as the Arab League, on the recent political developments in North Africa (particularly Libya) and the Middle East. As for the questions in the Asian theatre, the concerns about nuclear proliferation in North Korea or Iran, and the Israel-Palestine peace talks and peacebuilding in Afghanistan are not just regional, but trans-regional in significance. Therefore, India would like these issues to be approached on the basis of peaceful and diplomatic engagement rather than through the counter-productive coercive route.

### Priority Concerns for India at the UNSC

In other words, India is unlikely to raise issues motivated by narrow, exclusive national interests and prejudices. It would rather assist the Council in focusing on both existing and emerging threats to collective security. India is alive to the context of the post-Cold War era, especially in the climate of insecurity characterised by the growing salience of non-traditional threats, other than external aggression and intervention. Terrorism, proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and piracy are at the top of the new agenda India would be interested in. It is fitting that India (a country on the frontline of the struggle against terror perpetrated against innocent civilians) is now chairing the Counter-Terrorism Committee established by the Council in pursuance of Resolution 1373 (2001). In a general sense, it is these issues, along with the problem of piracy (witnessed off Somalia), which will receive attention from India in its present term. It is probable that when India assumes the Presidency of the Council in August this year, India will press for a ministerial or summit meeting to take up one of these issues.

Alongside participatory and transparent management of peacekeeping missions deployed in intractable intrastate conflicts (such as the Democratic Republic of Congo,

Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire), the facilitation of regular, timely and full consultations with relevant stakeholders, such as troop contributing countries (TCCs), is an issue in which India has demonstrated a good deal of interest. This is understandable, because India has expressed unhappiness that it has remained on the sidelines of Council peacekeeping decisions, despite the fact that the country has for decades been among the top five troop contributors to UN mandated peace operations. In other words, India will press for concrete steps to promote trilateral cooperation involving the TCCs, the Security Council and the Secretariat – as suggested by ongoing deliberations on the 'New Horizons' process.

### Preference for Consensus Building

As an original member of the UN, India has brought to bear its vast diplomatic experience whenever it has served on the Council. Its toolkit of tactics includes the introduction of draft resolutions with others as co-sponsors, promoting identity of views among fellow non-aligned states, as well as the non-permanent members serving on the Council, building and joining consensuses with the rest of the Council Members, and so forth.

It is worth noting in this connection that India has always preferred to be part of the democratic majority helping in the adoption of broadly acceptable decisions and resolutions. On the one hand, India went along with 59 per cent of the resolutions adopted either unanimously or without a vote during the previous six terms of its non-permanent membership prior to the current term in the UNSC. Even with regard to the aggregate of 113 adopted resolutions (41 per cent) which gave rise to division, India cast an affirmative vote on 101 (89 per cent) of them. On no more than a dozen occasions did it stand aside without joining the concurring majority. To be sure, India has not voted against any resolution, and has resorted to abstentions only to signal its reservations. Remarkably, moreover, India was never a loner as an abstaining country; it always had the company of other member countries, such as China, the former Soviet Union or fellow non-permanent member countries on many occasions. The latest such instance is India's abstention along with Germany, Brazil, China and Russia on UNSC Resolution 1973 that authorised enforcement of a no-fly zone and other complementary measures to protect civilians in Libya in March 2011. In all likelihood, this will continue in India's latest tenure in the Council during 2011-12.

## Possibilities for Working Partnerships

India's self-perception in 2011 is more robust than ever. Whether India will make a difference to the deliberations and outcomes in the UNSC during its current tenure will depend less on solo heroics than on the effective partnerships and positive consensus it is able to build and sustain, involving, first, fellow non-permanent members and then the permanent members. Unlike in the past, the non-aligned group is not relevant as a framework for coalescence among non-permanent members. Nevertheless, the presence of India, Brazil and South Africa in the Council this year may yield meaningful teamwork on issues such as Iran (although it is not clear how the United States and some other Western member countries would receive such initiatives) and the linkages between security and development. They could become the nucleus of a larger coalition on salient issues, notwithstanding some differences in emphasis among them.

At the same time, there are possibilities for cross-cutting partnerships involving IBSA and Germany or even the G4 countries (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) that could try to take advantage of their membership in the UNSC and push for a text in the Council supporting fast tracking of negotiations to enlarge the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Council membership. This course of action is admittedly not easy to pursue. But at the same time, it would be hard to imagine now that India will choose to go solo by abandoning the G4 negotiating positions and promote its own candidature at the expense of other co-aspirants. Besides, some (if not all) existing permanent members could become very useful partners in taking up and clinching issues of general interest, such as monitoring links between terror networks and money laundering, preventing non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction or effective coordination of action against piracy as a threat to maritime security. This is the surer way of shaping the Council as the effective and legitimate kernel of global security governance, without being reduced to an extension of US foreign and security policy interests.



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