At the high table: On India’s U.N. Security Council win

Context

# India’s election to the U.N. Security Council as a non-permanent member is a significant diplomatic victory for the country, which has long been pushing for reforms at global institutions.

UNSC Election for non-permanent seat

# The victory wasn’t unexpected as India was the only contestant for the Asia Pacific seat.
# But the Indian foreign policy establishment took no chances as the election would be done by secret ballot at the UN General Assembly and two-thirds of the votes were needed for victory.
# India secured the seat with 184 votes in the 193-strong General Assembly.
# Mexico, Norway and Ireland were also elected as non-permanent members.
# While Mexico won the Latin American seat uncontested, Norway and Ireland emerged victorious from a three-way contest for the Western Europe and Others Group seat.
# Canada failed to win enough votes in this group.
# Neither Kenya nor Djibouti, which were contesting the seat from Africa, won a two-thirds majority.
# They will face another vote.

India’s proposed reforms in UNSC

# India sought the support of member countries by highlighting its commitment to multilateralism and reforms.
# Ahead of the vote, India had launched a campaign brochure which highlighted its demand for transparency in mandates for UN peacekeeping missions and push for the India-led Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism: and called for joint efforts for UN reform and expansion of the Security Council. A “new orientation for a reformed multilateral system” (NORMS), would be India’s overall objective during the two-year tenure that will begin next year.

Steps to be taken by India

# Achieving this would depend on how India will conduct diplomacy in the global body, build alliances and raise issues that go beyond the interests of the big five.
# India has long been of the view that the structure of the UN Security Council doesn’t reflect the realities of the 21st century.

# It has also got increasing support from member countries for its push for reforms.

# But the five permanent members of the Security Council have resisted these attempts.

# The COVID-19 pandemic has already shaken up the global order and sharpened the rivalry between the U.S. and China.

# It has also opened up fresh debates on strengthening multilateralism and multilateral institutions.

**Challenges before India**

# In this context, the challenges before India are many. The Security Council is one of the most important multilateral decision-making bodies where the contours of global geopolitics are often drawn.

# India should avoid the temptation of taking sides at a time when the Security Council is getting more and more polarised.

**Way ahead**

# To serve its interests and push for its agenda of multilateralism and reforms, India should adopt value-based positions that are not transactional, aspire for the leadership of the non-permanent members of the Council and be the voice of the weaker nations.