

— PSIR OPTIONAL · UPSC CSE

EDITION 2026

PYQ Vault

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years of PYQs

DAY 47

India & the UN System

• **9 questions**

Every question carries a Flow Snapshot, and the channel carries a handwritten model answer. **No PYQ will be unfamiliar.**

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2016 · 15 marks

Critically analyze China's role in international politics against India's demand for permanent seat in UN Security Council. (2016/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 India's credentials strong → four of five P5 back it → only China non-committal → Article 108 makes one refusal decisive → China is the obstacle **R2** the paradox: broad support but a single veto point → China's non-commitment converts into structural blockage through Article 108

Body flow

strategic motive (sole Asian/non-Western P5, guards prestige, won't admit a co-equal rival, border) → **Kantha** (assurance + obstruction) → Jaishankar "duality" (NSG + UNSC pattern) → tactics: Pakistan → UfC regional link → G4 wedge (drop Japan) → "package solution"/no agreed text (procedural delay)

Counter-view

irony: Chinese assertiveness (South China Sea) proves a 1945 Council unfit → strengthens India's reform case, but gives China reason to keep the Council shut → China decisive but not sole barrier (regional claims + veto persist) → **Raja Mohan** caution (don't be bargained by the West)

Conclusion routes

R1 China is the proximate, decisive veto guarding its Asian primacy → India must build concrete power, not rest on entitlement **R2** reform held hostage to one P5 holdout → India's path is coalition plus capability, making the claim self-evident rather than merely just

India's claim rests on its demographic and economic weight, eight terms on the council, and the largest cumulative record in peacekeeping.

4 permanent members, the US, the UK, France & Russia back it. Only China stays non-committal, and under Article 108 one refusal to ratify a charter amendment ends the matter. China is thus the decisive obstacle.

As the only Asian & non-western permanent member, China guards a status that raises its prestige and will not admit a co-equal rival next door, a reluctance hardened by the unsettled border. Ashok Kantha argues formal assurances of goodwill beside quiet obstruction of any restructuring.

S. Jaishankar calls this a "duality" and the same behaviour that blocked India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Support for Pakistan links China's great-power resistance to the regional opposition of the Uniting for Consensus bloc. It calls for a consensus "package solution" keeps the talks without an agreed text.

Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea shows that a 1945 Council cannot manage today's conflicts. This strengthens India's reform case, but it gives Beijing reason to keep the Council shut. China is decisive, though not the sole barrier i.e. competing regional claims and the veto would survive its content.

C. Raja Mohan cautions India against being bargained by the West. India's way forward lies in building concrete power, not resting on entitlement.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 10 marks

“India has been the largest and consistent country contributing to the UN peacekeepers worldwide.”
Examine India’s role in this perspective. (2017/10 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 field is where India’s commitment shows most → **Nambiar**
“second to none” / Korea 1950 → claim rests on two unequal legs
R2 founding member, non-permanent, punches above weight →
weigh the two halves: “largest” vs “consistent”

Body flow

consistency = sounder leg → 2,90,000 personnel / 50+ missions /
highest fatalities / every African operation → **Thakur**: steady
involvement → operational success → qualify “largest”:
cumulative-largest over seven decades, not single-largest in
current deployment

Counter-view

Bahadur: goodwill in UN circles ≠ influence → power play driven
by funding + permanent-member interests

Conclusion routes

R1 India reworking numbers into governance → sustained Security
Council + committee work, voice for TCCs → 2025 UNTCC
Conclave, Jaishankar: field-driven, tech-enabled mandates,
peacekeeper safety → convert field credibility into agenda-setting
voice **R2** field credibility = moral standing + policy content of the
reform case → close the contribution-recognition gap by strategy,
not merit alone

India's commitment to global peace has shown clearly in the field. Satish Nambiar holds that its contribution has been second to none, from Korea in 1950.

India's participation has been unbroken across every phase, over 2,90,000 personnel in more than 50 missions. The highest fatalities of any contributor, and a presence in every UN operation in Africa. Ramesh Thakur argues this steady involvement has been critical to the mission's success.

India is the largest cumulative contributor over 7 decades, but no longer the single largest in active deployment.

The sharper concern, as Manmohan Bahadur argues, is that good-will in UN circles has not converted into influence over a power play driven by funding & permanent-member interests.

India is reworking members into a governance role. Sustained work in the UNSC and its committees presses for a decisive voice for troop-contributing countries. At the 2025 Troop Contributing Countries' conclave in New Delhi, S. Jaishankar sought field-driven, technology-enabled mandates & better protection for peacekeepers.

Therefore, the task is to turn credibility into agenda-setting voice.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 15 marks

'Uniting for Consensus' also known as 'Coffee Club' has opposed the claims of India and other countries over permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Point out their major objections. (2017/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 locate group: mid-1990s, Italy-led "Coffee Club", ~50 states → line: objections blend principle (no new permanent privilege) + regional rivalry
R2 1945 Council frozen → G4 seeks permanent seats → UfC forms as the counter-coalition → its objections now define the reform deadlock

Body flow

Objection 1: new permanent seats "freeze privilege" → widen small-elite-vs-membership divide → expand an existing oligarchy → Objection 2: veto untouched → deepens democratic deficit, no cure for paralysis → UfC alternative (March 2024): enlarge only elected tier, longer/re-electable seats → rotation + accountability + geographic balance → Objection 3: Article 108 → two-thirds GA + all five ratify → reform must rest on widest consensus → underlying motive: regional rivalry (Pakistan v India, Italy v Germany) → think-tank reading

Counter-view

India rejects the model → **Kamboj** (2024): ignores Africa / Global South, "just vetoes the process" → calls for "UN 2.0" → yet UfC numbers block the two-thirds majority → reform stuck without an agreed text

Conclusion routes

R1 objections coherent in principle yet selective in effect → democratic language + regional rivalry + Charter rigidity → entrenches the order it claims to reform **R2** objections are real constraints, not mere obstruction → but deadlock persists → any breakthrough needs the consensus UfC's veto-on-privilege denies

The Uniting for Consensus group, formed in the mid-1990s under Italian leadership & speaking for some 50 years, is the sharpest organised block to India's UNSC bid.

Its objections combine a principled case against new permanent privilege with plain regional rivalry. The objection is that fresh permanent seats would freeze privilege. A wider circle of permanent members would deepen the divide between a small elite and the general membership, expanding an existing oligarchy rather than correcting it.

Adding permanent members while leaving the veto untouched would widen the democratic deficit, not cure paralysis. Re-electable seats allowing rotation, accountability and geographic balance.

Any reform must respect Article 108, needing a $2/3$ assembly majority + ratification by all 5 veto-holders.

Beneath the principle lies rivalry, Pakistan against India and Italy against Germany. Recent think-tank assessments read the group as motivated chiefly by such regional contests.

India has rejected the model. At the 2024 negotiations, Ruchira Kamboj argued it ignores African & Global South representation. It merely vetoes the process, pressing instead for a credible "UN 2.0". The group's numbers can still deny the two-thirds majority, keeping reform without an agreed text.

The objections cohere in principle but remain selective in effect. Democratic language that, joined to regional rivalry & Charter rigidity, entrenches the order it claims to reform.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 15 marks

Discuss the various impediments in India's way to a permanent seat in the Security Council. (2018/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 credentials strong, support wide → yet seat blocked → impediments are structural/political, not merit **R2** Council frozen since 1945 → India's case overwhelming yet unrealised → obstacles lie in law and politics, not qualification

Body flow

Charter rigidity (Art. 108: 2/3 GA + all-P5 ratification) → China the lone holdout (border rivalry, Pakistan tie) → divided membership: Uniting for Consensus (Italy, Pakistan) + rival Africa/Latin-America claims → Africa's own split (Ezulwini's veto demand vs G4 deferral) → 17 years of IGN, still no single text → India-specific: NPT non-signature + modest UN budget share + **Mukherjee & Malone** (thin resources, shallow normative engagement, entitlement over realpolitik)

Counter-view

the larger doubt: **Raja Mohan & Saran** on "Cold War 2.0" sidelining the UN → 2024 Pact for the Future urged but delivered no negotiation → drift to G20/BRICS-plus/Quad → the prize itself is uncertain

Conclusion routes

R1 obstacle is structure + politics, not India's case → merit alone will not win the seat **R2** keep pressing text-based negotiations + build concrete national power so the claim becomes self-evident, not merely just

India's credentials are seldom disputed. It is the size, economy, 8 terms on the council, the largest peace keeping record, and backing from four of five P5 & 120 plus states.

But the seat remains blocked where the impediments are structural & political, not a deficit of merit. Article 108 needs a $2/3$ majority in the UNGA plus ratification by all 5 permanent members. A single veto blocks enlargement; most likely China's, the lone holdout, shaped by border rivalry and its ties with Pakistan.

Uniting for Consensus, led by Italy with Pakistan, opposes new permanent seats, and rival claims from Africa & Latin America split support. After 17 years, the inter-governmental negotiations lack a single agreed text.

India's refusal to sign the NPT gives opponents a handle, and its UN budget share is modest. Munkherjee and Malone argue weak resources for lobbying, shallow normative engagement and reliance on entitlement over realpolitik.

C. Raja Mohan and Shyam Saran suggest that a "Cold War 2.0" could sideline the UN. The 2024 pact for the future urged reform but yielded no negotiation, as states turn to the G20, BRICS-plus and the Quad, leaving the prize uncertain.

The obstacle, then, is structure and politics, not India's case. Merit alone will not win the seat. India must keep pressing for text-based negotiations while building the national power that makes its claim self-evident.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

Analyze the recent trends in India's role in the UN peacekeeping operations. (2019/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 largest all-time contributor → recent story is quality, not quantity → specialised + tech + gender service **R2** “recent trends” = how India contributes has changed → bulk infantry gives way to niche capability, technology, women-led roles

Body flow

specialisation (engineers, medics, aviation, trainers — **Nambiar**; high-risk African missions, South Sudan / DR Congo — **Kanwal**) → technology (UNITE AWARE + UN DPO; Jaishankar “protecting the protectors”; MP-IDSA → technology-contributing country; 2025 Berlin pledges — QRF, counter-IED, K-9) → gender leadership (first all-women FPU Liberia 2007 → 150+ women in Congo / South Sudan / Lebanon / Golan; 2025 Global South women's conference, Delhi) → normative push (Resolution 2589 — accountability for crimes against peacekeepers)

Counter-view

Gowan & Singh: habit not strategy → goodwill ≠ influence → active-deployment rank now behind Nepal & Bangladesh

Conclusion routes

R1 C. Raja Mohan: beyond troops to training, logistics, mediation, tech → convert specialised service into a decisive voice in mandate-making **R2** recent trends mark India as reformer, not just responder → field credibility must become agenda-setting influence

India remains the largest all-time contributor to UN peacekeeping, but its recent role turns less on numbers than on a shift from bulk troops to specialised, tech-driven and gender-led service.

Satish Nambiar stresses that such capabilities decide modern missions effectiveness. Mostly high-risk African deployments like South Sudan & the DR Congo, where Gunmeet Kanwal, in Indian Army : Vision 2020, shows how Indian strategy has adapted.

India co-designed UNITE AWARE with the UN Department of Peace Operations. S. Jaishankar has pressed for better tools for "protecting the protectors". It is a direction which 2025 Berlin Ministerial pledge of a Quick Reaction Force, counter-IED and K-9 units confirms.

From the first all-women police unit in Liberia (2007) to over 150 women serving in the Congo, South Sudan, Lebanon & the Golan, India hosted the 2025 Global South women peacekeepers' conference in Delhi.

India has pushed norms, championing Resolution 2589 on accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. Richard Gowan & Sushant Singh call this habit rather than strategy i.e. goodwill has not converted into influence, and with over 5000 personnel across 10 missions India now trails Nepal & Bangladesh in active deployment.

The task, C. Raja Mohan argues is to turn specialised, tech-enabled service into a decisive voice in shaping mandates.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2020 · 15 marks

Explain the importance of India's claim for a permanent seat in the United Security Council.
(2020/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 Council frozen at 1945 + crisis paralysis (Ukraine / Israel– Hamas) → claim important on two levels: institutional repair + India's own standing **R2** a rising power converting capability into recognition → the claim as the test of whether governance can accommodate new powers

Body flow

representation deficit (Global South, Asia's single seat) → implementers (most populous, largest cumulative peacekeeper) should shape the mandates → India's own interests (**Pant** ×3: recognition / 1948-Kashmir insurance / shield small states) + Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam → reform momentum: 2024 Pact for the Future (first summit doc, Africa priority; "good beginning" + caution; text-based talks stalled since 2015) → **Dabhade**: rule-taker → rule-maker, periphery → centre

Counter-view

Cold War 2.0 may sideline the UN (**Mohan, Saran**) → seat less consequential than concrete partnerships / national strength

Conclusion routes

R1 importance lies in what the claim tests → admit India = added legitimacy; refuse = drift toward the League's fate **R2** the badge is secondary → real stakes = India's passage from rule-taker to rule-maker, and the Council's own survival

The UNSC still mirrors 1945. Its paralysis over Ukraine and Israel-Hamas shows how far it has drifted from today's realities.

India's claim is important on two levels i.e. repairing a failing institution, and India's own standing in a changing order. India's entry would correct the under-representation of the Global South & of Asia, which has one permanent seat. It gives the world's most populous country & largest cumulative peacekeeper a hand in shaping the mandates it implements.

Harsh V. Pant argues that recognition of great-power status, insurance against a repeat of 1948 on Kashmir, & protection for smaller states from sanctions will align with Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

In September 2024 the Pact for the Future became the 1st UN summit document with a detailed paragraph on Council reform, prioritising the historical injustice against Africa. India welcomed it as good beginning.

Manish S. Dabhadre states, the claims marks India's shift from rule-taker to rule-maker, from periphery to the centre of global politics.

C. Raja Mohan & Shyam Saran argue that a looming 'Cold War 2.0' could sideline the UN, leaving the seat less consequential than partnerships. Its importance lies less in the badge than in what it tests i.e. can global governance absorb rising powers before losing relevance?

A council that admits India gains legitimacy and one that refuses risks the fate of the League of Nations.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 15 marks

Explain the factors which justify India's claim for a permanent seat at the UN security council. (2022/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 permanent membership still a 1945 settlement of the war victors → India's exclusion now the sharpest anomaly **R2** not one credential but a convergence → a Council built for the past cannot exclude India and stay legitimate

Body flow

founding member, universal character (**Bhagavan**, Ghetto Act) → eight non-permanent terms, sustained engagement → most populous (China 2023) + fourth-largest economy (IMF 2025) + largest democracy + responsible nuclear power (NFU) → peacekeeping, largest cumulative contributor → implementers should shape mandates → voice of the developing world (NAM, G-77, L.69) → backing of four P5 + 120-plus states → 2024 Pact for the Future endorses redressing Africa/Asia under-representation

Counter-view

credentials have not delivered → Council frozen, China non-committal, Pact short on a negotiating text → **Shyam Saran**: build concrete power, seat not owed

Conclusion routes

R1 the factors justify the claim in justice → convert rising weight into influence **R2** merit alone will not open the Council → make the claim irresistible, not merely just

The UNSC's permanent membership reflects the 1945 settlement among the 5 war victors. India's case rests not on one credential but a convergence that makes its exclusion the sharpest anomaly in a Council meant for present realities.

The claim begins in history. India was a founding member; Manu Bhagavan credits it with moulding the UN into a body of universal character, seen in the early campaign against South Africa's Ghetto act. 8 terms as a non-permanent member, recently in 2021-22, show sustained engagement across development, disarmament & peacebuilding.

India is the most populous country, having overtaken China in 2023, & the 4th largest economy on IMF's 2025 estimate.

It is the world's largest democracy & a responsible nuclear power committed to No First Use. Its peacekeeping - largest cumulative contribution, over 2,90,000 personnel across more than fifty missions.

India speaks for the developing world through the NAM, the G-77 & the L.69 group, 4 of the 5 permanent members & over 120 states back it, and the 2024 Pact for the Future - the most concrete reform commitment since the 1960s - endorses redressing the under-representation of Africa & Asia.

Yet credentials have not delivered. The council stays frozen, China non-committal, and the Pact remains short on a negotiating text. Shyam Saran urges India to build concrete power rather than treat the seat as owed. The factors justify the claim; the task is to convert rising weight into influence that makes it irresistible.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 15 marks

Discuss the importance of India's role in UN peacekeeping operations as a ground for its claim to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. (2023/15 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 peacekeeping = India's strongest single ground → those who implement mandates should shape them **R2** permanent membership demands readiness for global responsibility → seven-decade field record supplies exactly that

Body flow

quantum (2.9L personnel / 50+ missions / highest fatalities / 15 Force Commanders / every African op) → quality (UNITE AWARE, CUNPK, Res 2589) → normative bridge: implementers should shape mandates → **Raja Mohan** (moral authority + strategic capacity) → **Thakur** (emerging powers → larger governance role, seat included) → **Ghose** (diplomatic standing + readiness)

Counter-view

strong ground, not decisive → funding not troops decides influence, goodwill ≠ Council power → **Mukherjee** “not commensurate to results” → **Pant & Thakkar** (entitlement over responsibility; modest budget; no longer leads deployment)

Conclusion routes

R1 2024 Pact for the Future reopens the door → Charter rigidity + veto still decide → standing earned, not the seat **R2** standing earned ≠ representation → merit must be paired with the financial and political responsibilities of membership

Over 7 decades, peacekeeping has become the strongest single around India advances for a permanent seat. The argument is those who carry out the council's mandates should help shape them.

India's field record over 2,90,000 personnel across more than 50 missions, 182 fatalities. It is the highest of any contributor, 15 force commanders, and a presence in every UN operation in Africa.

The contribution has also grown in quality. The UNITE AWARE platform, CUNPK training around 12,000 personnel a year, and Resolution 2589 on accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. C. Raja Mohan calls this record as proof of moral authority & strategic capacity. Ramesh Thakur holds that contributions of emerging powers strengthen their case for a larger role in global governance, a seat included.

For Arundhati Ghose, peacekeeping has raised India's diplomatic standing & shown the readiness that permanent membership demands.

Funding, not troops, determines influence and goodwill has not converted into power over Council decisions. Amit Mukherjee calls the contribution "not commensurate to results". Harsh V. Pant & Chirayu Thakkar argues that the claim leans on demography & peacekeeping while underplaying the financial & political responsibilities of membership. India's budget contribution stays modest, and it no longer leads in active troop deployment.

The 2024 Pact for the Future, the boldest reform commitment since the 1960s, reopens the question. But Charter rigidity & the veto still decide it. Peacekeeping earns the standing; conversion into representation is a separate task.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2024 · 10 marks

“India must strive to become a semi-permanent member of the UNSC, rather than a permanent member without the right to veto.” Comment.
(2024/10 marks)

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 two diminished statuses on offer → both fall short of the equal-rights permanent seat India demands **R2** semi-permanent = Uniting for Consensus route; permanent-without-veto = US / 2005 Annan model → neither meets the real demand: parity

Body flow

seat's worth substantive, not symbolic → **Uday Bhaskar**: refuse a veto-less seat, it entrenches the P5 / two-tier Council → **Tellis**: veto withheld over India's independent foreign policy → semi-permanent no escape → it is the UfC device (Pakistan, Italy) to block the bid → pragmatic turn → **Desai**: veto-restraint norms = “pragmatic way out” + **Gharekhan**: realism + G4's fifteen-year moratorium

Counter-view

principle: parity, veto as substantive power vs pragmatism: realism, presence, persistent deadlock

Conclusion routes

R1 keep the principle (equal rights), bend only on timing → semi-permanent = stepping stone, never settlement **R2** flexibility on timing, not surrender of category → press the parity claim through the deadlock (Pact for the Future 2024 → 17th postponement 2025)

The proposition offers India a choice between two diminished statuses. A semi-permanent, renewable long-term seat is the Uniting for Consensus route.

A permanent seat without veto is the model the US & the 2005 Annan proposal put forward. Both fall short of the equal-rights seat India demands. Commodore Uday Bhaskar argues India should refuse a veto-less seat, since it would entrench the original 5 in a two-tier council. Ashley Tellis explains the veto is withheld because India's independent foreign policy will not always suit West.

The semi-permanent option is no escape as it is the very device Pakistan & Italy built to block India's permanent bid. Bharat H. Desai states emerging veto-restraint norms as a "pragmatic way out". Chinmaya R. Gharekhan urges realism; the G4 itself accepted a 15 year moratorium.

India's answer keeps the principle of equal rights & bends only on timing. The Pact for the Future (2024) was a good beginning, but a 17th postponement in 2025 confirms the deadlock. A semi-permanent seat is at best a stepping stone, never a settlement.



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