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## India at the UNGA

### What is the issue?

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- India called off the planned meeting with Pakistan in New York ahead of the United Nations General Assembly's annual session.
- In this backdrop, it is essential that India looks beyond Pakistan and engage with structural changes in the international system.

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### How have the roles changed?

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- There was a time when the voices of both Pakistan and India mattered on the world stage.
- Pakistan was a key member of the Western alliance system in Asia.
- It rightly saw itself as a pragmatic Islamic nation capable of exercising influence in the Middle East.
- It had the prospects of acting as a bridge between America and China.
- But today, Pakistan's diminished diplomacy drags on the Kashmir issue.
- India's political voice too mattered a lot at the UN, long back, when its economic weight was rather limited.
- India is now on its growing economic prominence and expanding global footprint.

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- But despite this, India seems obsessed with a few issues rather than engage with the larger international issues.

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### **Why has India become so?**

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- India persists with the quest for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, when all indications are that it is unlikely to happen.

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- It has also devoted too much energy in the pursuit of the international convention against terrorism.

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- However, this is unlikely to do very much in addressing India's security challenges.

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- More so, the UN resolutions are honoured by nations more in breach than in observance.

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- What have benefited India are key partnerships on counter-terrorism. E.g. with the US and Arab Gulf partners

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- This is more workable than the endorsement of general principles under multilateralism.

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### **Why should India look beyond Pakistan?**

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- India's relationship with Pakistan is not in its god phase at present.

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- India blamed 'Pakistan-based entities' for the recent killing of three special police officers in Kashmir.

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- The prospect of a diplomatic encounter between India and Pakistan has remained a focus in many multilateral gatherings.

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- For more than two decades now, this question seems to sensationalize the Indian public interest in multilateral gatherings.

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- The strained relations have deepened the inability of the two countries to engage with the larger global issues.  
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- So if India looks beyond Pakistan, terrorism and a UNSC seat, it could discuss much more in the UN.  
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## What are the global issues to be resolved?

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- **Sovereignty** - The foremost is balancing between the questions of sovereignty and multilateralism.  
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- Defending sovereignty was a key priority in India's UN diplomacy since the end of the Cold War.  
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- This is now being revived by the developments in regards with the decision of U.S. President Donald Trump.  
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- E.g. withdrawal from the Paris agreement, the UN Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the UN Human Rights Council, etc  
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- The essence of Trump's "America First" has been the promise to liberate US from the "globalist trap".  
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- He insists that he will not let multilateral organisations restrain America's pursuit of its national interests.  
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- Given these, sovereignty will once again be the dominant theme in this year's session.  
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- **Global Trade** - Trump is threatening to pull out of the WTO and choking its dispute-settlement mechanism.  
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- Key trading nations are already beginning to respond with proposals for reform.  
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- If it does not change, the WTO and the international order in trade may not survive the Trump era.

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- **Middle East** - Trump is making big moves in the Middle East that breaks away from the conventional thinking on the region.
- He has ended the 2015 [nuclear agreement](#) with Iran negotiated by the Obama administration.
- He is promising to press for a change in “regime behaviour” in Iran.
- There is also effort on constructing a new Middle East Security Alliance of Arab nations threatened by Iran.

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### What lies before India?

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- The geopolitics of the Gulf region is undergoing unprecedented change.
- This is a significant concern for India as it has massive economic and political stakes there.
- A similar issue is the world trading system and the nature of multilateralism.
- India’s diplomatic engagements at the UN should be about crafting a new strategy to address these challenges.

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**Source: Indian Express**

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