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The Prospect of India's Permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council

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I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Security Council was formed in 1945 with the aim of maintaining international peace, security and promoting friendly relations between countries. The UNSC was established by 51 countries and after 76 years the number has increased up to 193 countries. However, the changing world dynamics indicate that there is an immediate need for reforms in the UNSC as the organization does not represent the developing world and their needs. The structure of the UN Security Council is biased and unrepresentative due to the existing veto power that is shared among the five permanent members- China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and France. The poor credibility of the UNSC is reflected in large number of unresolved civil conflicts, security challenges and recent delay in declaring Coronavirus as pandemic. Thus, such challenges and failures highlight the urgent need for reforms and expansion of the Security Council to improve the credibility and effectiveness of the organization.

A. Selection of Topic

India was elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the tenure 2021-2022, with a thumping majority. Considering the contemporary scenario, it will be helpful for India to expand its geopolitical and geo-economic influence in South Asia. Four permanent members support India's permanent membership in the Security Council, while China is opposing it and has used its veto power to block India from becoming a permanent member. In such circumstances, the present study helps in focussing on issues and challenges related to India's claim for permanent membership in the UNSC. Moreover, the topic has been selected because of personal interest of the researcher in Global affairs.

B. Importance of Study

India is an emerging global power and is a potential candidate for permanent membership in the UNSC. India's inclusion in the Security Council would ensure balance of power and representation of South Asia in the UNSC. The aim of the study, in general, is to examine factors that justify India's claim for permanent membership and the future prospects of India's permanent seat in the Council. The article attempts to understand the existing challenges that India needs to overcome in order to fulfil its aspiration of becoming a permanent member in the Security Council. The study is important because no study has been conducted so comprehensively that it covers all issues relating to India's permanent membership claim. The research analyses, discusses and justifies India's claim for permanent membership based on aspects like India's size, population, contributions to UN organs and peacekeeping operations, economic and military capabilities and her role in raising voice on various related issues like terrorism, climate change and world peace.

C. Objectives

1) To study the role played by India in UNSC to maintain world peace and security.
2) To study and analyse India's prospects for permanent membership of UNSC.
3) To examine challenges in the path of permanent membership of India.
4) To lay down roadmap that can be helpful for permanent membership of UNSC.

D. Research Questions

1) What is the justification of India's claim for UNSC permanent membership?
2) What are the challenges before India for permanent membership of UNSC?

E. Hypothesis

1) India's claim for permanent membership in UNSC is justified.
2) There are obstacles in the path before permanent membership of UNSC

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F. Research Methodology

The present study is based on qualitative and descriptive research. The research is largely based on using the Secondary method for collection of data. In identifying sources for the research, various databases were used. The topic related scholarly articles were derived from Google scholar and Jstor. The ERIC, SAGE and GALE databases were also used to locate articles from notable journals relevant to the research questions. Reliability and validity were used to evaluate the resources used for the research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The United Nations Security Council is the most powerful and essential organ of the UN. It aims to shape global governance, prevent conflicts, promote human rights and maintain international peace and security. The UNSC is the only organ that can adopt legally binding resolutions for resolving conflicts and maintaining peace. Moreover, the Security Council fulfils its purpose through peacekeeping missions, international sanctions and even military actions.[1] It consists of 10 non-permanent members elected by the General Assemble and 5 permanent members- China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and France, having the veto power. This structure of the UNSC was shaped by the winners of the Second World War. The power, political and economic realities and security issues have undergone a sea change since the end of the Cold War period. The contemporary changing realities have broadened the tasks and responsibilities of the Security Council. Thus, this changing world scenario reflects the need for new ways of dealing with the security problems. The rising intra-state and inter-state conflicts have created a need for reforms in the council. [2]

The UNSC has inadequate representation of the Asian, Latin American and African populations. The developing world has constantly expressed its dissatisfaction towards the structure and functioning of the Security Council, as it is dominated by the P5 members and does not truly represent the international community. India and many other nations like Japan, Germany and Brazil have claimed a permanent seat in the Security Council to make it more democratic and representative. [3]

India bids for a permanent seat at the UNSC to improve its position as a global power and defend its national interests. India also believes that due to the rise of multipolar world order, the global realities and circumstances have greatly changed and thus, create a need for reforms.[4]

India's candidature is legitimate and justified as it fulfils all the objective criteria for the permanent membership. India has the world's second largest population and has been associated with the UN and its activities since inception. It has served eight times as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. Moreover, India is the world's largest democracy, fastest growing economy and a predominant leader in South Asia.[5]

India has always been a strong voice for the developing world and has insisted on becoming a permanent member of the Security Council to not only represent the developing nations, but also contribute towards resolving the rising conflicts and issues in the world.[6]

India has significantly contributed to various UN peacekeeping operations in Korea, Gaza, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Cambodia, Congo, Kosovo, Iran, Yemen, Iraq and many others since 1950. India is one of the longest serving and largest contributors of troops in the world.[7] The Indian armed forces have always helped the countries of the Indian Ocean in resolving conflicts and peace missions. India's contributions in almost 71 UN peacekeeping missions has not only increased her presence in the UN, but also presented a strong case for permanent membership.[8]

India has made notable contributions to various organs of the UN and has represented the interests and needs of the underdeveloped and developing countries. Moreover, India has performed remarkably on the world stage. It is the founder of Non-Alignment and member of various international groups like G8+5 group, G-15 nations, Group of 77, ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and many others.[9]

India's bid for a permanent seat of the UNSC is primarily based on her role as a leader among the developing countries and her position in the contemporary international politics. In addition to that, India has chaired five-member Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and three major international commissions for supervision in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in 1954.[10]

The Indian foreign policy has constantly supported the protection of human rights and environment. India initiated the International Solar Alliance in 2015 to reduce the exploitation of fossil fuels and encourage the use of solar energy. This initiative helped India gain worldwide recognition as a responsible and environment-friendly country.[11] India is a permanent member of International Atomic Energy Agency and a responsible nuclear power.

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India has achieved global recognition in the past decades by virtue of its population, economic growth, technological advancements, military capabilities, contributions to peacekeeping operations and cooperation towards counterterrorism. India introduced the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in 1996 to combat terrorism. Moreover, India chaired various committees to tackle terrorism like Counter Terrorism Committee, Libya Sanction Committee and Taliban Sanction Committee.[12]

The world opinion has increasingly supported and advocated India's permanent membership in the Security Council. Many nations around the world like France, Britain, Russia, Australia, UAE, Malaysia, Maldives, Bangladesh, Chile, South Africa, Indonesia and many African nations have supported India's claim to the council.[13]

India fulfils the objective measures of size, participations, economy, military capacity and world status to become a permanent member, however, its ambition has not been fulfilled so far because of the UN Charter and veto power of P5 members of the UNSC.[14]

China has been the biggest roadblock in India's path of getting a permanent membership. According to the Chinese, imposition of negotiations for reforms in haste doesn't promote consensus and unity.[15]China has criticized various initiatives and negotiating texts for Security Council reforms. In other terms, the inclusion of India in the UNSC permanent membership is an uphill task due to the veto power of China which had been previously used to prevent the adoption of any reform process. Moreover, opposition from the coffee club is another threat to India. Pakistan and Italy have openly opposed the expansion of permanent membership in the Security Council, as they believe that it would make the body ineffective and undermine the democratic principles based on periodic elections.[16]

India became a Nuclear Weapon State in 1998 and is highly criticized by the UNSC and many countries for not signing the treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

India lacks enough resources needed for multilateral diplomacy and the membership with G4 has limited her scope to negotiate a position as a great power. India's contribution to the UN budget is also less as compared to other developed countries.

India needs to overcome such barriers as it is a capable candidate for the permanent membership due to the country's civilisation, historic contributions to the UN, globally impacting geography and demography, leadership roles in South Asia and economic progress.[17]

It is necessary for India to expand its global influence by improving relations with the P5 nations, especially China, participating in resolving disputes and conflicts, joining various international security regimes, supporting human rights and participating in human security issues. India must play an active role in the UN and garner support of countries around the world to emerge as a global leader.[18]

III. ANALYSIS

The Security Council reflects the global power structure of 1945 as five permanent members- China, Russia, USA, UK and France enjoy the privilege of veto power. This veto power has made the council undemocratic, unrepresentative and ineffective. The permanent members have supreme power and authority which enables them to work for their selfish interest which thereby prevents several problems from reaching the Council. The changing power structure in the contemporary world calls for inclusion of more permanent members in the UNSC. The stagnant and biased structure of the Security Council has been challenged by many emerging global powers like Japan, India, Germany and Brazil.

India's legitimate claim to be a permanent member of the UNSC and represent the Indian Ocean region is based on several factors. India has been the founding member of the United Nations and has engaged in all the specialized agencies and organs of the organization. It has served as a non-permanent member eight times and participated in all important global issues and activities during its tenure. Moreover, India's foreign policy has always aimed at strengthening and supporting the United Nations and maintaining world peace and harmony. India is one of the oldest civilizations and thus, its vast experience and enriched history and culture strengthen its claim for permanent membership.

Additionally, India's claim is justified as it is the largest democracy in the world, second most populous country, fastest growing economy, second-largest military force and has constantly made significant contributions to various UN organizations and missions. India fulfils all the objective criteria and has achieved world-wide recognition in the past few decades due to her leadership roles in South Asia.

The underrepresentation of the Indian Ocean region which is of great geopolitical significance and comprises a large number of states, one-third of the world population and several conflicts, local tensions, ethnic tensions, territorial disputes, and threats to peace calls for representation of the region. India is a potential candidate to rectify these issues that are highly ignored and disregarded, as it is the largest economy in the region and a prominent leader of developing countries.

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India has made notable contributions to various peacekeeping operations and is one of the largest troop contributors with 180,000 troops since 1950 and longest serving countries in the world. India has initiated and chaired various committees like Counter Terrorism Committee, Libya Sanction Committee and Taliban Sanction Committee to combat terrorism. It is also the only nuclear weapon state that insists on total elimination of nuclear weapons. India's consistent efforts reflect the country's desire and aim of ensuring global peace, cooperation and harmony.

Thus, India is a potential candidate for the permanent membership in the UNSC. However, the country faces several challenges and issues that stand in the way of its target of getting permanent membership.

The issue of giving permanent membership has been debated and opposed by many countries, especially the local and regional neighbours of G4 countries, who feel that permanent membership to these countries would neglect millions of Muslim population from the UNSC. India's financial contribution to the UN has been comparatively less as compared to other countries that are vying for a permanent seat in the council. Another major challenge to India is that any change in the UNSC, in the form of size or veto privilege, requires amendment of the UN Charter. This requires a formal agreement of all the five permanent members and two-third majority of the UNGA, thus, making the process complicated and challenging. Moreover, the UNSC is conservative, slow and reluctant to change, which further blocks India's path of power grab.

China has continuously used its veto power to tear down India's efforts to become a permanent member. The veto power of the five permanent members also expands the risk as the agreement of power sharing is unlikely to be accepted by all P5 members. The countries can veto against expansion of the council depending on their self-interests.

Moreover, India's poor performance in Human Development Index, existing rivalry with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and the country's refusal to sign NPT and CTBT act as roadblocks in India's path of getting a permanent membership.

India needs to continue to raise its power, influence and wealth for at least the next 40 years and continue seeking its rightful place in the UNSC. Even through due the contemporary challenges and existing UN Charter and structure, a permanent seat in UNSC still remains far, India's chances of getting it in the future are very high. India is closer to getting a permanent UNSC seat than ever before. Thus, India needs to address and overcome such challenges to strengthen its global position and increase the probability of getting a permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

IV. CONCLUSION

India's claim for a permanent seat in the UNSC is justified on the basis of its potential, capabilities, contributions and role as a rising global power and leader. Moreover, India's historic association with the UN, population, size, economic power, purchasing power, military capabilities and participation in UN activities, organizations and peacekeeping missions strengthen India's claim for permanent membership. India's inclusion in the permanent council would not only make UNSC more representative and democratic, but also help the organization to deeply understand and efficiently respond to the issues of the developing countries.

India's ambition has been hampered by the country's security issues, China's opposition and low pace of development. Moreover, there has been no actual action taken to reform the UNSC as it is very complicated and time-consuming. In other words, under the given UN Charter, articles and norms, there is very little hope for reforms in the near future.

If India becomes a permanent member of the UNSC, it will be able to participate in major world decisions, work for its interests and represent the Indian Ocean region. India's representation in the permanent Security Council would also help in balancing the Western powers and promoting the interests and demands of developing countries in the UN. Moreover, a permanent seat will enhance India's bargaining power and influence in global affairs.

In order to realize its ambition, India needs to continue its demands by working together with other potential countries like Germany, Japan and Brazil. The countries need to act as one single unit and vote jointly to collect support for their bid for the permanent seat in the Security Council. It is essential for India to mobilize a favourable public option and global support. In addition to that, India needs to build its economic, diplomatic and military power and also achieve sustainable growth and human development targets to achieve the status of a global power.

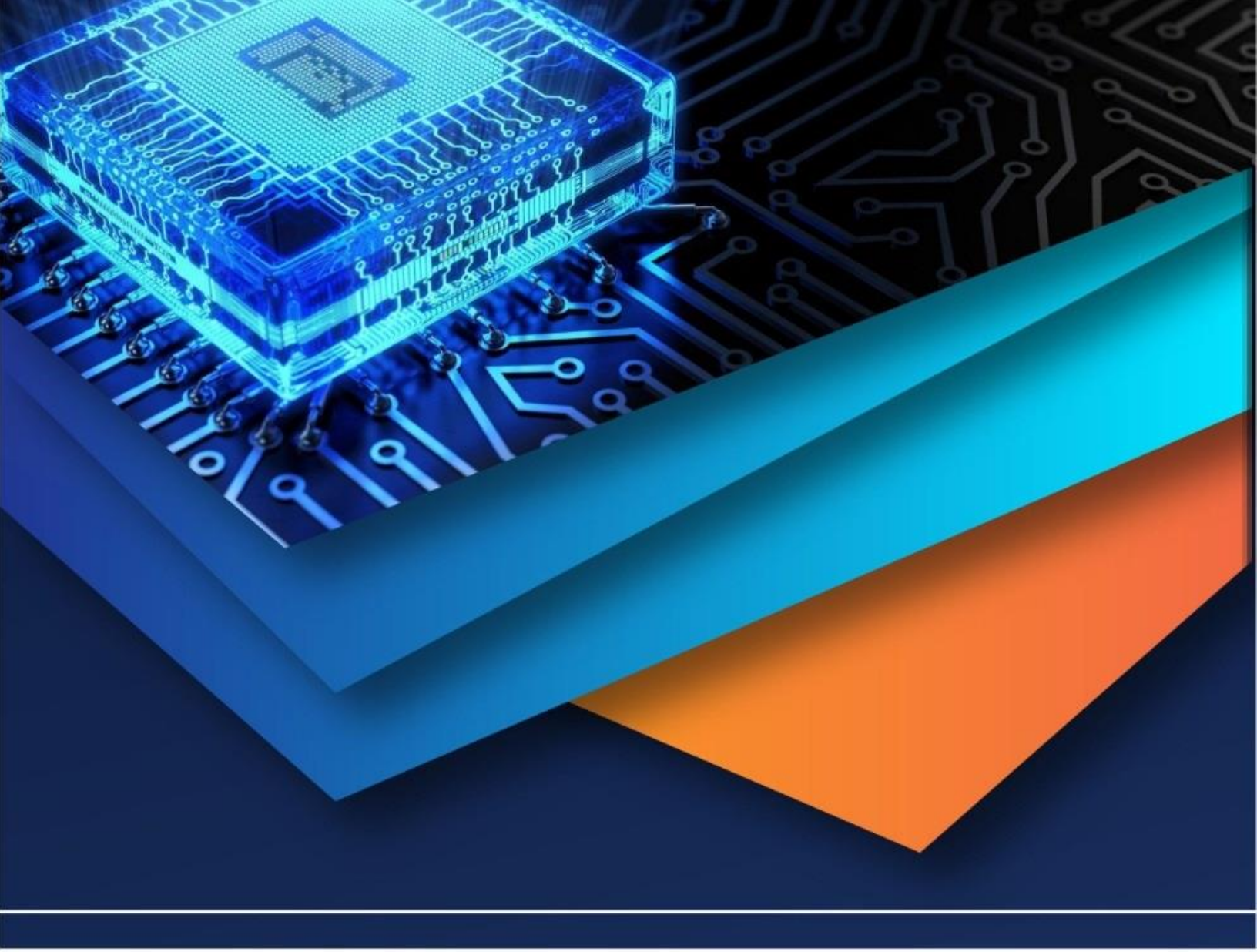
In the contemporary situation of Covid-19 crisis, India's predicament is staggering, the Indian economy is in shambles and facing recession and the country is facing extreme health crisis. In the ongoing situation, the country needs to overcome such difficult problems, adopt careful strategies and play an effective role as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. It would further help in determining how India can change its role from a responsible stakeholder to a global rule-maker. Thus, if India expands its economic, military, technological and political capabilities and continue working on the management of global issues, it would be able to overcome the challenges in the path of permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

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