India and the UN Security Council
An Ambiguous Tale

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During India's last stint on the United Nations Security Council in 2011-12, it was unable to pursue the originally charted strategy of demonstrating responsible diplomacy in the leagues of the great powers while also making the body a more legitimate and representative organisation. Delving into India's efforts to achieve its objectives, this paper discusses contemporary constraints on the country's ability to exercise greater influence at the UN. It also sketches what an alternative Indian policy at the UN could look like.

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1 Introduction

In January 2011, India joined the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for its seventh two-year term as a non-permanent member. Expectations were high, many in the country and abroad expected India's tenure to serve as "a rehearsal for permanent membership" (Srinivasan 2013). Accelerating expansion of the permanent membership of the UNSC to include India was among New Delhi's top priorities for its term. India's strategy, however, was rapidly blindsided by crises in Africa and the West Asia, which also exposed deep divisions between the five permanent members (the P-5) – China, France, Russia, the US and the UK – in the UNSC itself. India worked hard to cope with a stream of global events. In doing so, however, it was unable to pursue the originally charted strategy of demonstrating responsible diplomacy in the leagues of the great powers while also making the UNSC a more legitimate and representative organisation (Sidhu 2010). At the end of 2012, India exited the UNSC on a less than celebratory note, with some analysts castigating the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for wasting an important opportunity on the international stage (Srinivasan 2013; Malik 2012).

This paper examines India's performance on the UNSC in 2011-12 on the basis of five goals that we believe, after wide consultations, have dominated the Indian agenda. Two of them – making the UNSC more effective and legitimate, and enhancing India's standing as a responsible world power – are emphasised by non-Indian scholars and analysts because they focus on India's contribution to the global order. Three other goals – expanding the UNSC's permanent membership, reforming the UNSC's working methods, and protecting the primacy of state sovereignty from United Nations (UN)-sanctioned military interventions – are connected to India's own interests and ambitions in the international order.

Although India faced significant challenges, our evaluation of its performance along these five dimensions is nowhere near as gloomy as some observers proclaim. These challenges were exacerbated by three factors – insufficient Indian government resources devoted to multilateral diplomacy; insufficient engagement with the normative aspects of many UNSC issues; and an over-reliance on entitlement as the foundation of India's claims to permanent membership, at the expense of more hard-nosed realpolitik bargaining in the UN.

The paper first provides a historical overview of India's relationship with the UNSC. It then delves into each of the five goals by analysing India's objectives, its efforts within the

UNSC to achieve those objectives, and the eventual outcomes (or lack thereof). The article goes on to discuss contemporary constraints on India's ability to exercise greater influence at the UN. The concluding section sketches what an alternative Indian policy at the UN could look like.

2 Historical Overview

India – then still under British rule – was among the 51 original members of the UN when the organisation was formed in 1945. Delhi's first major brush with the UNSC occurred over Kashmir in 1948, following an invasion by tribal forces backed by the Pakistani military. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru referred the matter to the UNSC, hoping for a favourable outcome. He was rudely disappointed, particularly by the western powers, which treated the matter more as a dispute between two states rather than the invasion of one's territory by the other. Indian leaders concluded from this experience that "the Security Council was a strictly political body and that decisions were taken by its members on the basis of their perspective of their national interest and not on the merits of any particular case" (Gharekhan 2007: 200).

Cold War Years

Nevertheless, in 1950, India was elected for its first term on the UNSC. During this period, the council focused mainly on the outbreak of the Korean War. India emphasised through its votes and statements the need for the UN to bring about a peaceful, that is, non-military, resolution to the conflict. In the event, the UNSC voted for armed intervention. Instead of troops, Delhi contributed a field ambulance unit to the UN effort, a modest if elegant gesture given its position on the conflict. Following the war, India played an active role in the repatriation of prisoners-of-war and refugees. In subsequent years, India consolidated its reputation as a champion of peaceful conflict resolution in the UN, variously contributing troops, senior officials, military observers and humanitarian assistance to a diverse set of UN operations in west Asia, Africa and Asia. However, India's own circumstances were anything but peaceful. In 1961, when India used military force to wrest Goa from Portugal, a draft resolution sponsored by the western powers against India was vetoed by the Soviet Union (United Nations Security Council 1961). A few years later, the UN – under pressure from the Soviet Union – intervened diplomatically in the India-Pakistan war of 1965, calling for a ceasefire and helping to bring the conflict to a close.

India's second term on the UNSC came in 1967, during heightened tensions in west Asia, notably a military conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours. In keeping with its staunchly pro-Arab policy and Third World identity at the time, India criticised Israeli aggression (and ignored Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's reckless posturing in the run-up to the war), stressing the need to protect the sovereignty and rights of the Arab countries and peoples involved in the conflict. India's tenure also coincided with the advent of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), which it strongly opposed on grounds of fairness and the sovereign equality of states.

In 1971 India found itself in a tight corner at the UN after its intervention in the East Pakistan (eventually Bangladesh) conflict. Most states considered India's humanitarian justifications for its actions less compelling than arguments in favour of Pakistan's territorial integrity. To its humanitarian concerns India added the need for self-defence in the face of large refugee flows across its borders. Delhi narrowly avoided diplomatic isolation through Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's energetic diplomacy and a Soviet veto on three UNSC resolutions calling for a ceasefire in the immediate aftermath of India's entry into the conflict.

India joined the council again in 1972, during which the UNSC was again preoccupied mainly with conflict in west Asia, but also with decolonisation in Africa. India adopted a tough stance against Israel, notably on its actions connected with the terrorist attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. In 1974, India generated considerable controversy by conducting the first public nuclear test by a non-P5 state. The international response centred on US-led efforts within the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to tighten proliferation controls, resulting in the formation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. On nuclear matters, India became a pariah state, even though – in its own narrative then and since – it emphasised that it had not exported either nuclear weapons-related technology or materials beyond its own borders. Despite this impasse, India returned to the UNSC in 1977, co-sponsoring a resolution on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory; a resolution condemning South Africa's involvement in Angola's civil war; and three resolutions strongly condemning the minority white regime in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Delhi joined in the unanimous condemnation of apartheid in South Africa and in the imposition of an arms embargo on the South African government.

Following a period of five years marked by the US-Iran hostage crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, further armed conflict between Israel and Lebanon, and the Falklands/Malvinas war, India was elected to its fifth term on the UNSC in 1984. Familiar themes predominated, with India focused on South Africa and Israeli policies towards Palestinians. Soon thereafter, in 1987, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi initiated India's three-year diplomatic and military engagement with Sri Lanka's civil war that proved an unmitigated failure.

Post-Cold War Era

India again joined the UNSC in 1991-92, at a time of seismic geostrategic change spurred by the end of the cold war and refracted through new unity among the P-5. A prominent result of this change was Iraq's forcible expulsion from Kuwait in early 1991 by a widely-subscribed coalition operating under a strong UNSC mandate. While some of the wreckage of the cold war (for example, conflicts in central America and Indo-China) proved amenable to UN ministrations, new intra-state conflicts came to dominate the UNSC's agenda. An overworked council unprepared for the complexity of civil wars briefly experienced an era of euphoria over the unshackling of its own bonds

earlier imposed by the cold war, but generated uneven results during this period of hyperactivity.

India, internally riven by coalition politics and an economic crisis, and externally disoriented by the demise of its Soviet partner, struggled to keep up with events. Delhi's response to the Iraq-Kuwait dispute in particular appeared haphazard, first condemning the US invasion, then supporting it and allowing US airplanes to refuel on Indian territory and finally withdrawing use of this facility under domestic political pressure. In the UNSC, India abstained on two crucial votes relating to Iraq. Subsequently, India also abstained on four other resolutions dealing with an arms embargo on Libya (for the Lockerbie bombing), providing humanitarian assistance in Bosnia, expanding the UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia, and ending the membership of the former Yugoslavia to the UN (United Nations 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1992d). At root, India appeared unsettled by emerging US hegemony in global affairs.

Through the 1990s, the UNSC continued to authorise the use of force in internal conflicts across the globe and India turned into something of a conscientious objector on military and humanitarian interventions. In addition, India frustrated great-power interlocutors and also some other states in 1996 by opposing the comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT). That same year, India lost the election for a non-permanent position on the UNSC to Japan by a wide margin, attributing the result to Tokyo's ability to use financial incentives to garner support. Indian diplomats seemed oblivious to the possibility that the CTBT negotiations played some role in determining the election outcome. It soon emerged that Delhi had specific reasons to oppose the CTBT. In May 1998, India shook the global stage with a series of nuclear tests. International reaction was sharply negative but short-lived – instead of opprobrium, India earned recognition from the great powers for its emerging status as a rising power to be reckoned with (Mohan 2003). This recognition was undoubtedly buoyed by the rapid economic growth that post-1991 economic reforms had generated.

Not coincidentally, after 1991, India began voicing a demand for greater representation in international organisations based on its national capabilities and contributions to the UN system since its inception. At the UNSC, this translated into a demand for permanent membership. Desultory conversations had begun among member states on UNSC reform as of 1993, and various schemes were proposed. Eventually, in the run-up to the 2005 UN Summit, India banded with Brazil, Germany and Japan in campaigning for a permanent seat each in the council. Ultimately, negotiations on council reform became hopelessly bogged down, ostensibly over the thorny issue of greater African representation, on which an overambitious African "consensus" created an insurmountable stumbling block. However, the issue itself did not recede, as Brazil, South Africa and India each began playing a larger international role, notably within the Group of 20 (G-20) forum of leading economic powers and by advocating a reallocation of voting rights within the International Monetary Fund.

3 Evaluating India on the UNSC in 2011-12

India joined the UNSC in 2011 after a hiatus of 19 years. During this absence, India's relationship with the body had changed dramatically. The world in 2011 was further down the post-cold war path to multipolarity with the rise of new powers such as China and India, and with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries humbled by their misadventures in Afghanistan. The UNSC in 2011 was both a more active and a more politically diverse body than it had been in the past. Along with India on the council for 2011 were Brazil, South Africa and Germany – all significant powers in the rapidly changing world order. India itself had undergone a dramatic economic transformation since the end of the cold war and was now a rising power in Asia. Consequently, the world expected two things of India as it joined the UNSC in 2011 – responsible leadership on issues of international peace and security, and constructive engagement that would improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UNSC.

Responsible Leadership

On responsible leadership, C Raja Mohan argues, "The term began with great expectations...and a clear decision in the MEA that India's re-entry into the UNSC after a long time must be put to very good use and demonstrate its emergence as a responsible power".[1] Responsibility in this context admits to two alternative interpretations. The first, articulated by western observers, suggests that a responsible power is one that recognises the benefits it receives from the international order and works towards sustaining that order (Dormandy 2007). The second, articulated by India, suggests that its responsibility lies in its domestic realm – to quote India's National Security Advisor, "India would only be a responsible power if our choices better the lot of our people" (Sidhu 2011).

Given these interpretations, India's performance on the UNSC in 2011-12 emerges quite positively. With regard to the various international crises addressed by the council – in Cote d'Ivoire, Libya and Syria – India did not undertake any actions that can be construed as detrimental to the international order. Indeed, by counselling restraint on the question of military intervention and emphasising the importance of undertaking well-planned and adequately resourced UN missions, it upheld its role as a guardian of the UN Charter and its goals (Mukherjee 2011). With regard to its responsibility towards the well-being of its people, the Indian mission to the UN highlighted within the UNSC the need for concerted UN action on global terrorism and piracy, two key threats to India's security and commercial interests.

Nonetheless, western (particularly US) animus towards India's role on the UNSC remained strong during this period. Critiques centered on its reluctance to endorse vigorous multilateral action against the Syrian government's crackdown on its own citizens. Susan Rice, the US ambassador to the UN, publicly voiced her disappointment with India – along with Brazil and South Africa – for not taking a stronger stance on Syria (Kelemen 2011). The *New York Times* (2012) subsequently published a sharply worded critique of China, Russia and India's

policies on the UNSC. Collectively dubbing them "The Enablers," the editorial argued, "China, Russia and India see themselves as global leaders. So why have they been enabling two dangerous regimes, Syria and Iran, to continue on destructive paths?" That India was bracketed with two authoritarian powers known for their poor human rights records and support for other regimes that frequently repress their citizens suggests something awry in its diplomatic handling of the Syria file. Moreover, it underscores a strong bias in Western discourse, which views "responsibility" as being aligned with western – especially US – interests and preferences. By contrast, Srinath Raghavan argues that India was keen to "make its presence in the UNSC felt as an independent power, that is, a power that would not automatically follow the lead of the (P-5) but would judge issues on their merits".[2] On balance, therefore, India pursued its own interpretation of responsibility but did not actively seek to undermine the UNSC's capacity to maintain and promote global peace and security.

UNSC Effectiveness and Legitimacy

The international community's second expectation of India was that it would engage constructively with the UNSC and its members to make the UN a more effective and legitimate organisation in world politics. From the Indian point of view, the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations had repeatedly been called into question by the UNSC's inability to provide clear mandates, sufficient resources, and adequate operational guidance to troops on the ground. India, having contributed more than 1,00,000 peacekeepers to various missions for over six decades (PMUN 2011d), made the improving effectiveness of peacekeeping a major plank of its diplomacy at the UN. In particular, it decried the increasingly ambitious mandates of UN peacekeeping operations which, it argued, made excessive use of Chapter VII (on coercive measures) of the UN Charter without first exhausting other diplomatic options. Moreover, India was critical of the manner in which the mandates of individual peacekeeping missions were gradually expanded to include tasks that might be labelled as nation building, which was not historically the role peacekeepers played for the UN. In a speech made to the UNSC in August 2011, Hardeep Singh Puri, India's ambassador to the UN, summarised the problem, "Ambitious agendas are not being backed with the financial, operational, and logistical resources. This lack of resources tells on the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping and casts a shadow on the credibility of the council's mandates" (PMUN 2011d). The changes that India advocated on peacekeeping in the UNSC are ones that would take more than a two-year term to see to fruition. It is therefore difficult to evaluate its contribution to overall UNSC effectiveness so soon.

On the question of legitimacy, M J Akbar highlights an important weakness of the UNSC as it stands today, "The United Nations is often at odds with contemporary reality, because it has not, at its core, shifted from the international power structure of 1945".[3] This is a view echoed by many Indian leaders and intellectuals, who see the UN as increasingly bordering on illegitimate or irrelevant to the realities of the 21st century world, in which India plays an ever more important role. While the goal of a permanent seat remains an important governmental priority, the broader question of legitimacy is one that India's membership was expected to address in some measure, particularly due to its credentials as a traditional leader of developing nations in the UN. Indeed, the crises in the Arab world and west Asia that the UNSC faced in 2011-12 were particularly well-suited to India's use of its good offices with nations such as Iran, Syria and Libya to bring about outcomes that these countries and the international community could have found acceptable. In the event, however, the Islamic aspects of India's identity turned out to be a hindrance more than a resource in these conflicts. According to Mohan, "The MEA is paralysed by the fear of being seen with the west against the Muslims", so much so that Indian policymakers were slow to respond to calls for action on Libya and Syria from the Arab League and Saudi Arabia respectively. Chinmaya Gharekhan notes that India eventually "appeared confused, between not upsetting the Gulf countries…and our general approach on non-interference and opposition to regime change from outside".[4] The result was a loss of credibility for India both with the West and with the Islamic states. On balance, therefore, India did not contribute to bolstering the legitimacy of the UNSC.

UNSC Expansion

India's performance on the goals set for it by international expectations seems nowhere near as dismal as proclaimed by some analysts outside the country. However, when one turns to the attainment of India's own objectives with regard to the council, the judgment of Indian critics is the harshest. The most important issue in this regard has been whether India was successfully able to pursue the goal of expanding the permanent and non-permanent ranks of members on the UNSC. India is by many accounts the top contender for permanent membership in the UNSC. According to Ramesh Thakur, "If there was to be a vote on a new UNSC, (there is) no question but that India would get through, I suspect with the largest majority of all candidate countries."[5] This was what a 2012 survey of UN experts and insiders found (Slattery 2012). However, the politics of translating this preference into an outcome are virtually insurmountable, not least because the P-5 members themselves – not wishing to dilute their own power by sharing it with others – are opposed to expansion of permanent membership. Gharekhan comments, "The P-5 keep passing the buck to one another but they are totally united on this matter. (India) should not get carried away when Britain or France support our candidature; they lose nothing and gain our gratitude by pledging support."[6]

India's strategy with regard to UNSC expansion has followed two parallel tracks. The first focuses on a narrow major-power claim, which emphasises India's capabilities and contributions to the UNSC as the basis for permanent membership. This approach is embodied in the official statement on reform from India's permanent mission to the UN (2013), "By any objective criteria, such as population, territorial size, GDP, economic potential, civilisational legacy, cultural diversity, political

system, and past and ongoing contributions to the activities of the UN – especially to UN peacekeeping operations – India is eminently qualified for permanent membership." It is also embodied in India's involvement in the G-4 (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) group, which includes similarly placed countries in the international system.

The second approach focuses on the problem of representation in the UNSC and makes the case for expanding both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership with a view to ensuring that the world's foremost organisation for international peace and security reflects the dramatically altered distribution of power since 1945. In a speech to the 45th session of the UN general assembly – the first session following the end of the cold war – India's then foreign minister I K Gujral made a claim of this type, "True multilateralism...requires the full and equal participation of all nations – big and small – in the multilateral decision-making process...The voice of the majority must not only be heard but also be respected" (PMUN 1990). This approach is therefore anchored in larger coalitions such as the L-69 (a grouping of developing countries advocating UNSC reform) in which India is an active member.

India used its recent term to raise repeatedly the topic of UNSC expansion in various speeches, debates and forums devoted to reviewing and improving the procedures and effectiveness of the council (PMUN 2011f, 2012b). However, an early attempt in February 2011 to pass a resolution in the general assembly endorsing the G-4's claims to permanent membership fell short of the required two-thirds majority (Gowan 2013). According to ambassador Puri, Delhi was able to generate considerable momentum on this front (2013). Citing India's activities within the G-4 group and the L-69 group respectively, he argues, "Both of these processes have gathered considerable traction and we are determined to take forward the process to its logical conclusion."[7] Other assessments on India's quest for expansion are less sanguine (Vembu 2013). On balance, despite India's efforts, there was little movement on UNSC expansion in 2011-12, though the time frame under consideration could scarcely be considered adequate for achieving real gains. Indeed, longer-term momentum for council reform has sagged notably since the 2005 UN Summit.

UNSC Working Methods

Short of the near impossible goal of expansion, India's objective on the UNSC has been to make the organisation more transparent, responsive and constrained in its ambit relative to other UN bodies, especially the general assembly. This strategy is arguably a rational one given political realities – if India is unable to break into the UNSC as a permanent member, it makes eminent sense to advocate steps that would make the UNSC more accountable and less powerful relative to non-member states. In the past, and during its most recent term, India has clearly articulated its criticisms of the way in which the UNSC functions, which can be classified under the headings of transparency, efficiency, responsiveness, representation and mandate.

On transparency, India has advocated better access to important documents pertaining to the decision-making

process within the UNSC, and for a curb on closed-door meetings from which non-member countries are excluded. On efficiency, India has argued for removing or at least de-prioritising items that, through inertia, remain on the UNSC agenda for too long a time, to create space for discussion of more contemporary threats to international peace and security. On responsiveness, India has pushed for greater consultations with UN member-states, irrespective of whether they are on the UNSC or not, if they have a substantial interest in a particular issue being considered by the council. In the realm of peacekeeping, India – being a major contributor of troops – has pushed for more frequent and in-depth consultations with troop-contributing countries over specific missions to ensure their success and effectiveness. India has also criticised the increasing frequency with which the UNSC has authorised Chapter VII interventions, thus bypassing the need for consent in countries that are subject to intervention – in this case too it has called for greater consultation with the countries in question. On representation, aside from linking proposals for procedural reforms to proposals for expansion, India has advocated a greater role for non-permanent members within the UNSC, attacking the convention that the "pen holder" on UN draft resolutions nearly always be a permanent member, thus restricting critical agenda-setting powers in the council to a small group of states. On the UNSC's mandate, India has frequently pointed to the council's propensity to extend its mandate beyond threats to international peace and security, thereby gradually encroaching on the preserve of the general assembly. In particular, it has pointed to the frequent expansion of peacekeeping mandates to include activities normally associated with nation building, socio-economic development, and related activities.

As with proposals for expansion, India's proposals for reform in the UNSC's working methods tended to fall on deaf ears within the council. While India has played a significant role in highlighting the drawbacks of the UNSC's internal functioning, it has done precious little to build a constituency for reform or offer specific ways in which to carry out reforms.

Intervention and Protection Norms

Perhaps the most urgent goal for India at the UNSC since the end of the cold war has been to act as "a voice of reason, calm and moderation" in the face of the western powers' increasing enthusiasm for humanitarian intervention and (subsequently) the responsibility to protect civilians from mass atrocities within their states .[8] India's stance on military and humanitarian intervention, though somewhat flexible during the cold war, has since the early 1990s steadily hardened into one that generally places state sovereignty and territorial integrity above considerations of human rights and state-sponsored atrocities. At the same time, the UN itself – freed from the shackles of cold war gridlock – has become a far more interventionist organisation than before, and has sought to redefine and expand its role in the security sphere to include a host of non-traditional situations such as coups, humanitarian crises, internally and externally displaced populations, and terrorism (Malone 2003).

Consequently, India has become a frequent naysayer on the merits of humanitarian intervention, and at most a very reluctant supporter of specific missions. Its positions have become harder to defend as the global consensus on sovereignty – barring Russia and China – shifts from an absolute to a contingent view. The frequent association of India with China and Russia in western discourse on humanitarian intervention and R2P (the responsibility to protect) is telling of both, India's reflexive abstention on these issues and the West's lack of disposition to understand the constraints of a democratic state with multiple internal challenges to its authority such as India, which hosts a number of insurgencies (Mukherjee 2013).

It is no surprise therefore that humanitarian intervention and R2P were the biggest bones of contention between India and the western powers on the UNSC in 2011-12. India abstained on two crucial votes – on Libya in March 2011 and Syria in October 2011 – while repeatedly sounding alarm bells on sovereignty and the need for domestic resolution of domestic conflicts even when voting in favour of taking action. In February 2011, while supporting a resolution calling for an arms embargo, travel ban, asset-freeze and referral of Libyan leaders to the International Criminal Court, India indicated that it would have preferred "a calibrated and gradual approach" (PMUN 2011a). During the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire in March 2011, India voted for a resolution implementing targeted sanctions and civilian protection but warned that UN peacekeepers "cannot be made instruments of regime change" (PMUN 2011b), which they did eventually become. In reference to the air strikes on Libya, India's ambassador to the UN alleged that the western powers did not pursue the same tactics in the humanitarian crises in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s because these countries lacked oil resources (Dikshit 2012). During thematic debates on intervention, the Indian delegation frequently reiterated that "force is not the only way of protecting civilians" (PMUN 2011c).

On the whole, India's statements and stances on issues of intervention and protection in 2011-12 – though widely criticised in the West – presented a coherent picture of conscientious objection, though one that resulted in it falling somewhat between the two stools of western pro-interventionism and eastern anti-interventionism. Consequently, India was not fully a member of either camp and at times found itself essentially isolated on the council, as in the case of its initial abstention on Syria in late 2011 that was followed by a change of course that some argue was largely provoked by representations from Delhi's Saudi interlocutors (Aneja 2012). That India was neither able to sway the council on specific cases nor able to emerge from debates with widely well-received positions is indicative of the international pressures and domestic constraints it faced during this time.

4 India's Multilateral Constraints

Reflecting on India's recent term on the UNSC, Puri, highly regarded at the UN, comments, "Our endeavour was to leave our footprint on the council's work, to act as a bridge builder and to further demonstrate India's credentials for permanent membership of the council".[9] By this yardstick, India's record is mixed – although it was able to leave a footprint on some of the UNSC's work – particularly on counter-terrorism, piracy and peacekeeping – it enjoyed less success on the more high-profile crises in Africa and west Asia. Indeed, the second half of India's tenure was marked by a subdued attitude towards files such as Syria and the emerging crisis in Mali (Gowan 2013). On the whole, India did not succeed in acting as a bridge between the concerns of the western powers and the developing world, or between east and west. Frequently, Delhi's positions were out of line with those of regional actors such as the Arab League or the African Union. Most commentators do not believe that India's 2011-12 term materially advanced the country's credentials for permanent membership.

The primary causes of India's mixed record can be traced back to three factors – available resources; insufficient engagement with varying normative perspectives on UNSC issues; and an over-reliance on entitlement as the foundation of India's claims to a permanent seat.

Resources are an important constraint on India's foreign policy. Within the UNSC, India had the smallest mission among all of the major and middle powers in 2011. Compared to the 130 officials of the US, 87 of Russia, 70 of Germany, 63 of China, 42 of Brazil, and 27 of South Africa, India fielded a paltry 24 officials, coming in just below Nigeria (Global Policy 2013). The Indian Foreign Service (IFS) is composed of not more than 900 officers spread across 120 diplomatic missions and 49 consulates, and is only slightly larger than Singapore's foreign service (Tharoor 2012). Although the MEA is anticipating an expansion, it is scheduled to take place over a number of years, resulting in only a modest short-term increase (Bajpai 2012). Finances are another major constraint. In 2011, the MEA's budget was Rs 7,836 crore ($1.4 billion), of which only Rs 225 crore ($41.5 million, or 2.9%) was spent on contributions to international organisations, and only Rs 1,464 crore ($270 million, or 18.7%) was spent on embassies and missions abroad (MEA 2012).

The "software" of India's foreign policy, that is, the intellectual and institutional infrastructure required to engage productively in international affairs, is woefully inadequate (Markey 2009). Although India hosts the third largest number of think tanks in the world (well behind China and the US), not a single Indian think tank features among one ranking of the world's top 30 think tanks (McGann 2011). That India does field some exceptionally able diplomats across the world and at MEA headquarters is a testament to the high quality of the IFS, though one can scarcely dispute that India needs more and better-supported personnel to meet its international aspirations.

On the content of Indian foreign policy, there are some blind spots that even the best IFS officers are unable to address, notably with respect to in-depth engagement with key international debates and trends. Commenting on India's recent UNSC term, Raghavan writes, "The weakest aspect of Indian performance was its inability to come up with a clear and compelling narrative on why it was taking the stances that it did and what were the underlying considerations behind its

responses to various issues."[10] For example, in UNSC debates on intervention and protection, India repeatedly asserted the primacy of national authorities and national capabilities in ensuring the protection of civilians. The role of the international community, according to India, was to help states develop the national capabilities to protect their citizens (PMUN 2011e, 2012a). What was missing from the Indian statements was any consideration of what the international community must do when a state precipitates an international crisis by turning against its own citizens; when the state ceases to be a viable entity that might fulfil its obligations; or when the existence of a state is called into question by a major secessionist movement – all entirely commonplace scenarios in today's world. By treating the state as a black box with primary authority and responsibility for protecting its civilians, India wilfully or otherwise elided the debate. This example highlights a deeper characteristic in India's UN diplomacy, which is an overwhelming tendency to focus on the merits of each case without any heed to broader global patterns, underlying normative contestation, or the intellectual currents in other capitals of the world.

India's unwillingness to put itself in the shoes of its interlocutors exacts an even greater price when it comes to the issue of UNSC expansion. Its arguments for expansion have all centred on a sense of entitlement, be it as a rising power, an Asian nation, or a developing country. Implicit in these claims is an assumption that India's interlocutors cannot but be impelled by the sheer moral weight of its arguments. Missing from this world view is a sense of the political calculus of multilateral diplomacy and a disposition to strike deals with other states in the quest for permanent membership. India decried Japan's "yen diplomacy" in winning a non-permanent seat on the UNSC in 1996, without having spent much time or effort in cultivating – diplomatically or financially – the relationships that might have helped Delhi edge Tokyo out of the Asian seat. In the words of one analyst,

> Permanent membership of the Security Council...is a measure of hard power, of military capacities and of the willingness and ability of the individual country to contribute to international security. 'Contribute to international security', in turn, should not be confused with sending troops to serve on United Nations peacekeeping missions. If that were so, Bangladesh would probably have a stronger claim on a permanent seat than India (Malik 2012).

It is hardly surprising therefore, that with a meagre budget and modest resources devoted to the UN, India's campaign for a permanent seat has not prospered. And the lack of resources points to an important underlying factor, the primacy of internal political imperatives over those of India's international relations. In the words of Mani Shankar Aiyar, "There are too many domestic issues in India's vibrant and diversified democracy to leave space for any international affairs aside from those relating to our immediate neighbourhood."[11]

5 Conclusion: The Road Ahead

It is important to keep India's most recent term on the council in perspective, recognising that Delhi has proved to be a more responsible actor and constructive interlocutor in the international system than many other states. Shyam Saran lays out the simple logic behind this observation, "India sees its interest best served in a rule-based, multilaterally structured and democratically governed international system. The UN is obviously the logical platform for such a system, although its limitations and infirmities are all too evident".[12] Whereas Nehru's faith in the UN might have been utopian (to the detriment of Indian interests), Indian policymakers today are far more pragmatic, viewing the UN as one avenue among others through which to advance India's international interests. In this sense, India has matured into a responsible stakeholder in principle, though it is a long way off from navigating the multilateral system for its own benefit as other major powers do.

Keeping this in mind, there are three strategies that India can simultaneously follow to better secure its interests in the UN. First, given that the P-5 are likely to block any efforts at expanding the permanent membership of the UNSC in the near future, India might devote considerably greater resources than at present to wooing the middle and smaller powers in the UN to increase the clout of the general assembly relative to the council, a tactic already evident in India's participation in the L-69 group. If this strategy is successful, the P-5 might prefer to defuse the threat of a stronger general assembly by incurring the cost of expanding the permanent membership of the UNSC.

Second, the MEA would benefit from a wider public dialogue on what India's positions should be on key aspects of international issues today, including sovereignty, intervention and the use of force. The multi-author Nonalignment 2.0 report (Khilnani et al 2012) provides a valuable stepping stone, ideally to be followed by wider consultations, especially on multilateralism. Particularly on issues of sovereignty and intervention, India would gain from a deeper understanding of its own constraints rather than hewing to the positions of western members of the P-5 on some occasions, and the eastern members on others. India's unique circumstances among the rising powers as a liberal democratic state with serious internal and regional security challenges merit a domestic dialogue on how best to engage with and respond to the growing international norm of contingent sovereignty.

Third, India should engage in coalition building with other rising powers that are similarly placed in the international system, such as Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa and Turkey. Given the P-5 and general assembly's lack of enthusiasm for G-4 proposals, a wider coalition representing a larger swath of powers might prove more effective, at mid range between the G-4 and the L-69. From India's perspective, it would represent a shift from being "leader of the Third World trade union" (Mohan 2003) to key member of a rising power cartel, a formation better suited to India's evolving capabilities and interests than is the G-4. Such a grouping could successfully lobby for more frequent or even systematic middle-tier membership within the UNSC, between the P-5 and other members, with a view to translating this status into permanent membership over time.

There is widespread consensus among India's intellectual elites that permanent membership on the UNSC is only a matter

of time. Moreover, few believe that India's performance in its most recent term will have any bearing on its future prospects as a permanent member, which will be determined by the trajectory of India's economic growth and military development. By this reasoning, the P-5's obduracy dictates that India invest in relationships elsewhere to bolster its international profile sufficiently that UNSC permanent membership becomes a logical corollary. In the words of a veteran observer of India's role in the world, "The Security Council will not be changed from inside, but from outside".[13]

This is almost certainly true but India would still benefit greatly from investing more and more wisely in increasing its influence and footprint within the international system, keeping in mind that for now this is the order within which important matters of international peace and security will be determined in the near future.

NOTES

1 Correspondence with the authors, 20 January 2013.
2 Correspondence with the authors, 13 February 2013.
3 Correspondence with the authors, 24 January 2013.
4 Correspondence with the authors, 1 February 2013.
5 Correspondence with the authors, 24 January 2013.
6 Correspondence with the authors, 24 January 2013.
7 Correspondence with the authors, 1 February 2013.
8 Hardeep Singh Puri, correspondence with the authors, 1 February 2013.
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11 Correspondence with the authors, 8 March 2013.
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13 M J Akbar, correspondence with the authors, 24 Jan 2013.

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