UNSC Meeting on J&K Situation

Why in news?

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held a "closed consultation" meeting on the situation in Kashmir, following India scrapping Art 370.

What was the meeting?

- The 15 members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) engaged in closed-door informal consultations on the situation in J&K.
- This was in a response to a letter written by Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to the President of the UNSC.
- It was backed by a request by China.
- Informal consultations are held in the UNSC all the time.
- There is no official record of the proceedings nor does the informal exchange result in any outcome document.
- In this case, the only consensus that had the backing of the majority of members was that India and Pakistan should resolve matters bilaterally.

What were the countries' stances?

- **UK** - China's attempts to get the president of the UNSC to issue an informal statement to the media, was curiously backed by the UK.
- This was perhaps in the hope of having some gains from the large domestic constituencies of Pakistanis.
- The UK might also have hoped to get some favour with China to further its mercantilist interests in the face of an imminent Brexit meltdown.
- **Pakistan** - Pakistan's Permanent Representative Maleeha Lodhi made a statement to the media making allegations against India.
- It was claimed that the voice of the people of Kashmir was being heard in the UNSC.
- **China** - China's Permanent Representative Zhang Jun claimed that members of the UNSC had expressed their serious concern concerning the situation in J&K.
- He added that they were also concerned about the human rights situation there.

What is India's stance?

- The move to revoke Article 370 is expected to bring development and prosperity to the J&K region.
- It is aimed at providing good governance, promoting social justice and ensuring economic development in J&K.
- The decisions are claimed to be internal to India.
- It has also been clarified that the constitutional change in India had no bearing on the boundary issue or the Line of Actual Control with China.

What is China's larger objective?

- As known, China treats Pakistan as a quasi-colony and backs it on all matters.
- However, its initiative to trigger informal consultations in the UNSC may have a broader rationale.
- China is facing global censure for its -
    i. uncontrolled human rights violations in Xinjiang province
    ii. mass incarceration of Uighurs in so-called re-education camps
    iii. razing of mosques and other historical places that give the Uighurs their distinct identity
- The protests in Hong Kong are a reaction to the progressive erosion of the special status accorded to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
- So, apart from the Pakistan cause, China is trying to deflect scrutiny of its own actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

Is UNSC involvement new?

- It is patently wrong to claim that the scrapping of Article 370 has resulted in the "internationalisation of Jammu & Kashmir".
- It is also wrong to argue that the informal discussion by UNSC members is the first of its kind in six decades.
- **Agenda** - Many sections of the Indian media have erroneously claimed that the last time the UNSC discussed the issue of J&K was in 1965.
- It is to be noted that the UNSC does not have any agenda item explicitly termed "Jammu and Kashmir".
- The only agenda item on its mandate is "The India Pakistan Question".
- **UNSC resolutions** - UNSC Resolutions 209, 210, 211, 214 and 215 of September 1965 focussed on a ceasefire during the India-Pak war.
- They demanded that the two sides cooperate with UNMOGIP (United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan).
- The last formal resolution under the agenda item titled "The India Pakistan Question" was UNSC Resolution 307 held in 1971.
- This mentioned India's unilateral declaration of a ceasefire in the western

theatre during that war, and Pakistan's acceptance of it.
- It also demanded a durable cessation of all hostilities.

How did this evolve?

- It was under PM Jawaharlal Nehru that India first brought the matter before the UNSC using Article 35 of the UN Charter.
- A letter (of January 1, 1948) was addressed to the UNSC president from the Representative of India P P Pillai.
- The agenda item was titled "The Situation in Jammu & Kashmir" until the 230th meeting of the UNSC (held on 20 January 1948).
- Pakistan too had written a letter dated January 15, 1948, addressed by Pakistan foreign minister, Zafarullah Khan, to the UN secretary general.
- As a result, the agenda item was re-designated as "The India-Pakistan Question" in the 231st meeting of the UNSC on January 22, 1948.
- This diluted the question of "aggression" that India had taken up.

How does the future look?

- With the exception of Pakistan and a few of its supporters, the global community endorses the bilateral framework for resolution of differences between India and Pakistan.
- The global community will no doubt take positive note of the steps being taken by India to restore normalcy in J&K.
- E.g. restoration of landlines, phased lifting of restrictions and the re-opening of government offices and schools

Source: The Indian Express

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