



UN and the new Multilateralism



Context:

- September month ought to have been a moment of celebration for the United Nations — the 75th anniversary of its founding. The coronavirus has exposed the structural weakness of UN system that was set up amidst the ruins of the Second World War.

What is the criticism of UN in the wake of Pandemic?

- The UN has been unable to respond effectively to the once-in-a-century global crisis triggered by the coronavirus.
- At the UN Security Council, China blocked a serious discussion on the origin and sources of the crisis.
- While the World Health Organisation did move a bit in that direction, the US was not satisfied with the outcome and walked out of the forum.

How has International Politics affected UN functioning over the years?

- UN, was meant, by design, to be a concert of great powers who had a permanent seat in the Security Council. Cooperation among the great powers was the precondition for its success in the security arena.
- **During the Cold War**, Washington and Moscow were at each other's throats and the UNSC was deadlocked.



- **During the brief unipolar moment of the 1990s**, post-Soviet Russia was willing to acquiesce to the sweeping US agenda for global security. China was feeling its way around multilateral institutions and avoided any challenge to the US and West.
- **In 2000s**, Russia and China began to offer resistance to US dominance.
- The conflict between the US on the one hand and China and Russia on the other has become full-blown. To make matters more complicated, the West itself is divided.

What are India's prospects vis-a-vis UN in coming days?

- The current political fragmentation augurs poorly for India's two-year tenure at the UNSC starting next January 2021.
- This is an opportunity to restructure India's traditional approach to the UN.
- There are huge possibilities for enhancing India's multilateral standing.

What steps should India take in future with regard to UN?

- India should shed the illusion of expansion of UNSC in near future. It should accept the reality that UNSC reform is unlikely to happen soon
- India should develop a multilateral agenda of its own despite UNSC being dysfunctional like it did in the past (decolonisation, disarmament and new international economic order during Cold War era)
- The primary objective of India's present multilateralism must be to ensure its territorial integrity in the wake of aggressive China & Pakistan
- The rules governing economic, technological and environmental areas are now up for a significant overhaul and India should help set the agenda.
- Delhi can't hope to expand its international influence on the cheap. India's share in the UN budget stands at 0.7 per cent. The shares of China, Japan and the US are at 8, 10 and 22 per cent respectively. Raising Delhi's contribution to at least one per cent might convince its partners that India is serious about pursuing a more vigorous multilateralism.

Conclusion:

- In writing the new rules and reshaping the global order, India needs to strengthen its recent turn to a more dynamic coalition building.