

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

India's 2028-29 UN Security Council Campaign: Africa beyond Bilateral Goodwill

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July 21, 2026

S*ummary*

India needs to convert longstanding partnerships into electoral support, particularly in Africa, to secure a non-permanent seat on the UNSC for the 2028-29 term.

On 14 July 2026, India officially launched its campaign to be elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2028–29 term.¹ Unlike its successful and uncontested bid for the 2021–22 term, India faces competition from Tajikistan this time. The election will be held in the UN General Assembly in June 2027, where a candidate must secure a two-thirds majority of the member states present and voting to be elected.

The contest also shows how Security Council elections have become more competitive. Diplomatic reputation and bilateral partnerships remain important, but they no longer guarantee electoral success. For India, the central challenge is to convert longstanding partnerships into electoral support across regional and multilateral forums, particularly in Africa. The African Group, with 54 member states, is the largest regional group in the General Assembly, and India’s extensive development partnership with the continent offers a useful diplomatic platform. Yet, in a closely contested election, bilateral goodwill alone may not be sufficient.

Why the 2028–29 Election is Different

India has served eight terms as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, most recently in 2021–22.² Its previous election, however, took place under markedly different circumstances. India was the sole candidate from the Asia-Pacific Group after securing the group’s unanimous endorsement before the election.³ It was subsequently elected with 184 of the 192 valid votes cast, reflecting broad international support.⁴

The 2028–29 campaign presents a more competitive political landscape. India faces a challenge from Tajikistan, which announced its candidature in September 2022 and has never before served on the Security Council. Tajikistan has also secured the

¹ External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar formally launched India’s campaign for election to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028–29 term at the UN Headquarters in New York on 14 July 2026. The campaign was launched under the theme “SHANTI” (Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity), which outlines India’s priorities for its candidature.

² India has served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC eight times: 1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, 2011–12 and 2021–22. India was elected in 1950–51 from the Commonwealth seat. Thereafter, it represented the Asian Group (1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85 and 1991–92), and, following the renaming of the group in 2011, the Asia-Pacific Group (2011–12 and 2021–22).

³ [“55 Asia-Pacific Countries Unanimously Back India’s Bid for Non-permanent Seat at UNSC”](#), *The Indian Express*, 26 June 2019.

⁴ [“Transcript of Virtual Special Media Briefing on the UNSC elections by Secretary \(West\)”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 18 June 2020.

backing of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).⁵ Although OIC endorsements are not binding and member states vote independently, they provide an important platform for diplomatic outreach and coalition-building, particularly in closely contested elections.

Recent Security Council elections suggest that electoral outcomes are becoming less predictable. In June 2026, Kyrgyzstan defeated the Philippines to win the Asia-Pacific seat. The Philippines, a four-time elected member of the Security Council, suffered its first-ever defeat in a Council election, while Kyrgyzstan was contesting a seat for the first time.⁶ In the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), Germany lost to Austria and Portugal despite being Europe’s largest economy, a G4 member and an experienced Security Council member.⁷

The results suggest that Security Council elections have become less a contest of diplomatic prestige than of sustained coalition-building. For India, the lesson is clear: like Germany, it possesses strong international credentials, but success will ultimately depend on sustained engagement and coalition-building across the UN membership.

Why Africa Matters

In a competitive Security Council election, Africa becomes especially important because of its numerical strength and growing influence within the United Nations. With 54 member states, the African Group is the largest regional group in the General Assembly, giving it considerable weight in elections to the Security Council and other UN bodies. Although General Assembly voting is conducted by secret ballot and African countries vote independently, the African Group's support can prove decisive in a closely contested election.

Africa’s significance extends beyond the size of its voting bloc. The African Union (AU) has strengthened continental coordination through common positions on major international issues, including Security Council reform as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.⁸ The AU also plays an important role in

⁵ [“Resolution No. 7/49-LO”](#), Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 17 March 2023.

⁶ [“Security Council Members Election”](#), United Nations, 3 June 2026.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Ezulwini Consensus sets out Africa’s common position on UNSC reform, calling for two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats for Africa in an expanded Council. The position was reaffirmed in

coordinating African candidatures for elections to UN bodies through internal consultations and consensus-building.⁹ These mechanisms do not determine how African states vote for non-African candidates. Even so, AU’s growing coordinating role means that engagement with African diplomacy increasingly extends beyond bilateral relationships.

Africa’s expanding role in global diplomacy has also made the continent an important arena for international engagement. Major powers and regional organisations have increasingly institutionalised their engagement with Africa through regular summits, ministerial meetings and strategic partnerships.¹⁰

India enters this contest with significant strengths. Over the past two decades, India has built a strong network of partnerships across Africa through development cooperation, trade, defence cooperation, capacity-building and high-level political exchanges.¹¹ It has also worked closely with African countries on Security Council reform through the L.69 Group and consistently supported greater African representation in global governance.¹² These are significant diplomatic assets. However, whether they translate into votes will depend on sustained political engagement during the campaign.

Beyond Bilateral Goodwill

These developments also expose a limitation in India’s current approach. While India’s partnerships with individual African countries remain a major strength, greater attention should also be given to engagement with the African Union and

the Sirte Declaration (2005). See [“The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: ‘The Ezulwini Consensus’](#)”, African Union, 8 March 2005.

⁹ The AU generally seeks consensus on African candidatures for the Security Council. However, contests have occurred, including between Mauritania, Morocco and Togo in 2011, and between Djibouti and Kenya in 2020. For the 2025–26 term, Somalia was endorsed by the AU after Mauritius, Tanzania and Madagascar withdrew their candidatures. See [“Security Council Elections 2024”](#), Security Council Report, 28 May 2024.

¹⁰ The growing number of Africa+1 summit processes, including the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), EU–AU Summit, Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), US–Africa Leaders’ Summit, Russia–Africa Summit, Korea–Africa Summit and Türkiye–Africa Partnership Summit, illustrates Africa’s increasing importance in global diplomacy and the expanding engagement of external partners with the continent. See [“Africa+1 Summits: A Closer Look at the Geometry of Global Diplomacy”](#), Africa Policy Research Institute (APRI), 26 January 2026.

¹¹ [“Remarks by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar at the Launch of Theme, Logo, and Website for the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit \(IAFS-IV\)”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 23 April 2026.

¹² [“Support from International Community for UNSC Membership”](#), Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 525, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 21 November 2019.

other continental institutions. As the AU has assumed a larger role in coordinating continental positions and shaping discussions on major regional and international issues, engagement at the institutional level has become an important dimension of diplomacy with Africa.

The prolonged gap in the India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) process highlights this challenge. India and the African Union jointly agreed to postpone the Fourth IAFS because of the evolving public health situation in parts of Africa.¹³ The summit has not been held since 2015. During the same period, several external partners have continued to convene Africa-wide summits and ministerial meetings, maintaining regular engagement with African leaders and institutions.¹⁴ The contrast is difficult to ignore.

The 2028–29 Security Council campaign offers an opportunity to strengthen the multilateral dimension of India’s Africa policy. Building on its strong bilateral partnerships, India should deepen engagement with the African Union and other continental institutions as part of its campaign strategy. Such an approach would strengthen India’s electoral campaign and better align its Africa policy with the changing institutional landscape of multilateral diplomacy. Whether it produces electoral gains will ultimately depend on sustained political engagement and the wider dynamics of the election.

¹³ [“Joint Press Release on the India-Africa Forum Summit IV”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 21 May 2026.

¹⁴ For instance, just a week after the scheduled IAFS dates, South Korea hosted the Korea–Africa Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with broad African participation. See [“First-ever Korea-Africa Foreign Ministers’ Meeting Opens in Seoul to Enhance Economic, Global Cooperation”](#), *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 1 June 2026.

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