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India's Role in the United Nations under Modi's Administration

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Abstract:

Narendra Modi has transformed India into a strategic player with a highly successful foreign policy since taking office in 2014. He has focused on improving relationships with neighbouring countries in South Asia, engaging the extended neighbourhood of Southeast Asia and the major global power. Making India a keystone of the rising multipolar world order, Modi has engaged in a vigorous and ambitious diplomatic campaign from the beginning of this office which included a number of high-profile foreign visits and the hosting of numerous foreign leaders. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has rightly said that 'India has been one of the most eloquent voices helping the United Nations to shape its agenda on behalf of the developing world. And the experience and professionalism of its armed forces have proved invaluable, time and again, in UN peacekeeping operations - in which over a hundred Indian soldiers have given their lives. In this article, the researcher attempts to examine India's role in the United Nations during Modi's leadership.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, India, Narendra Modi, Role, UNO.

Introduction: Observing the devastating consequences of the Second World War, many nations of the world decided to form a new global organization which could 'build a post-war world of safety, justice and returning prosperity' (Whittaker, 1997). So, in the year 1945, a conference was held from 25th April to 26th June in San Francisco, the USA with the participation of fifties countries across the world and their effort resulted in the official charter of the United Nations (UN) though it was conceived in the Atlantic Charter, an agreement signed by Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in July 1941 when 26 states signed to stand together against the Axis power. However, the organization officially came into effect on 24th October 1945 when the Charter was ratified by China, France, the USSR, the United Kingdom, the United States and by a majority of other governments of the original member countries. With the aim 'to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace; and to develop friendly relations among nations based

on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace' (*United Nations Charter, Chapter I: Purposes and Principles*).

India and UN before Modi's Administration: As one of the nations invited to the San Francisco Conference, India was one of the charter's original signatories. Although India had not become independent at that time and it was an official delegation without any nationalists in it, because of the peculiar status that she enjoyed, she was called to make her contribution to the hammering of the United Nations (Mathur, 1964). However, in spite of many limitations, India has been actively participating in the various activities of the United Nations and appreciated its responsibilities towards the UN charter and consistently contributed towards consistent efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security since its inception. India's glorious contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping operation since independence is a saga of dedication and commitment to the objectives of the United Nations charter. This has been reflected not in terms of rhetoric and symbolism, but in physically demonstrated participation (Faridi, 2008). India's approach towards the United Nations was summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly of India thus 'India's approach towards the United Nations shall be one of consideration and support without reservations and that India would always undertake to carry out its due responsibilities towards the international community.' In the first speech to the UN General Assembly on 3rd November 1948 as the prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru said that the chapter of the United Nations has laid down in the novel language the principles and purposes of this great organisation. The lesson of history, especially the lesson of the last two great wars has shown that out of hatred and violence only hatred and violence will come and the result of the continuation of hatred and violence will not only be tremendous devastation all over the world but not an achievement by any individual power or group of its object. India has been committed to the UN since the event's very first mission and thereafter India was a key participant in a world of 30 missions.

As a member of the United Nations, India, after independence, has reaffirmed its commitment to UNO's promise towards world peace, friendship and cooperation by incorporating article 51 in the constitution. Article 51 describes that the State shall endeavour to (a) promote international peace and security; (b) maintain just and honourable relations between nations; (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another, and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration and other peaceful means. Thereafter India expressed firm faith in the spirit of the UN charter by extending wholehearted support to various agencies of the United Nations in different capacities and implementing different programmes by the organization.

With the changes in the global international systems, and changing perception of India's security needs and economic development, Indian foreign policy towards the United Nations has fluctuated considerably over the past seven decades. Stanley Kochanek has identified at least three distinct phases of Indian policy toward the UN: an era of global

leadership from 1947 to 1962, a period of low profile from 1962 to the mid 1976s; an emerging policy of new realism which began in 1976 (Kochanek, 1980).

Under the leadership of Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1947, India emerged on the world scene as an independent actor. From 1947 to 1962 India took a major leadership role in the UN. India's leadership and peacekeeping role in the UN, especially the role in the Korean dispute, Suez Crisis, and Congo crisis brought considerable recognition and global standing. But this recognition and global leadership became limited due to the India-China border conflict and the India-Pakistan war. From 1962 to 1972 the UN was no longer central to India's foreign policy interests. Though on the economic question, India began new diplomacy to acquire a distinct role on the issues involving aid, trade, investment and reform of international monetary institutions. On the other hand, India was one of the first countries to raise the issue of apartheid in South Africa at the United Nations and was one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1965. However, Kochanek has identified three major reasons behind these changes. First, the Bangladesh war in 1971, second, the exploration of nuclear devices in 1974 and thirdly, a series of foreign policy reviews after the declaration of an emergency by Indira Gandhi in June 1975 fourthly, the impact of OPEC. Above all the Janata government after coming in power in 1977, declared that its policies of good-neighbourly intentions in South Asia, restoration of true non-alignment, and further rapprochement with China, were all designed to give India the flexibility and maneuverability to play a more active leadership role in global affairs. (Vajpayee, 1978).

India- UN During Modi's Administration: Through a decisive victory, Narendra Modi came into power in 2014. The 2014 General Assembly Election was the first time in three decades that a single party (BJP) won the majority seats (282) to form the government at the Center. However, Narendra Modi has transformed India into a strategic player with a highly successful foreign policy since taking office. He has focused on improving relationships with neighbouring countries in South Asia, engaging the extended neighbourhood of Southeast Asia and the major global power. Making India a keystone of the rising multipolar world order, Modi has engaged in a vigorous and ambitious diplomatic campaign from the beginning of this office which included a number of high-profile foreign visits and the hosting of numerous foreign leaders. Modi's foreign policy has been characterized by great energy, a desire to break the mold of the past and a penchant for risk-taking (Joshi, 2017). During Modi's administration, India's high level of engagement with the United Nations has been noticed.

Peacekeeping, with an annual budget of \$6.7 billion (almost three times the regular budget of the UN), is certainly the most important security function being performed by the UN today (Sinha, 2019). Over the past 72 years, more than one million women and men from 125 countries have served in 71 peacekeeping missions. Under Modi's leadership, the Indian Army continues to play a lead role in United Nations' various peacekeeping operations across the globe. Speaking at the September 2015 Leaders' Summit in New York on UN Peacekeeping, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "The foundations of the United

Nations were laid by the brave soldiers on the battlefields of the Second World War. By 1945, they included 2.5 million men of the Indian Army, the largest volunteer force in history (Mukherjee, 2019). India today is the largest contributor of troops to UNPKOs. More than 200,000 Indian troops have served in 49 of the 71 United Nations Peacekeeping Operations deployed so far.

In 2014 (as of 30 June 2014) (*Home Resources Data Troop and Police Contributors*) India contributed 8123 personnel out of a total of 84327 troops including 991 police, and 51 UN Military Experts on Mission. It was the second largest contributor after Bangladesh with 8766 personnel. Thereafter, India four times occupied the third position between 2015 and 2022 (April 2022) by providing 7798, 7710, 5579, and 5581 troops in the corresponding years of 2015, 2017, 2021 and 2022. India continued to rank fourth among the contributing nations in peacekeeping operations in the year 2018 (6445), 2019 (5491), and 2020 (5425) for maintaining international peace and security. India has also provided and continues to provide eminent force commanders for UN peacekeeping operations. Moreover, Indian peacekeepers have been deployed in some of the UN's most dangerous and challenging missions- in Congo, South Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic and ten others missions around the world. Above all, as the demand for UN peacekeepers has risen steadily, India has responded to the call for service, reaffirming the strength of its relationship with the UN.

In the 69th session (2014) of the UN General Assembly, the Prime Minister gave a collective call to the international community to work together for inclusive global development and to seek a more sustainable world. He added that 'a nation's destiny is linked to its neighbourhood. That is why my government has placed the highest priority on advancing friendship and cooperation with its neighbours.' Regarding the post-2015 Development Agenda, Modi said 'eradication of poverty must remain the core of the post-2015 Development Agenda.' India was the first country to contribute to the Trust Fund on sexual exploitation and abuse, which was set up in 2016.

In 2019, Modi again led the Indian delegation to the High-level segment of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly (22-27 September 2019) and attended high-level meetings viz. Climate Action Summit, High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage, and the Leaders' Dialogue on Strategic Responses to Terrorist and Violent Extremist Narratives. PM also announced the launch of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the initiative of the "Leadership Group ", an outcome of the Industry Transition Track that India co-led with Sweden as part of the Climate Action Summit. On the sidelines of the 74th UNGA in New York, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi hosted a high-level event (24 September 2019) titled, "Leadership Matters: Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi in the Contemporary World" to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In response to an urgent request from the UN Secretariate, India sent two medical teams, each with 15 medical personnel, to Goma (DRC) and Juba (South Sudan) in September 2020.

On 01 January 2021, India took its place as an elected member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2021-22. India assumed the Presidency of the UNSC for the month of August 2021. On 9 August 2021, the Prime Minister chaired a high-level Virtual Open Debate of the Security Council on International Maritime Security. This was the first time that an Indian Prime Minister chaired a UN Security Council Meeting. (Ministry of External Affairs, 2022). During this period India supported UN Peacekeeping efforts by (a) Contributing 200,000 doses of COVID vaccines for uniformed personnel deployed in various field missions, which were utilized by August 2021 India contributed USD 1.64 million to the Department of Operational Support for the UNITE AWARE platform aims at improving overall security situation of Peacekeeping Missions. Above all in 2021-22, India continued its efforts to move forward the process of UNSC Reforms through an expansion of both categories, permanent and non-permanent seats. During its UNSC tenure of 2021-22, India emphasised on maritime security which is regarded as the first ever standalone product of the Council.

However, under Modi's administration, India has occupied a distinct position in the UN. During this period the UNGA Resolution (in Dec 2014) declaring 21 June every year as the International Day of Yoga was adopted. The use of Hindi has been started in March 2018 in United Nations public communications; such as UN social media, UN news, and weekly audio bulletins. The 'India-UN Development Partnership Fund; a \$100 million fund facility to carry out the developing world was established in 2017 June. In 2018, India received the highest votes (188/193) and was chosen to join the Human Rights Council for the year 2019-2022.

Conclusion: Rising India's growing political influence has brought impressive electoral gains to the UN in the new century. It was elected to the Security Council's non-permanent membership, and to the Human Rights Council consistently, with the biggest margins. But it is a matter of deep regret that in spite of its major contribution to strengthening international peace and security, India is not a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. India has been vigorously pursuing the goal of the reform of the UN, with a permanent seat for itself in an expanded Security Council. In his statement, during the 69th session of the UN General Assembly debate held from 24-30, Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly advocated reform and restructuring of the UN Security Council to reflect current political realities. Describing India's involvement in the international effort to combat the COVID-19 epidemic, Modi said the United Nations needs urgent change and called for India's voice in its decision-making structures. However, the aspiration for securing a permanent seat in the enlarged Security Council remains elusive.

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