

The attempt to securitise the climate change agenda could have unintended consequences

India's negative vote at the UN Security Council (UNSC) on a draft resolution on climate change is a reflection of its long-held opposition to expanding the UNSC's mandate into areas that are already being dealt with by other multinational fora.

The resolution, piloted by Ireland and Niger and which had the support of a majority of the UNSC members, was voted down by India and Russia — it has veto powers — while China abstained. Their position is that the UNSC's primary responsibility is "maintenance of international peace and security" and climate change-related issues are outside its ambit. But the supporters of the resolution argue that the climate is creating security risks in the world, which will exacerbate in the future with water shortage, migration and a destruction of livelihoods. Germany had circulated a similar draft last year which was never put to vote in the Security Council as the Trump administration opposed it.

Now, with support from the Biden administration, the developed world is pushing to include what they call "climate security" in the agenda of the UNSC. While the urgency to take action to tackle climate change is appreciated, the attempt to securitise the climate agenda could have unintended consequences. Bringing the issue under the UNSC will also give more powers to the world's industrialised countries, which hold a veto power, to decide on future action on climate-related security issues.

Currently, all matters related to climate change are being discussed in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a specialised agency. And with over 190 members, its framework has made progress in tackling climate change. It is this process that led to the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement and the recent COP26 summit, and has put in place an international approach to combat global climate change.

Sure, there is valid criticism that decision making at UNFCCC conferences is slow and there has to be faster collective action to tackle climate change and associated challenges. But the solution is not outsourcing decision making to the five permanent members of the UNSC. Also, it is wrong to look at climate change through the prism of security.

Each nation faces different challenges in transitioning into a greener economy. As India's Permanent Representative at the UN T.S. Tirumurti pointed out, the developed countries, all big polluters, have not met the promises they made with regard to climate action. The least developed and developing countries should be encouraged to keep the promises they made with financial assistance. This needs to be a collective process and the best way is through the UNFCCC, where decisions made are by consensus. The UNFCCC should not only make sure that the promises made by member countries, especially the powerful ones, in previous conferences are kept but also expand the scope of discussions to include climate-related security issues.

Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

- Q. Recently, on which of the following issues did India get negative voting in the Security Council of the United Nations?**
- (a) Terrorism
 - (b) Climate change
 - (c) Refugee crisis
 - (d) All of the above.

Expected Question (Mains Exams)

- Q. To what extent is it appropriate to bring a resolution in the United Nations Security Council regarding climate change? Also tell how logical is the stand adopted by India on this?**
(250 Words)

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.