

Important Vocab for the Editorial

1. **tactical** (adjective) – calculated, strategic, diplomatic.
2. **abstention** (noun) – refusal to vote, abstaining, non-voting.
3. **UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** (noun) – The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them. The Council is created on 15 March 2006 and it is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly. The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
4. **resolution** (noun) – motion, proposal.
5. **keen** (adjective) – discerning, sensitive, perceptive, clear, observant, insightful.
6. **diplomatic** (adjective) – (delicate & sensitive) consular, foreign-policy, political.
7. **persuade** (verb) – convince, influence, motivate.
8. **devolution** (noun) – decentralization, delegation, distribution.
9. **abstain** from (verb) – not vote, decline to vote, refuse to vote.
10. **signal** (verb) – indicate, communicate, express, signify.
11. **unwillingness** (noun) – disinclination, reluctance, hesitation.
12. **neighbour** (noun) – a country that is next to another country; (bordering) country.
13. **reluctance** (noun) – unwillingness, disinclination, hesitation.
14. **meet** (verb) – fulfil, satisfy, fill, match up to.
15. **aspiration** (noun) – aim, ambition, goal, target, objective.
16. **endorse** (verb) – uphold, support, ratify, approve, justify.
17. **stubborn** (adjective) – inflexible, uncooperative, difficult, resolute.
18. **sort of** (phrase) – to some extent, somewhat, somehow, slightly.
19. **accountability** (noun) – responsibility, liability, answerability.
20. **past** (noun) – history, background, experience.
21. **dismiss** (verb) – reject, deny, repudiate; banish, disregard, brush off, shrug off, forget.
22. **intent** (adjective) – purpose, intention, objective.
23. **shield** (verb) – protect, save, guard.
24. **credible** (adjective) – acceptable, trustworthy, reliable, dependable; believable, plausible, reasonable.
25. **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, indictment.
26. **war crimes** (noun) – War crimes are those violations of international humanitarian law (treaty or customary law) that incur individual criminal responsibility under international law. As a result, and in contrast to the crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes must always take place in the context of an armed conflict, either international or non-international.
27. **assessment** (noun) – evaluation, judgement, analysis.
28. **preserve** (verb) – protect, conserve, continue, maintain, perpetuate, safeguard, uphold.
29. **contain** (verb) – control, curb, keep under control, restrain, limit.
30. **pervasive** (adjective) – penetrating, pervading, extensive, widespread, prevalent, ubiquitous, omnipresent.
31. **influence** (noun) – power, authority, sway, leverage, weight.
32. **equality** (noun) – fairness, justness, impartiality.
33. **dignity** (noun) – self-esteem, self-worth, self-respect, pride/morale.
34. **mandated** (adjective) – authorized, empowered, designated.
35. **mechanism** (noun) – structure, system, procedure/method.
36. **in favour of** (phrase) – in support of, to the advantage of, approve of.
37. **concurrence** (noun) – agreement, acceptance, approval.
38. **stress** (verb) – emphasize, draw attention to, highlight, underline, underscore.
39. **integrity** (noun) – unity, wholeness, cohesion, togetherness, solidarity.
40. **'either-or' choice** (noun) – an unavoidable choice (between two options).
41. **amidst** (preposition) – amid, in the middle of; during.
42. **regress** (verb) – go backwards, revert, relapse slip back (to a less developed state).
43. **deficit** (noun) – slippage, shortfall, deficiency, shortage.
44. **regime** (noun) – government.
45. **predecessor** (noun) – previous holder of the post; forerunner, precursor, antecedent.
46. **constructive** (adjective) – useful/helpful, productive, practical/effective/beneficial.
47. **engagement** (noun) – participation, taking part, involvement.
48. **consensual** (adjective) – relating to consensus/consent; in agreement with those who involved.
49. **militarisation** (noun) – the act of making something similar to armed forces. the process of equipping something (an organisation/etc) with military forces/resources.
50. **heightened** (adjective) – intensified, increased, aggravated, exacerbated.
51. **surveillance** (noun) – monitoring, observation, scrutiny, inspection.
52. **interference** (noun) – intervention, meddling, unwarranted involvement.
53. **prosecution** (noun) – legal action, legal proceeding, legal case.
54. **emblematic** (adjective) – symbolic, indicative, representative, demonstrative.
55. **emblematic case** (noun) – an emblematic case seeks to create or influence case law in the countries in question. It aims to produce a social impact through law by testing existing legal structures, but also to encourage changes in social, institutional and cultural attitudes towards respect for human rights.
56. **rhetoric** (noun) – the art of speaking or writing effectively & persuasively or impressively (but, often lacking substance); bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
57. **inform** (verb) – characterize.
58. **sense of** (noun) – understanding, comprehension, discernment, acknowledgement.
59. **well-being** (noun) – a healthy state/condition.
60. **foster** (verb) – encourage, promote, develop.
61. **emphasis** (noun) – importance, significance; priority, insistence.
62. **rather than** (phrase) – instead of.
63. **move away from** (phrasal verb) – change/alter one's ideas/beliefs/views and so.
64. **reconciliation** (noun) – reunion, resolution, compromise.
65. **weigh down** (phrasal verb) – burden, impede, depress, oppress, make difficult.
66. **in accord with** (phrase) – in accordance with, in agreement with, consistent with.

67. [sentiment](#) (noun) – general feeling, thought, view, opinion.
68. [in the midst of](#) (phrase) – in the middle of.
69. [neutrality](#) (noun) – non-alignment, non-participation, non-involvement, non-intervention; impartiality, detachment.
70. [pragmatism](#) (noun) – common sense, realism, matter-of-factness.
71. [measure](#) (noun) – amount, degree, quantity.
72. [way out](#) (noun) – answer, solution.

Tactical abstention: On the U.N. Human Rights Council resolution on Sri Lanka

India was keen not to lose diplomatic space to persuade Sri Lanka on devolution for Tamils

By [abstaining from the vote on the U.N. Human Rights Council resolution on Sri Lanka](#), India has signalled its unwillingness to upset its neighbour. At the same time, it does not want to be seen as ignoring Sri Lanka's reluctance to meet the political aspirations of the Tamils or endorsing the country's stubborn refusal to ensure any sort of accountability for its war-time past. It may be easy for the political opposition to dismiss India's abstention as showing an intent to shield Sri Lanka from a credible investigation into allegations of war crimes. A more reasonable assessment would be that India seems to have utilised the opportunity to preserve its diplomatic space and to contain the pervasive influence of China over Sri Lanka even while maintaining its support for the Tamil minority to achieve equality, justice, dignity and peace. India has not been comfortable with externally mandated investigative mechanisms. Even when it voted in 2012 in favour of a credible investigation into human rights, India had got the resolution to incorporate the need for Sri Lanka's 'concurrence' to any assistance that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights may offer in such a probe. In this session and just ahead of the vote, India stressed on both meaningful devolution to meet Tamil aspirations and the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka — aspects that it believes are not an 'either-or' choice.

The resolution comes amidst disturbing signs that Sri Lanka is regressing into the days of democratic deficit seen prior to the 2015 elections. Unfortunately, the present regime withdrew from the commitments made to the UNHRC by its predecessor on constructive engagement with the international community, and the consensual resolution on justice and accountability. The UN High Commissioner's report raises concern over increasing militarisation, heightened surveillance against rights defenders and NGOs, interference with the few prosecutions in emblematic cases from the past, and the dangerous anti-minority rhetoric. India's concerns in Sri Lanka have always been different from the rest of the international community, informed by a sense of the long-term well-being of the Tamils, and that power-sharing does foster reconciliation. Hence its emphasis on devolution rather than accountability. It is clear that India has its own limitations in expressing disappointment over the island nation's move away from reconciliation and devolution. It continues to be weighed down by the Chinese presence in the region. Even the need to be in accord with sentiment in Tamil Nadu in the midst of an election was not motivation enough for India to change its position from tactical neutrality to one of open support for the resolution. When pragmatism and principle were needed in equal measure, the Centre seems to have chosen abstention as an easy way out.