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The Big Picture- UNSC & Permanent Seat for India

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Indian Vice President recently claimed that “India representing one-sixth of the global population has a rightful claim to the permanent membership of the **United Nations** Security Council (UNSC).” One of the key historic reasons for India’s quest for a permanent seat at the UNSC was to ensure the **protection of its national interests** in crucial diplomatic moments when the organ takes up issues such as **Kashmir**.

India has always remained at the forefront of efforts at the UN to push for the long-pending reforms of the Security Council emphasizing that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high-table, as a permanent member. The issue of expanding the UNSC, and the text-based negotiation (a process that formalizes the adoption of a resolution) is expected to come up in the next UN General Assembly session that is to be held in September, 2019.

India's Demand for Permanent Membership

India deserves to be in the list of permanent members not only because of the **one-sixth** world's population that resides in India but because of the following reasons:

- Being a **founding member** of the UN, India has always respected, participated and supported the United Nations.
- India is not only funding the UN substantially, but it is also **leading the peace-keeping** operations of the UN; upholding the principles & credentials of the UN.
- India is a major **emerging economic power** & follows an **independent foreign policy**, which signifies India's stand on any issue on multinational forum.
For example, India opposed the bombing in Libya at the first stance & later abstained from voting in the UN.

Similar Demand by Other Nations

When the G-4 (India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan) campaign began in the mid-2000s, India was perceived to be the weakest one, but by the end of **3 years-long campaign**, India emerged out to be the strongest candidate in terms of its support. The other contenders for the permanent seat at the UNSC are:

- **Japan:** The economic influence of Japan has declined over time.
 - **China's** fanatical objection to Japan's entry into the UNSC acts as a big hurdle for Japan.
 - China went to the extent that it was ready to allow India to become a member of **P5** (Permanent members of UNSC- China, France, Russia, Britain, and the US) if India leaves G-4.
- **Germany-** In general, the UK and France & in particular, **Spain and Italy** object Germany's entry.
 - Germany's economic clout is declining within Europe these days.
 - Also, Africa, Latin America, & the Arab world are objecting to an additional European power entry in the UNSC.
 - In the mid-2000s, it was decided that there will be a combined European Union seat, but with **Brexit** taking place- UK is not going to surrender its seat. Hence, France will have to merge its seat with Germany, which it is not willing to do.
- **Brazil-** Argentina & Mexico oppose Brazil's entry into the group of P5 claiming that their GDP's size is the same as that of Brazil, so they also deserve a fair chance for entry.

- **Africa-** Africa is divided in selecting its candidate for the UNSC permanent seat amongst
 - *South Africa-* **economically** powerful,
 - *Nigeria-* most **populous-** the same claim raised by India, &
 - *Egypt-* another **powerful** contender.

China's Scuttling Efforts

India was ready to become part of the UNSC with the least benefits, it even agreed to be in the Permanent seat list for 10 years without veto power. In the light of this stance of India, China needs to take a relook on its decision banning India's entry into the P5.

- **De-hyphenation with Pakistan:** China needs to *de-hyphenate* (to deal with parties of the same issue, differently) India with Pakistan.
 - China-Pakistan's strategic partnership cannot further act as an impediment in the path of India's progress.
 - On behest of Pakistan, China called for the closed-door meeting of the UNSC on the Kashmir issue. China needs to think beyond all these issues in the limelight of **progressing relations** with India.
 - Pakistan's declining economic size (less than that of the city of Mumbai & **one-tenth of India's GDP size**) is a cause of worry for China. China finds it difficult to bail-out Pakistan every now & then.

Hence, China is trying to reduce the tension between India-Pakistan relations by asking for conciliating efforts from the Indian side, so that it can move out of the tussle between India & Pakistan.
- **Settlement of ongoing issues: Wuhan Summit** acted as a temporary truce between India and China. The several ongoing issues between the two nations demand their focused attention upon:
 - The unsettled border disputes
 - Question of **Dalai Lama's succession**
 - The **Proxy struggle** between India & China in Maldives & Sri Lanka overthrowing each other's government.
- **Internal issues concerning India & China:** Both the nations currently face the major problem of the **economic slowdown**. The need of the hour is to keep aside the mutual differences and put concerted efforts in resolving this looming threat.
 - Kashmir issue signifying the shift in India's policy stance demands focused attention from India.
 - Also, the support of significant number of UNSC members in favour of India over the Kashmir issue is isolating China in the UNSC.
 - These members either don't oppose India or positively support India.
 - The **US-China trade war** is affecting China economically.

Way Forward

- Whenever India has tried to take a lead, it has succeeded in the past. Hence, India should look at getting entry into different multilateral agencies like the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**.
- India needs to **build its own constituency** & mobilize people's perception in its favour and not rely on the efforts of P5 or others for the same.
- **Global power hierarchies** are changing and the P5 needs to realize that this is high-time to initiate **UNSC reforms**. The declining powers should either give away their membership or should expand the size of the UNSC opening the doors for new emerging powers.
- Other reforms might succeed earlier than the expansion of P5. As at the end of the day, none of the so called powerful nation wants to expand the table and share their pie with another nation.
- India needs to focus on strengthening itself ***economically, militarily & diplomatically*** in order to participate in major conversations and groupings. Steadily, the UNSC will itself deem India fit to become a part of the UNSC.