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GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE

INDIA AND SRI LANKA RELATIONS: POST-CRISIS DEVELOPMENTS

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **PSIR:** India and South Asia
- ❑ **GS2:** India and its neighborhood

Context: Sri lankan president Ranil Wickremesinghe undertook an official visit to India on 20-21 July 2023.

INTRODUCTION

After Sri Lanka's sovereign debt default, India's **Neighborhood First policy** was evident in its substantial economic aid to its neighbor. This aid played a crucial role in stabilizing Sri Lanka during its 2022 crisis and paved the way for further developments in the bilateral relationship.



INDIA'S ECONOMIC AID TO SRI LANKA

India provided **\$5 billion** in economic aid to Sri Lanka during its crisis in 2022. This substantial financial support helped Sri Lanka manage its economic challenges and gain some stability.

Additionally, India's aid also played a significant role in securing a \$3 billion program from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Sri Lanka in March 2023. This assistance showcased India's commitment to supporting its neighbors during times of crisis.

INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TOURISM

The Indian government has set an agenda for investing in key sectors in Sri Lanka. This includes a focus on **renewable energy, infrastructure development, and tourism**.

Indian companies, including renowned groups like Adani and Tata, have shown interest in investing in Sri Lanka to promote economic growth and foster deeper ties between the two countries.

OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA-SRI LANKA RELATIONS

Countering China's Influence: One of India's primary concerns in the region is China's growing presence in Sri Lanka. China has made significant investments in Sri Lanka, which has raised geopolitical concerns for India. By strengthening its ties with Sri Lanka, India aims to keep China's influence in the region at bay, thus maintaining its strategic interests.

Enhancing Regional Attractiveness: India's robust engagement with Sri Lanka can elevate South Asia's regional attractiveness. The bilateral engagement can extend to the Indian Ocean region and beyond, contributing to a more cohesive and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Strengthened economic ties between India and Sri Lanka can attract more investments and foster economic growth in the region.

Developing a South Asian Supply Chain: India's aid and investments in Sri Lanka open up opportunities for increased trade and the development of a robust South Asian supply chain. With lower hourly wages compared to China, South Asian countries can create export processing zones and industrial clusters, supported by an efficient supply chain network.

FUTURE INITIATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Turning Aid into Trade: While India currently provides aid to Sri Lanka, the focus should be on transforming this relationship into a reciprocal one, similar to India's approach with Japan. Encouraging more investments and promoting bilateral trade will help create a mutually beneficial partnership between India and Sri Lanka.

Consolidating Aid Programs: India can streamline its fragmented aid program by establishing a single development bank to handle assistance to Sri Lanka. A centralized approach will ensure more effective utilization of resources and coordination in providing aid.

Comprehensive Free Trade Deal: Accelerating talks for a comprehensive and high-quality India-Sri Lanka free trade deal, with a focus on supply chains and foreign investment, will facilitate greater trade cooperation and economic growth for both countries.

Adopting India's Digital Public Infrastructure: Sri Lanka can explore the adaptation of India's digital public infrastructure, including the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and open-source fintech. This collaboration can enhance digital connectivity and promote financial inclusion in the region.

Early Warning Mechanism: India and Sri Lanka should establish a mechanism for early warnings and methods to address economic crises. Learning from the ASEAN countries' experience after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, such a monitoring mechanism will enhance regional economic resilience and stability.

CONCLUSION

India's proactive engagement with Sri Lanka after its sovereign debt default demonstrates its commitment to the Neighborhood First policy and fostering strong ties with its neighbors. The economic aid provided by India and the focus on investment in key sectors open up new opportunities for both countries. By consolidating aid programs, pursuing a comprehensive free trade deal, and adopting India's digital infrastructure, India and Sri Lanka can further enhance their bilateral relations and promote regional prosperity and stability, in turn making this an **Asian century**.

INDUS WATERS TREATY: TOWARDS A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- GS2: Bilateral groupings and agreements
- PSIR: India and South Asia: Impediments to regional cooperation: River water disputes

INTRODUCTION

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has been a crucial agreement between India and Pakistan for the equitable sharing of water resources from the Indus River system. However, over the years, certain issues have arisen that call for a relook at the treaty. These issues mainly revolve around the need for flexibility in water allocation and the impact of climate change on water availability. To address the differences between India and Pakistan, the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization (ERU) and the no harm rule (NHR) from international watercourse law can offer potential solutions.



LACK OF FLEXIBILITY IN WATER ALLOCATION

The IWT provides a certain level of predictability and certainty in water supplies to both riparian states. However, it lacks mechanisms to account for changes in water availability due to factors like climate change. Climate change can alter precipitation patterns and river runoff, affecting the quantity of water available for allocation. The IWT must incorporate provisions that allow for flexibility in water sharing in response to changing conditions.

VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Bilateral water agreements like the IWT are based on the assumption that future water availability will remain similar to the present. However, climate change poses a significant challenge to this assumption. Changes in weather patterns

can impact water availability for agricultural and industrial purposes, making the current allocations less sustainable. The IWT needs to be reviewed to address the implications of climate change on water resources.

WAY FORWARD

Equitable and Reasonable Utilization (ERU): The ERU principle, as enshrined in the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses 1997, can be instrumental in resolving disputes between India and Pakistan. ERU requires both states to consider various factors, including climate change, when utilizing shared water resources. By incorporating ERU in the IWT, the parties can make more informed and equitable decisions regarding water allocation.

No Harm Rule (NHR): The NHR principle complements the ERU principle by emphasizing the need to avoid significant harm to other riparian states when planning water projects. Any project with the potential to impact neighboring states must undergo a transboundary environmental impact assessment as a precautionary measure. Including the NHR principle in the IWT will promote responsible water resource management and foster cooperation between India and Pakistan.

Leaning on “Vital Human Needs”: In situations where conflicting uses of water arise, Article 10 of the 1997 Convention suggests considering “vital human needs” as a guiding principle within the context of ERU and NHR. While the definition of “vital human needs” may be debatable, incorporating this concept into the IWT can provide a basis for finding common ground in water allocation decisions.

Role of the World Bank: The World Bank, which played a pivotal role in brokering the IWT in the past, can continue to facilitate dialogue between India and Pakistan. By bringing together transnational epistemic communities, the World

Bank can foster convergent state policies based on ERU and NHR principles. This alliance can contribute to the inclusion of these principles in the revised IWT, leading to more sustainable and collaborative water management.

CONCLUSION

The Indus Waters Treaty has been an essential mechanism for India and Pakistan to share water resources amicably. However, to address the challenges posed by changing water availability

due to climate change and ensure equitable utilization, the treaty must be reviewed and adapted. By incorporating principles of ERU and NHR, and considering “vital human needs,” both countries can find common ground in water allocation decisions. The World Bank can play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and building a transnational alliance to shape the revised IWT and foster sustainable water management in the region.

INDIA'S EVOLVING APPROACH TO REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS: EMBRACING PARTNERSHIPS AND BALANCING PRIORITIES

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- GS2: India and its neighborhood
- PSIR: Regionalisation of World Politics

INDIA'S CURRENT APPROACH TO REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS



Emphasis on Neighbourhood: The current Indian approach on regional geopolitics places significant emphasis on its neighbourhood. Prime Minister Modi's visits to Washington and Paris highlighted India's commitment to strengthening cooperation with its neighbours and major powers.

Indo-Pacific Roadmap: India and France issued a joint declaration on the Indo-Pacific Roadmap, signifying India's willingness to work with former colonial powers in the Indian Ocean. This marks a departure from India's previous stance of keeping colonial and extra-regional powers out of the region.

Expanding Regional Framework: India has expanded its regional framework to include the Pacific, demonstrating its engagement in a broader Indo-Pacific approach. Cooperation with countries in Africa, the Indian Ocean Region, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific is a key element of India's regional strategy.

Strengthening Regional Platforms: India seeks closer cooperation with regional partners through various platforms such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and the Indian Ocean Commission. These engagements enhance India's influence and collaborative efforts in the region.

Strategic Partnership with the US: The Indo-Pacific plays a crucial role in India's strategic partnership with the United States. The Quad has become an essential platform for strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

HISTORICAL APPROACH TOWARDS ASIAN NEIGHBOURHOOD

Area of Peace: After independence, India aimed to create an "area of peace" in Asia by keeping major powers out of the region. It emphasized regional security without interference from external powers.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): India's policy focused on NAM principles, which required the absence of foreign military bases on national territory for NAM membership. India sought to maintain distance from major power rivalries.

POST-COLD WAR POLICY SHIFT

Economic Liberalization: India's economic liberalization led to a shift in priorities, giving higher importance to trade, investment, and connectivity in bilateral relations with Asian neighbours.

Engagement with Major Powers: India started collaborating with major powers like Russia and China through forums like the Russia-India-China (RIC) and BRICS to promote a multipolar world.

Integrated Approach: India adopted a more integrated approach to its interests, engaging in various overlapping forums and partnerships. It joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Indo-Pacific framework, showcasing flexibility in its strategic engagements.

Quad and Western Partnerships: India's engagement with Western powers gained prominence, and it joined the Quad, aligning with countries like the United States, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates in the I2U2 forum.

Complementing ASEAN Efforts: India's participation in the Quad is seen as complementary to the efforts of ASEAN and other institutions led by Southeast Asian countries.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, India's current approach to regional geopolitics emphasizes a more proactive engagement with its neighbours and major powers. It seeks to strengthen regional cooperation through various forums while simultaneously maintaining its strategic partnerships with Western countries. The evolving regional dynamics and India's flexible approach enable it to pursue its interests effectively in the complex Indo-Pacific region.

INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONS

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ PSIR: India and Global Centre of Powers
- ❑ GS2-India France Bilateral relations.

Context: PM Modi's recent visit to France.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour at France's Bastille Day parade in Paris. This visit holds special significance as it coincides with the 25th anniversary of one of India's oldest and most significant strategic partnerships worldwide. Since its establishment in 1998, this alliance between India and France has consistently showcased "total convergence."

Over the past 25 years, four French Presidents and three Indian Prime Ministers have played crucial roles in nurturing this strong relationship. Back in 2009, the Indian tri-services personnel participated in the parade under the chief guest, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, while Nicolas Sarkozy served as the President of France.



In this year's parade, a tri-services contingent will march down the prestigious Champs-Élysées, accompanied by a flypast of three French Rafale fighter aircraft. These aircraft were recently

integrated into the Indian Air Force, symbolizing the deepening ties and cooperation between the two nations.

INDIA FRANCE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The strategic partnership between India and France began right after India conducted its nuclear tests, a time when most Western countries had distanced themselves from New Delhi. France was the first nation to acknowledge India's strategic significance following the nuclear tests in 1998. This partnership holds immense importance for India in Europe, characterized by complete alignment of interests.

Mohan Kumar, the former Indian Ambassador to France and current faculty member at Jindal Global University, emphasized that the India-France partnership stands out as a **rare example of absolute convergence**. **D B Venkatesh Varma**, a former Ambassador to Russia, noted that **India and France share a common pursuit of strategic autonomy** amid the complexities of global power dynamics.

Despite being geographically distant, India and France share a remarkable similarity in their strategic outlook. France has consistently supported India during crucial moments, including the civil nuclear negotiations with the US, where then-President Jacques Chirac conveyed a strong message to President George W. Bush, ensuring that India's interests were not compromised.

The partnership primarily focuses on various areas, as highlighted by the French foreign ministry, such as civil nuclear energy, defense cooperation, counter-terrorism efforts, space collaboration, cyber security, and digital technologies.

The signing of agreements for the supply of 36 Rafale aircraft in September 2016 and an industrial pact in March 2018 to construct six European pressurized water reactors (EPR) at the Jaitapur site are direct outcomes of this significant partnership, according to the French ministry's official site.

PARTNERSHIP IN DEFENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND CLIMATE DOMAIN

During the recent visit of PM Modi the following outcomes were reached between the two strategic partners.

Horizon 2047 Agreement: India and France have signed a strategic roadmap outlining their cooperation for the next 25 years, focusing on three main pillars:

1. **Partnership for Security and Sovereignty:** Strengthening joint efforts to enhance security and sovereignty.
2. **Partnership for the Planet:** Collaborating to address climate change and promote green transitions.
3. **Partnership for the People:** Fostering cooperation in education and people-to-people ties.

The agreement encompasses a wide range of fields for collaboration, including:

- Defence:** Both countries will work together on various defense initiatives.
- Space:** Joint space projects and research will be undertaken.
- Nuclear Energy:** Cooperation in the field of nuclear energy will be pursued.
- Climate Change and Green Transitions:** India and France will team up to tackle environmental challenges.
- Education:** Educational programs and exchanges will be promoted.
- People-to-People Ties:** Efforts will be made to enhance cultural and social connections.

In the **Indo-Pacific region**, the two nations have released a specific roadmap for cooperation, which includes:

- Military and Naval Exchanges:** Strengthening ties through military and naval collaborations.

- ❑ **Trilateral Development Fund:** Establishing a fund to support countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

DEFENSE COOPERATION HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❑ **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft:** Safran and DRDO will collaborate on the development of jet engines.
- ❑ **Submarine Joint Project:** Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders and the Naval Group of France will jointly build submarines.

INDIA FRANCE AND IDEA OF WORLD ORDER

India and France share common values in upholding their strategic autonomy and pursuing independent foreign policies, while recognizing the significance of the US in the global order. During a state visit to Beijing, President Emmanuel Macron emphasized the need for Europe to maintain its strategic autonomy and avoid being drawn into the US-China confrontation. He proposed the idea of Europe as a “third superpower,” with France taking the lead.

The geopolitical shifts resulting from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have led to a heightened appreciation of India’s strategic importance for Europe and vice versa. France, as India’s primary partner in Europe, understands New Delhi’s position on the war and the need for diplomatic efforts to restore peace. France’s support will be crucial for achieving a consensus outcome at the upcoming G20 summit in New Delhi, and India hopes that differences over the Ukraine conflict will not hinder a positive result.

Given France’s presence in the Indo-Pacific through its territories, it can become an important partner for enhancing maritime domain awareness and monitoring China’s activities in the region. However, it is essential to recognize that France’s relationship with China differs from India’s, particularly in trade and commercial aspects.

While France may not be able to completely de-risk or decouple from China, it can contribute to India’s maritime defense efforts on a transactional basis.

Many European leaders including Macron have labelled China as a negotiating partner, an economic competitor, and a systemic rival. Since ‘de-coupling’ from China is not possible, the latest focus is on ‘de-risking’ economic ties with China. Although Europe’s tough policies towards Russia and French ‘mixed-up’ approach towards China will continue to pose challenges to bilateral ties, it may also through new opportunities to work together.

INDIA AND FRANCE’S ECONOMIC TIES: AN AREA OF CONCERN

The recent communique between India and France gave relatively little attention to trade and investment, an area where there is significant room for growth. Currently, India’s trade with France stands at around \$10-12 billion annually, which is notably lower compared to our trade with countries like Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

Despite the modest trade figures, many prominent French companies have established a presence in India, making investments amounting to approximately \$10 billion over the past 25 years. Strengthening trade and investment ties with the European economy, valued at \$3 trillion, holds great potential. Negotiations on trade and investment agreements between India and the European Union have been resumed, and concluding these agreements promptly could provide a fresh impetus to economic relations. However, given the historical context of these negotiations, it will require intensified efforts to finalize these agreements.

In order to foster people-to-people ties between India and France, several measures have been announced, including increasing the number of

students admitted to France. Overcoming the language barrier is a challenge, but the growth of these ties is planned on several pillars. An existing migration and mobility agreement, expanded student and professional mobility, and strengthened civil society linkages aim to bring India and France closer together. The Alliances Françaises's goal of reaching 50,000 students will contribute to the target of having 30,000 Indian students in France by 2030. Encouraging the teaching of French in educational institutions will be crucial in facilitating mobility.

The state of India-France ties can be attributed to the collective efforts of previous leaders as well as the present leadership of the two countries. Over the past 25 years, three Indian Prime Ministers and four French Presidents have contributed to building a special relationship between India and France. PM Modi has played a significant role in finalizing the Rafale deal and advocating for the Indo-Pacific narrative, which has had a transformative impact. The amicable relationship between Modi and Macron has the potential to elevate the partnership to a defining level.

CPTPP: THE BIGGEST TRADE DEAL THAT UK SIGNED SINCE BREXIT

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **PSIR:** India and Global Centres of Power.
- ❑ **GS2:** Effect of policies of Developed and Developing countries on India's interest.

Context: Britain has formally signed a treaty to join a major Indo-Pacific trading bloc, through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

On Sunday, July 16th, 2023, the United Kingdom officially signed a treaty to become a member of a major Indo-Pacific bloc. The agreement in question is the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which is hailed as the most significant trade deal for the UK since its departure from the European Union in early 2020.



The accession protocol was signed by Business Minister Kemi Badenoch in Auckland, New Zealand. Badenoch expressed enthusiasm about the modern and ambitious nature of the agreement, seeing it as evidence that the UK is open for business and eager to engage with the dynamic and forward-looking bloc.

During an interview with Sky News, Badenoch highlighted that the UK's membership in the CPTPP grants it a position at the table in one of the world's fastest-growing regions. She also noted that other nations are showing interest in joining the pact, further solidifying the UK's role in this economic partnership.

According to government analysis cited by the broadcaster, the CPTPP is expected to provide significant economic benefits for the UK. Specifically, it is projected to boost UK exports by £1.7 billion, increase imports to the UK by £1.6 billion, and contribute £1.8 billion to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in the long run. The implementation of the pact is anticipated to take place in the second half of 2024.

WHAT IS CPTPP?

The CPTPP, a historic agreement reached in 2018, aims to reduce trade barriers among 11 participating countries: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. This pact necessitates the elimination or substantial reduction of tariffs, along with firm commitments to open services and investment markets.

Additionally, the CPTPP includes provisions addressing competition, intellectual property rights, and safeguards for foreign companies. It is widely viewed as a countermeasure to China's regional dominance, and interestingly, China has applied for membership alongside Taiwan, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Ecuador.

In response to China's interest, politicians from various nations, including the UK and Australia,

are actively pushing to exclude China from joining the agreement. On the other hand, Beijing is attempting to block Taiwan's accession to the CPTPP. This complex geopolitical situation adds significant dynamics to the ongoing discussions and negotiations surrounding the trade pact.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CPTPP FOR UK

The UK government has expressed its belief that joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will result in reduced tariffs for UK exports to Asia Pacific countries. With the UK's membership, the trading bloc will have an impressive combined GDP of 12 trillion pounds, accounting for about 15% of global trade.

Following Brexit in 2020, the UK is eager to strengthen its trade ties in the Pacific region. To achieve this, London has been pursuing a "Global Britain" strategy, diverging from the EU's single market and customs union. Instead, former Prime Minister Boris Johnson negotiated the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Since leaving the EU, the UK has been seeking trade deals with faster-growing economies around the world, as it recognizes that it may face challenges in securing immediate free trade agreements with major players like China or even its closest ally, the United States, which has indicated that further trade liberalization with the UK is not currently on the table.

Critics argue that agreements like CPTPP might struggle to fully compensate for the economic damage caused by leaving the EU, which is the world's largest trading bloc and collective economy. The government's own Office for Budget Responsibility has projected a long-term reduction of 4% in the UK's productivity as a result of Brexit.

While the UK already has trade deals with most of the CPTPP member countries, the expected economic boost is modest, with a projected annual increase in GDP of just 0.08%.

In 2022, the UK's exports to the EU amounted to 340 billion pounds, constituting 42% of its total exports. However, the UK government believes that around half of global growth is expected to

come from the Indo-Pacific region by the middle of the 2030s and continue to be significant until the middle of the century.

BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

☐ PSIR: Contemporary Global Concerns

Context: Russia has recently pulled out of Black Sea Grain deal.

Russia has said it is withdrawing from the Black Sea grain deal, which assured safe passage to ships carrying grain from Ukraine.

Brokered by the UN and Turkey, the deal was set to expire Monday, and negotiations had been on to get the Kremlin to extend it. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the agreements had reached a "de facto" end on Monday, BBC reported.



WHAT IS BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL?

Ukraine, one of the world's largest exporters of foodgrains like wheat and corn, plays a significant role in contributing to the UN's food aid programs. However, when Russia invaded Ukraine and blockaded its ports, it caused food prices to soar, raising concerns about food security in poorer nations. For instance, Pakistan experienced a crisis due to the skyrocketing wheat prices.

On July 22, 2022, the UN and Turkey successfully brokered the Black Sea Grain Initiative with Russia. This agreement allowed cargo ships to travel to

and from three Ukrainian ports, namely Odesa, Chornomorsk, and Pivdennyi (Yuzhny), as long as they underwent inspection to ensure they were not carrying arms. The designated safe passage in the Black Sea was 310 nautical miles long and three nautical miles wide.

The deal was so crucial that it had to be extended twice. As of June, nearly 32 million tonnes of mainly corn and wheat have been exported by Ukraine under this agreement, providing some relief to the food crisis situation.

Overall, the Black Sea Grain Initiative played a vital role in mitigating the impact of the Russian invasion on global food prices and addressing concerns about food security in vulnerable nations.

WHY RUSSIA HAS NOT RENEWED THE DEAL AGAIN?

Russia alleges that the commitments promised to them as part of the deal have not been fulfilled, leading to difficulties in exporting their agricultural products and fertilizers due to various sanctions imposed by Western nations. Although there are no direct restrictions on Russia's agricultural exports, the country claims that barriers in payment platforms, insurance, shipping, and other logistical aspects are impeding their trade.

Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed frustration with the situation, stating on July

13, as quoted by AP, that they have repeatedly demonstrated goodwill to extend the deal, but they can no longer tolerate the current situation.

Russia had initially agreed to the grain deal with the intention of supporting global food security. However, it contends that most of Ukraine's exports have been directed towards higher and middle-income countries, while the United Nations argues that these exports have also helped mitigate food price increases for poorer nations.

As a potential solution, Reuters reports that the European Union (EU) is exploring the possibility of reconnecting a subsidiary of the Russian Agricultural Bank (Rosselkhozbank) to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT). This reconnection would facilitate grain and fertilizer transactions, which were previously halted due to the ongoing war.

PERFORMANCE OF RUSSIA, UKRAINE GRAIN TRADE AMID THE WAR

Russia is solidifying its position as the world's leading wheat exporter, while Ukraine's wheat shipments are expected to decrease by over half from their peak, with production reaching an 11-year low.

The primary destinations for Russian wheat are the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, with Egypt, Iran, and Algeria leading the way. The Black Sea Grain Initiative supported Ukraine in exporting 16.8 million tonnes in 2022-23, but around 39% of its wheat was transported via land to Eastern Europe. Ukraine's markets have undergone significant changes, shifting from Asia and North Africa to predominantly Europe due to logistical convenience. However, this shift has resulted in a surplus of Ukrainian grain, causing distress among farmers in some Eastern European countries who have seen their produce prices plummet.

INDIA AND THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO)

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **PSIR:** Regionalisation of World Politics
- ❑ **GS2:** Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: India recently hosted the 23rd summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in a virtual format, marking its inaugural chairmanship since becoming a full member of the organization in 2017.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

India's assumption of the chairmanship at the 23rd virtual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) underscores its growing role in regional diplomacy and its engagement with multilateral institutions. The summit, themed 'Towards a SECURE SCO,' encompasses various dimensions of international relations, including

security, economic development, connectivity, unity, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and environmental protection.

SCO IN BRIEF

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a regional intergovernmental institution established in 2001 by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia,

Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Initially known as the 'Shanghai Five,' the organization expanded to include Uzbekistan in 2001, embodying the principles of regionalism and multilateralism in international relations.

SCO 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- ❑ The topic of Afghanistan garnered widespread consensus.
- ❑ Notable agreements included the New Delhi Declaration and two joint statements addressing countering radicalization and digital transformation.

- ❑ The summit witnessed Iran's official entry as the ninth member country of the SCO.
- ❑ Member countries expressed the necessity for establishing a more representative and multipolar global order in the interest of the world.
- ❑ India chose not to participate in statements concerning economic cooperation and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), reflecting a lack of consensus.



RELEVANCE OF SCO FOR INDIA

- ❑ **Dealing with Pakistan & China:** Within the SCO framework, India gains the opportunity to evaluate China's Belt and Road Initiative in the region. Active participation in the SCO becomes

crucial, given Pakistan's membership, as it aids in addressing challenges such as terrorism originating from Pakistan and preventing closer links between India and Central Asia.

- ❑ **Strategic Significance:** The SCO serves as a vital platform for India's multi-alignment and strategic autonomy, enabling it to balance relationships with other regional and global powers effectively. By engaging with the SCO, India can address its perceived Western tilt, considering its participation in QUAD, referred to as the Asian-NATO by China.
- ❑ **Central Asia:** As an emerging power, India's involvement in Eurasian geopolitics is essential. India's economic growth makes it an attractive economic partner for Central Asian countries as they seek to reduce dependence on China. India is also pursuing regional connectivity projects to establish links with landlocked Central Asia for accessing their markets and resources.
- ❑ **Expanding Footprint:** With the SCO's expansion, it becomes increasingly significant for India. Iran's inclusion as a permanent member holds significant geopolitical importance. Additionally, having neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka as dialogue partners adds to the significance of the SCO platform.
- ❑ **Economic Potential:** The SCO possesses the potential to create an economically constructive alliance. Member countries collectively represent 40 percent of the world's population and 30 percent of global output. With the inclusion of Iran, the SCO will control 20 percent of the world's oil reserves and approximately 44 percent of natural gas reserves.

CHALLENGES FACING SCO

- ❑ **Becoming China-centric:** China's shared borders, growing political importance, and rising regional security profile increase the likelihood of its emergence as the dominant force in Central Asia. Most SCO members receive infrastructure aid from China's BRI. The inclusion of Iran in the SCO further consolidates

China's position within the organization due to Iran's strategic proximity to China.

- ❑ **Decline of Russia:** India's full membership in the SCO was based on Russia's prime position within the organization. However, Russia's involvement in the Ukraine conflict raises questions about its capacity to sustain its dominance in Central Asia, as Central Asian states seek to reduce reliance on Russia.
- ❑ **"Anti-West" Forum:** The SCO is increasingly perceived as an "anti-West" forum, and Iran's inclusion further complicates the situation for India. The anticipated inclusion of Belarus next year is expected to reinforce this image of the SCO.
- ❑ **Gap between Purpose and Practice:** While the SCO advocates peaceful conflict resolution, respect for territorial integrity, and counteracting terrorism and extremism, these principles are violated by China and Pakistan in their relations with India. Pakistan continues to support jihadi groups and promote terrorism against India, despite the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the SCO.
- ❑ **Limited Institutional Capacity:** The SCO faces challenges due to its comparatively weak institutional capacity and decision-making processes, which hinder effective implementation of agreements and timely response to crises.

FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION

- ❑ **Counterterrorism and Security Cooperation:** India should actively engage with SCO members to address shared security concerns, particularly in counterterrorism, countering extremism, and ensuring regional stability.
- ❑ **Protecting Interests:** Given the changing regional power dynamics favoring China, India must safeguard its interests by actively participating in the SCO, shaping the

organization's agenda, and contributing to its decision-making processes.

- ❑ **Improving Connectivity with Central Asia:** Enhancing connectivity with Central Asia has been a significant constraint for India. Iran's induction into the SCO will aid India in developing its connectivity strategy through Iran's Chabahar port and the International North South Transport Corridor, which passes through Iran and Central Asia to reach Russia. This will allow India to bypass land-based trade routes through Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

India's active engagement within the SCO demonstrates its commitment to regional cooperation, economic integration, and multilateral diplomacy. By leveraging its participation, India aims to strengthen its regional presence, safeguard its interests, and contribute to the broader objectives of regional stability and development within the complex landscape of international relations.

"INDIA AND NATO PLUS: ASSESSING THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF CLOSER ENGAGEMENT"

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **GS2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests.
- ❑ **PSIR:** Recent developments in Indian Foreign Policy: Vision of a new world order.

Context: The U.S. representative to NATO expressed receptiveness to increased engagement with India, signalling a potential shift in **realist power dynamics**.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. House Select Committee on China proposed augmenting **deterrence** in the Taiwan Strait by incorporating India into the NATO Plus framework, aiming to strengthen **collective security** among like-minded states. However, India rebuffed this proposition, thereby asserting its **strategic autonomy**. Yet, the U.S. Senate's India Caucus Co-Chairs unveiled their intention to introduce legislation granting India a "**NATO plus five**" defense status, evoking debates about India's potential alignment with NATO.

WHAT IS NATO AND NATO PLUS?

NATO, a prominent intergovernmental military alliance, embodies a realist construct with 31 member states primarily hailing from Europe and North America. Its justification revolves

around safeguarding the collective security and geopolitical interests of its members through political and military cooperation.



Source: Hindustan Times

NATO Plus represents an enlargement of NATO by incorporating five additional nations — Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Israel — that share treaty alliances with the United States. This security arrangement, embodying **neo-realist principles**, fosters cooperation beyond the confines of NATO to fortify global defense capabilities and address shared challenges.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE U.S. INVITATION TO INDIA AND INDIA'S REJECTION

The U.S. motive to bolster security cooperation with India stems from their shared interest in countering China's rising influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

The United States posits that India's inclusion in NATO would serve as a bulwark against Chinese territorial assertiveness and a means to enhance global security, particularly in the Indo-Pacific theatre.

India however, maintains its ability to independently navigate the complexities of the China challenge. The geographic barrier presented by the Himalayan region renders India's formal alignment with NATO inconceivable in the current geopolitical milieu.

Additionally, India's skepticism regarding China's sustained economic crisis undermines the efficacy of NATO membership as a countermeasure against Chinese aggression.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF INDIA'S INCLUSION IN NATO PLUS

Fortification of defense capabilities: In light of evolving security dynamics, India has already fostered diplomatic exchanges and military cooperation with several NATO member states, such as the United States, Britain, and France. Embracing the NATO Plus framework would potentially bolster India's deterrence capabilities

and shield against emerging threats, aligning with realistic notions of power projection.

Access to advanced technologies: Membership in NATO Plus would grant India access to advanced military technologies, intelligence-sharing platforms, and interoperability with fellow member states.

Deterioration of India-Russia relations: Despite India's long standing partnership with Russia, marked by historical realpolitik calculations, recent geopolitical shifts and Russia's burgeoning ties with China have strained their relationship. India's pursuit of closer ties with NATO could compensate for the diminishing cooperation with Russia and align with **realist principles of adapting to evolving alliances**.

Countering Chinese aggression: China's belligerent conduct, driven by realist pursuit of regional dominance, underscores the necessity for India to forge a robust partnership with the United States. A pragmatic engagement with NATO could enable India to effectively counter Chinese aggression and safeguard its own national interests.

India's Europe policy: India's realist approach to European geopolitics, encompassing an independent European policy, propels it toward potential engagement with NATO. As Europe recalibrates its role in the Indo-Pacific, India's alignment with NATO could contribute to its goals of expanding diplomatic and security linkages.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST INDIA'S INCLUSION IN NATO PLUS

Impact on India-Russia relations: A realist lens underscores the significance of India's long-standing partnership with Russia, which has facilitated regional security cooperation and moderated China's behaviour. Upsetting Russia through NATO Plus integration could drive Russia closer to China and Pakistan, undermining India's strategic calculations.

Preservation of strategic autonomy: India seeks to maintain flexibility in engaging with various nations and blocs based on its national interests. A formal NATO alliance could potentially compromise India's strategic autonomy, particularly in relation to its nuclear arsenal, as it would entail becoming embroiled in the United States' conflicts.

Constraining freedom of action: Joining a military framework like NATO Plus, while potentially advancing realist objectives, would also curtail India's freedom of action and limit its ability to pursue an independent policy toward China. Moreover, adopting the U.S.-led Taiwan strategy within NATO Plus could exacerbate India's security situation along the India-China border.

Tangible benefits and great-power aspirations: India can reap tangible benefits as a major defense partner of the United States without formal NATO Plus membership. Existing strategic partnerships, such as initiatives on Critical and Emerging Technologies, have flourished without the constraints of NATO membership. Furthermore, ambitions to rise as a great power and advocate for the Global South could be hindered within the confines of a junior-partner status in an alliance.

FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION

A smart approach holds that India should prioritize addressing immediate regional security challenges, including border disputes, terrorism, and conflicts, while cautiously navigating the wider geopolitical agenda of NATO. It calls for ensuring that India's engagement with the United States does not lead to direct military involvement or entanglement in conflicts related to Taiwan.

At present, India's involvement in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) presents a more promising path than NATO Plus, as it lacks a formal mutual-defense pact akin to NATO. The Quad's focus on economic, diplomatic, and military cooperation among like-minded nations aligns with India's goals and may better serve its strategic interests.

India should refrain from direct military entanglement with NATO. However, maintaining a constructive dialogue with NATO can facilitate productive exchanges and promote the convergence on a rules-based international order, considering the shared values between India and NATO.

INDIA-US TIES: TRUST & NECESSITY

RELEVANCE

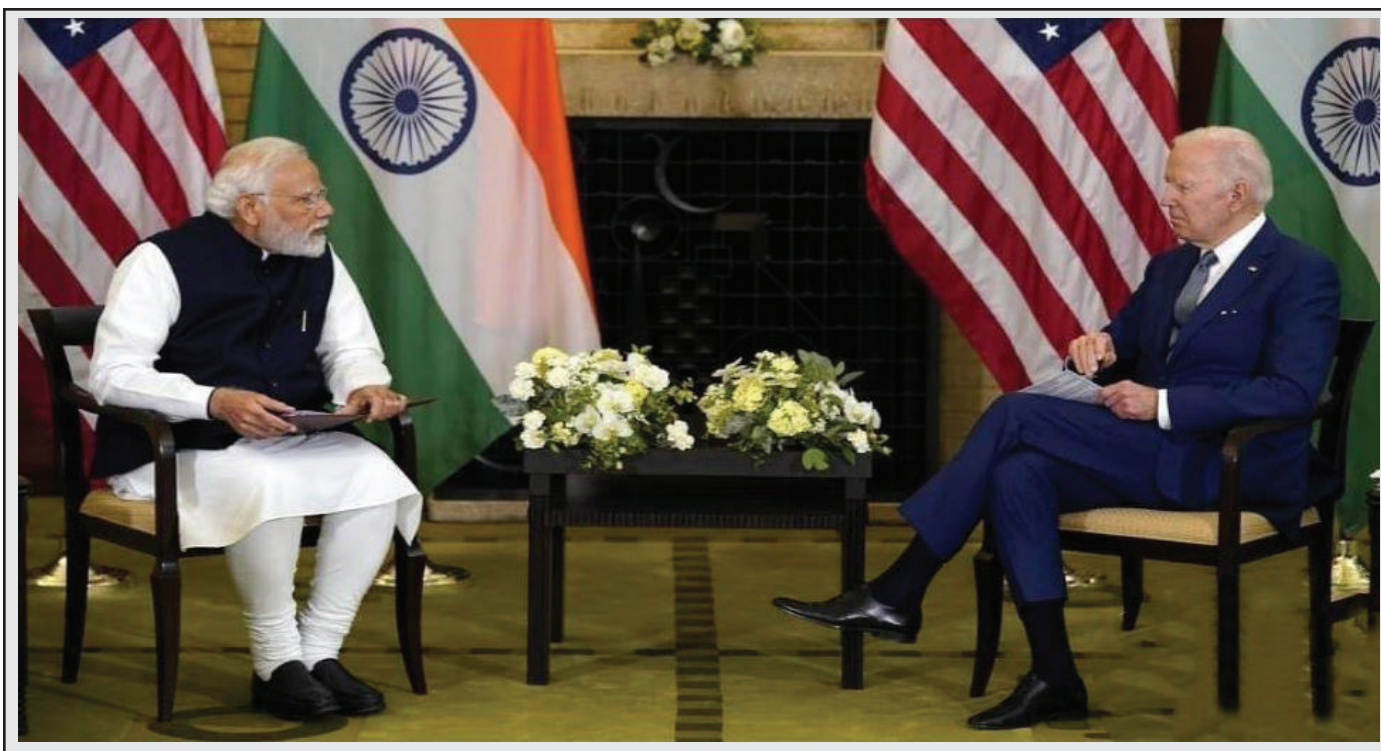
Syllabus:

- ❑ **PSIR:** India and Global Centre of Powers
- ❑ **GS2-**India USA Bilateral relations.

Context: PM Modi's recent visit to USA.

The Washington's strategic embrace of New Delhi owes both to bilateral efforts and geopolitical concerns. Some divergences remain, but ultimately, mutual interests can be expected to trump other concerns. Let us summarize this in context of recent development in Indo-US ties.

In September 2008, after the Nuclear Suppliers' Group's (NSG) waiver to the Indo-US nuclear deal, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, "It marks the end of India's decades long isolation from the nuclear mainstream and technology denial regime."



In June 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the US Congress that India and the US have overcome “the hesitations of history”, and called for ever-stronger economic and defence ties.

Six years later, the end of the “technology denial regime” and the overcoming of the “hesitations of history” had developed into the Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), which President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Modi announced in May 2022.

Led by National Security Advisors Ajit Doval and Jake Sullivan, the initiative got off to a start in January 2023 — and Sullivan visited India this month. The initiative is looking at technologies to be shared in critical sectors such as defence, space, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing.

As Modi lands in the US for his first State Visit — he has travelled to the country seven times as Prime Minister — the initiative on sharing critical and emerging technologies between “trusted geographies” is going to be a key element of the conversation.

PRESIDENTS AND PM'S VISITS

The Prime Minister’s visit, in the course of which he addressed a joint meeting of Congress for the second time, is a culmination of efforts made by a range of stakeholders over the years. The bilateral relationship has drawn on the current geopolitical situation, US strategic and economic concerns, the political and diplomatic positioning of India, and the slow process of building trust that has overcome the many challenges before the two democracies.

After the nuclear tests of 1998, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee faced global opprobrium, but he explained India’s position in a letter written to President Bill Clinton. “We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962,” Vajpayee said. “Although our relations with that country have improved...an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem.”

While “the nuclear tests...may have retarded India’s relationship with the US and the West

somewhat, by the turn of the century, [it had]... begun to crystallize into a mutually beneficial and substantive relationship”, former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran wrote in his book, “How India Sees the World”.

The Jaswant Singh-Strobe Talbott talks led to President Clinton’s visit in March 2000, and in the years that followed, relationship strengthened and matured. The George W Bush years saw the Indo-US nuclear deal, which elevated ties to a higher strategic trajectory. That the US pulled all the levers — including a phone call between President Bush and China’s President Hu Jintao — is testimony to Washington’s strategic embrace of New Delhi.

In the last months of Bush’s tenure, the global financial crisis hit, and the 26/11 terrorist attacks on Mumbai followed soon afterward.

Ties stayed the course under Barack Obama, who became the only President to visit India twice, and who hosted both Prime Ministers Singh and Modi at the White House. And despite Donald Trump’s unpredictability, ties continued to strengthen during his presidency.

The QUAD framework was revived, and the defence partnership was strengthened with the signing of the foundational agreements. Trump visited India just before the Covid-19 pandemic put much of the world under lockdowns.

Ties have maintained their rhythm under President Biden, especially on the Indo-Pacific strategy. But the chaotic US exit from Afghanistan left New Delhi vulnerable at a time when India faced challenges along two of its borders.

A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP

“India’s relationship with the US has been the most comprehensive association the country has had since independence...this is truly a relationship forged in crisis”, Rudra Chaudhuri, head of Carnegie India, wrote in his book, Forged in Crisis: India and the US since 1947.

Shyam Saran told The Indian Express at an Idea Exchange programme in May 2022: “The kind of depth and breadth that the India-US relationship has acquired in the last couple of decades, ...to me, has been a very surprising development. If you told me in 2005 that 20 years later, we would have such a strong military-to-military relationship, a strong counter-terrorism relationship, I would have probably said that that is an unrealistic prospect. But that has happened. I would have been one of the persons to oppose the signing of all the three foundational agreements between India and the United States. But there is a recognition that in terms of the challenges that we face, and will continue to face, this relationship is going to be very critical. And I agree with that.”

Saran was referring to the defence agreements that have been signed to provide the legal framework for enhanced interaction and exchange of information between the two militaries. These are the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA, 2016); Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA, 2018); and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA, 2020).

LEMOA allows the two militaries to access supplies, spare parts, and services at each other’s bases. COMCASA allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems so that Indian and US military commanders, aircraft and ships can communicate with each other through secure networks in peace and war. And BECA allowed India to use US geospatial intelligence and enhance accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones.

Other defence pacts were also signed: Industrial Security Agreement (ISA, 2019), and Memorandum of Intent on Defence Innovation Cooperation (2018). The India-US Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, concluded during the visit of Defense Secretary Lloyd J Austin last month, is expected to fast-track technology cooperation and co-production in areas of mutual interest.

RUSSIA AND CHINA FACTOR

While enough strategic trust has been built over time for the two countries to consider the transfer of about 11 critical technologies in the GE414 engine deal, there have been challenges in their divergent approaches towards Russia.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has tested the durability of the relationship like never before.

Over the last 16 months, India has not criticised Russia's actions — much to the discomfiture of its allies in Europe and the US. So when Prime Minister Modi told President Vladimir Putin in September last year that “today's era is not of war”, the US was pleased — both with the formulation and its articulation in public.

At the same time, Washington has shown an understanding for India's complex ties with Russia — its more than 60% dependence on Russian defence supplies, and its purchase of Russian oil at cheaper rates.

Both countries acknowledge Beijing as the biggest threat and rival. New Delhi had seen the challenge from far, but US administrations had ignored the warning signs until Obama started talking about the concept of “pivot”. But it was only under Trump that the US unambiguously identified China as a strategic threat. This framing has continued under President Biden.

With the US exit from Afghanistan, Beijing's stock in the region has risen. And the ambition

and confidence behind China's efforts at making peace between the Saudis and Iranians, Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine has been noticed in Washington and New Delhi.

With Russia and China having announced no-limits ties, India and the US have found reasons for greater convergence in approach: the Quad grouping and I2U2 formats are reflections of those.

THE UPSHOT

Divergences remain — Democrats have always been vocal about human rights, freedom of press, and rights of minorities, while New Delhi has pushed back against interference in “India's internal matters”.

But ultimately, interests trump other concerns — and New Delhi is aware of that. India has positioned itself as a fellow democracy and a strategic counterweight to China.

So, as the red carpet is laid out for Modi — with a State dinner hosted by President Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, a lunch hosted jointly by Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a reception by top US Congress lawmakers — Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said, “This is a milestone in our relationship between the two countries...it's a very significant visit, very important visit, a visit on which there is a genuine and widespread deep interest in the United States.”

HEART OF INDO-US TIES: ECONOMICS AND STRATEGY

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **PSIR:** India and Global Centres of Power.
- ❑ **GS2:** Indo-USA trade relations

Context: Underpinning the Indo-US strategic partnership is deepening economic engagement and a resolve on both sides to elevate the bilateral relationship to a ‘global strategic partnership’. Bilateral trade is at a record high and the potential is limitless — but there are some headwinds to contend with.

As Narendra Modi concludes an official state visit to the United States on the invitation of President Joe Biden, the bipartisan consensus in Washington on fostering the bilateral relationship is exemplified by the invitation extended to the Prime Minister by the leaders of the two chambers of the US Congress to address a joint meeting of Congress for a second time — an honour that has been accorded earlier only to a few leaders including Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, and Israel’s Prime Ministers Binyamin Netanyahu and Yitzhak Rabin.

ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT

At the heart of the Indo-US strategic partnership is deepening economic engagement and a resolve on both sides to elevate the bilateral relationship to a “global strategic partnership”. While the relationship is founded in shared democratic values and an increasing convergence of interests on regional and global issues, an indication of how far the needle has moved is in the fact that only 25 years ago, India was under US sanctions.

INDIA-US BILATERAL TRADE

<i>in US\$ billion</i>	2018	2019	2020	2021
INDIA'S EXPORTS TO THE US				
Merchandise	54.28	57.69	51.19	73.37
Services	28.87	29.74	25.84	28.98
Total	83.16	87.43	77.03	102.35
US EXPORTS TO INDIA				
Merchandise	33.19	34.29	27.39	39.94
Services	25.20	24.33	17.42	16.72
Total	58.39	58.62	44.82	56.66
TOTAL BILATERAL				
Merchandise & Services	141.55	146.05	121.85	159.01

Source: US Dept of Commerce, US Bureau of Census, Indian Embassy in Washington

Modi’s visit comes at a time when the value of trade between the two countries has touched a record \$191 billion, making the US India’s largest trading partner. For India, the favourable balance of trade position with the US is comforting, given that it has an adverse balance of trade equation with the majority of its other major trading partners. For the US, India is the ninth largest trading partner.

American companies have invested around \$60 billion in India in sectors ranging from manufacturing to telecommunications and consumer goods to aerospace. And Indian companies have put in more than \$40 billion in sectors such as IT, pharmaceuticals, and green energy, supporting, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in his address at the annual India Ideas Summit of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) on June 12, “425,000 jobs from California to Georgia”.

In February, Air India announced the purchase of more than 200 Boeing aircraft — a historic deal that President Biden said would “support over one million American jobs across 44 states”, and which will likely figure as a key pitch of his re-election campaign.

At the USIBC event, Blinken said Modi’s visit “will further solidify what President Biden has called a ‘defining relationship’ of the 21st century”.

STRATEGIC UNDERPINNINGS

Much of the relationship’s broader subtext is strategic, with both partners cranking up the engagement with an eye on China. Central to this cooperation is also the post-pandemic consensus on diversifying and deepening supply chains with trusted countries, while reducing strategic dependencies. The two governments are pursuing more than 50 bilateral dialogue mechanisms at various levels.

- The flagbearer of the strategic engagement is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. The Quad began as a broad partnership after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, but gained strategic heft after the four-country grouping, which has Australia and Japan alongside India and the US, was repurposed in 2017, primarily as a counter to China’s growing influence in the Indian Ocean rim, and as a forum for redoubling focus on the Indo-Pacific region.

❑ The I2U2, a grouping of India, Israel, the US and the United Arab Emirates, is focused on joint investments and new initiatives in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

❑ This January, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his US counterpart Jake Sullivan launched a new US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies. During Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo's visit in March, the two countries established a partnership to make the semiconductor supply chain more resilient through private sector cooperation. The semiconductor manufacturing agreement could have three main upsides for New Delhi.

The most important is the possibility of India getting aligned for a more central role in the global electronics supply chain — especially the possibility of potential convergence among the chip manufacturing incentive scheme launched by India and other governments around the world.

There is a commitment to mainstream India's \$10 billion incentives by dovetailing component manufacturing projects from established foreign chip firms and industry leaders, as opposed to just marginal players that have shown interest in India's scheme so far.

There is also the possibility of India benefiting from a further realignment of the regional collaborative effort being fostered by the US, which aims to diversify the sourcing supply base for semiconductor chips and avoid duplication of efforts, government officials said.

The US is already pursuing the **'Chip 4' alliance initiative** with three other top semiconductor makers, **Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea**. In September 2021, **India, Japan, and Australia** had announced plans to establish a **semiconductor supply chain initiative** "to secure access to semiconductors and their components".

A convergence of regional efforts is possible if the US were to play a fostering role to avoid overlap of efforts by partner countries, with India being possibly drafted into some of the chip alliances that are currently under discussion.

❑ The defence sector is likely to see multiple pacts, building on the bilateral cooperation framework that is already in place. Cooperation in areas such as armoured vehicles, ammunition, and air combat could include a deal for India, the world's largest arms importer, to manufacture under licence GE's F414 turbofan jet engine to power the indigenous Tejas Mk2 light combat aircraft that is under development.

SOME HEADWINDS

A few issues would need ironing out. The US still has significant export controls on India (instituted after the 1998 nuclear test), which inhibits the free transfer of technology. And the GE deal, if it goes through, will require clearance by Congress.

❑ Among the outstanding trade issues that require resolution are **visa delays** and the **revoking of India's trade benefits under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** programme in 2019. The US has complained about India's trade policy being overly protectionist, especially with regard to entry barriers for foreign investment and unsteady legal rules. India has been raising tariffs over the last few years, reversing an earlier policy of lowering tariffs that endured for decades.

❑ The seeming contradiction in India being a key partner of the US even as it ramps up procurement of discounted crude oil from Russia (which is now almost half of India's total crude imports, with state-owned oil utilities buying more Russian oil than private companies) needs to be resolved. The US has looked the other way so far — even as G-7 countries slapped price caps on Russian oil products to restrict Moscow's access to funds

for its war on Ukraine, while still maintaining an incentive for the country to supply to the global market.

- ❑ New Delhi will likely be nudged to join the trade pillar of the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). From Washington's perspective, there is no political appetite for a full-scale free trade agreement (FTA) with India in Congress at this moment, and it sees the IPEF as a more practical substitute for bilateral deals. (The Trade Policy Forum Working Group on Resilient Trade launched in January 2023 is seen as a primer for an FTA.)
- ❑ India has signed up for three pillars of the IPEF — committed to building more resilient supply chains, tapping clean energy opportunities, and combating corruption — but has opted out of the fourth pillar (trade) citing reservations about the commitments required on environment, labour, digital trade, and public procurement.

- ❑ There is growing disquiet within sections of the Union government over India not finding an entry into the **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**, a US-led partnership to secure supply chains of critical minerals that is aimed at reducing dependency on China. The partnership, which was floated last year, has now been expanded to include a new member, Italy (along with the 11 founding countries and the European Union).
- ❑ The MSP is learnt to have weighed the possibility of collaborative work on some 150-odd projects and shortlisted a dozen where members are likely to commence work — including fostering a critical minerals and metals cooperation forum for sharing expertise, developing battery materials, and jointly developing a minerals processing facility in South America.

FRANCE ENGULFED BY PROTESTS OVER INCIDENT OF POLICE BRUTALITY

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **PSIR:** Contemporary Global Concerns: Human Rights

Context:The latest protests erupted after Nahel, a boy of Algerian descent, was shot dead by the French police for allegedly not having a driver's license.

A few months after it witnessed massive protests over pension reforms, France is on the boil again. Over the last week, protests have swept across France following the death of a teenager as a result of the excessive use of force by the police on June 27.

Cars and public buildings were set on fire and clashes were reported between police and

protestors, who have taken to the streets to rally against French authorities' excesses.

However, a week after the shooting that sparked off the protests, things are calmer than they were, initially, with fewer arrests by police. 719 arrests had been made, and so far over 3,000 people have been detained, with around 45,000 police personnel deployed on the streets.



French riot police officers walk next to an upside-down vehicle during the fifth day of protests in Paris following the death of Nahel, a 17-year-old teenager. (Photo: Reuters)

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN FRANCE?

Large-scale protests were first reported in suburban Paris and then spread to a few other cities in France.

These were triggered by the death of 17-year-old Nahel. Nahel was a resident of Nanterre, a suburb to the west of Paris. He was allegedly driving a car without a license around the city when two policemen stopped him.

According to the Le Monde, the yellow Mercedes car and its young driver came to the notice of the policemen. They asked the driver to stop the vehicle at a traffic light, but the driver ran the red light. Two passengers were accompanying him in the car.

The car then stopped at the side of a road. According to a video that has been circulating widely after the death of Nahel, at least one of the policemen had their gun aimed at the car while they were talking. After the vehicle drove away from the officials against their orders, a bullet was fired at the boy, killing him, and the car then drove into a roadside pavement. The other passengers fled the scene.

Belonging to a French-Algerian family, Nahel was an only child of a single mother. He was enrolled in a course to become an electrician, as part of a larger programme to upskill and assist young people from disadvantaged areas. His attendance at the college was poor and he played rugby, a BBC report said, adding he did not have a police record.

WHAT HAS THE SCALE OF PROTESTS BEEN LIKE?

Clashes between the police and protestors erupted in and around Nanterre, and the government deployed 2,000 police personnel, AP reported.

Soon, however, the protests spread across France, with long-existing undertones of racism in society and the disproportionate use of force by the police at the centre of public anger.

“It’s an explosion of general anger” directed not just at police oppression, but also at economic and racial inequities, Mathieu Rigouste, the author of *La Domination Policière*, a book examining how French policing practices are rooted in colonialism, told Vox. He added: “In spite of international criticism and local struggles, the French state has continually reinforced its police, prisons, and borders (multiplying weapons, laws, and units specialized in ferocity) as well as judicial impunity over the last 30 years”.

Nahel’s mother has taken part in marches protesting the police action. She said the policemen “saw an Arab face, a little kid, and wanted to take his life” but told France 5 TV that she blamed only the one person who fired the shot, not the police.

Nanterre’s public prosecutor Pascal Prache, in a public statement, said that an autopsy showed that Nahel was killed by a single bullet. A formal investigation of the officer, under the charge of voluntary homicide, has been initiated. “The

prosecution considers that the legal conditions for the use of the weapon” by the police officer who fired the shot “are not met”, Prache said.

Rallies have continued despite numerous arrests as well as the generous use of teargas by the police. Over the first two days, the police arrested about 150 people around the country, more than half from Paris. Later in the week, many cities witnessed looting and arson. The facade of the Paris aquatic centre, where Olympic swimming events will be held in 2024, was damaged.

GOVERNMENT’S REACTION

French President Emmanuel Macron has appealed for calm and termed the death of Nahel as “unforgivable and inexplicable”. He has also said that “Violence against police stations, schools, town halls, against the Republic, is unjustifiable”, in a tweet. He said he would ask social media companies to take down inflammatory messages, “sensitive” footage of rioting and ask for those spreading such messages to be identified.

The government has held meetings on taking steps for calming the situation. Emergency was last imposed following weeks of rioting in France in 2005, when two boys fleeing police, in an attempt to hide, got electrocuted in a power substation. Concerns have been raised over a possible repetition of that time when thousands were arrested amid protests.

EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS: THE ARTEMIS ACCORD AND ITS IMPACT ON US-INDIA RELATIONS

RELEVANCE

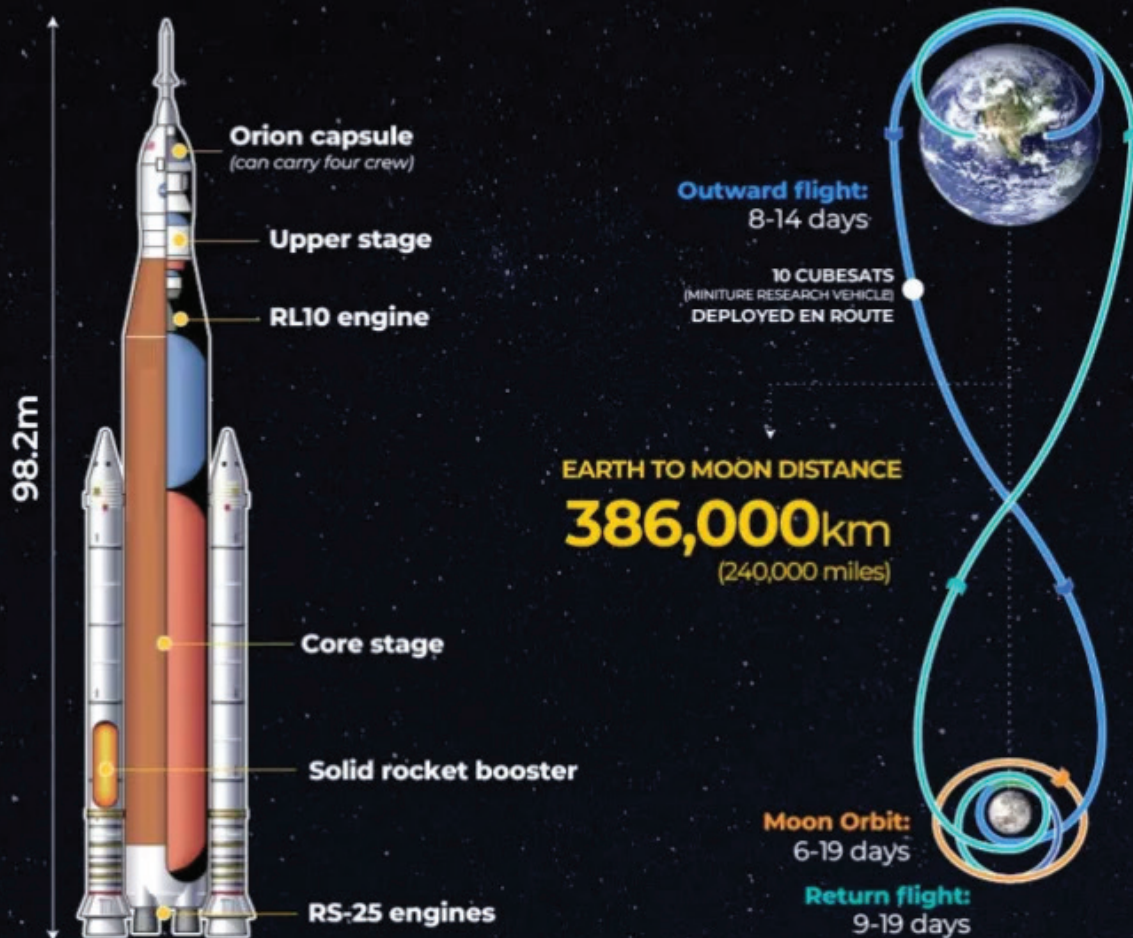
Syllabus:

- PSIR:** Vision of a new world order.
- GS2:** International relations

SPACE

NASA's Artemis moon mission

Artemis I is the first stage of NASA's new lunar exploration programme, which has the ultimate goal of establishing a long-term presence on the moon's surface.



Source: NASA, Graphic News | August 28, 2022

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Source: Al Jazeera

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARTEMIS ACCORD FOR US-INDIA RELATIONS

The signing of the Artemis Accord by India has implications for US-India relations, particularly in the field of space exploration. By aligning itself with the US-led space program, India has joined a group that currently excludes Russia and China,

two major space explorers. This move signifies a closer partnership between India and the United States in the realm of space exploration.

The agreement holds significance considering the historical context of US-India relations in the 1980s and 1990s when the US hindered India's access to crucial space technology. It also exerted

pressure on Russia to retract its commitment to supply cryogenic technology, which set back India's space program for nearly three decades. With the signing of the Artemis Accord, the US has promised to address export controls and facilitate technology transfer, indicating a shift in its stance towards India and a willingness to collaborate on space technology.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACCORD FOR INDIA

For India, the Artemis Accord holds significance in terms of its space plans and aspirations. While countries like the US, Russia, and China have already achieved milestones such as human missions, moon landings, planetary explorations, and the establishment of space stations, India has been playing catch-up in these endeavors. Joining the US-led alliance allows India to collaborate on the next generation of space technologies while simultaneously pursuing its own space plans. This collaboration can help India bridge the gap and accelerate its progress in space exploration.

The Accord is particularly important for India as it addresses the technology denial regime that hindered its space program in earlier years. India's delay in sending manned missions or landing a satellite on the moon was not due to a lack of capacity or expertise but rather restrictions on accessing advanced technology. By participating in the Artemis program, India aims to leverage the resources, expertise, and technological advancements of the alliance to bolster its own space ambitions.

ENRICH YOUR ANSWERS

Why is NASA going back to the moon again?

NASA's return to the Moon is driven by objectives of scientific discovery, economic benefits, and inspiring the next generation of explorers.

What new things have scientists discovered about the moon in recent decades?

Scientists have made intriguing discoveries challenging previous assumptions about the Moon, particularly regarding its dryness.

Researchers have found frozen water in the perpetually dark craters at the lunar poles, revealing potential sources of drinking water for future astronauts and offering the ability to break down water into hydrogen and oxygen for breathable air and rocket propellants.

The presence of these ices suggests that they could provide valuable insights into the solar system's history, potentially acting as a scientific record spanning billions of years.

NASA's Artemis program aims to achieve significant milestones, including landing the first woman and the first person of color on the Moon, marking a significant step forward in lunar exploration and representation.

CHALLENGES WITH INDIA SIGNING THE ARTEMIS ACCORD

One of the challenges India may face with the signing of the Artemis Accord is related to its relationship with Russia. Russia has been a trusted partner for India in the space and defense sectors, and it recently offered its facilities to train Indian astronauts for the Gaganyaan mission. Joining a US-led alliance that promotes US interests may not be viewed favorably by Russia, potentially straining the India-Russia relationship in the space domain.

Therefore, India will need to navigate this situation carefully, aiming to maintain a delicate balance between its collaboration with the US in the Artemis program and its existing ties with Russia. India has previously demonstrated its ability to strike such a balance in other sectors, such as the energy sector, following the conflict in Ukraine.

EXPLORING THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND EGYPT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **GS2:** Bilateral groupings and agreements
- ❑ **PSIR:** Recent developments in Indian Foreign Policy

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Egypt (June 24-25, 2023).

HISTORICAL AND CIVILIZATIONAL CONNECTION

The ties between India and Egypt can be traced back to ancient times, making it one of the oldest civilizational links.

Evidence of this connection dates back to 2750 BCE when Pharaoh Sahure dispatched ships to the Indian peninsula.

Additionally, Egyptian mummies from the middle of the second millennium BCE were wrapped in muslin dyed with Indian indigo. Throughout history, both countries have shared a commitment to decolonization and non-alignment, fostering goodwill and mutual understanding.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

In the realm of trade, India's bilateral trade with Egypt amounted to \$6,061 million in 2022-23, experiencing a 17% decline compared to the previous year.

Petroleum-related trade constituted a significant portion of this volume. India ranked as Egypt's sixth-largest trading partner, while Egypt held the position of India's 38th.

Indian investments in Egypt encompassed 50 projects worth \$3.15 billion, while Egyptian investments in India amounted to \$37 million.

BILATERAL INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

Several institutional mechanisms exist to facilitate cooperation between India and Egypt, including the

Joint Commission, Foreign Office Consultations, and various joint working groups. High-level visits, such as those made by the Defense and External Affairs Ministers, have strengthened bilateral ties. Notably, a bilateral summit occurred less than five months ago when Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi visited India.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING BILATERAL RELATIONS

Egypt, with its sizable population of 105 million and a \$378 billion economy, presents opportunities for collaboration.

The country shares socio-economic similarities with India and has a demand for imports such as refined petroleum, wheat, cars, corn, and pharmaceuticals. India has the potential to fulfill these requirements.

Moreover, Egypt's ambitious infrastructure development agenda, encompassing projects like New Cairo (\$58 billion) and a high-speed rail network (\$23 billion), opens avenues for partnership.

CHALLENGES IN THE INDIA-EGYPT BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Egypt faces economic challenges, including a financial crisis, stagnant economy, pandemic-related impacts, global slowdown, and the Ukraine conflict.

The decline in tourism and increased costs of imports, such as cereals, have exacerbated the

situation. With an annual inflation rate above 30% and significant currency depreciation since February 2022, foreign exchange scarcity has forced deferral of payments for essentials like wheat.

Furthermore, Gulf Arab states, who initially supported Egypt's economy with around \$30 billion, have become more hesitant due to concerns regarding governance issues.



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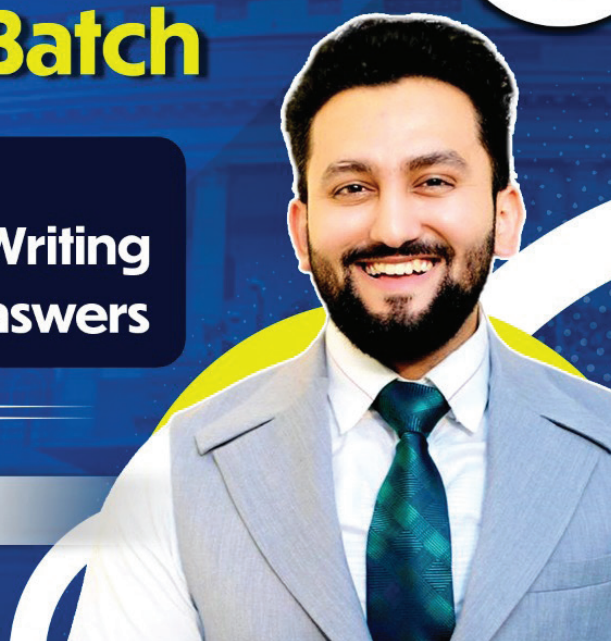
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INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (IGP)

EMPOWERING CITIZENS: A CLOSER LOOK AT RAJASTHAN'S MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME BILL 2023

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **GS2:** Government policies and interventions.
- ❑ **PSIR:** Planning and Economic Development

Context: The Rajasthan government has proposed Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023.

RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME BILL

Why in news?

The Rajasthan government has tabled the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023.



Visit [studyiq.com](https://www.studyiq.com) or Download The APP 

MAIN PROPOSALS OF THE RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME BILL 2023

Right to Minimum Guaranteed Income: The Act proposes a rights-based approach that ensures every eligible individual's right to receive a minimum guaranteed income. This income support aims to provide financial security and uplift vulnerable sections of society.

Right to Guaranteed Employment: The Bill aims to create a scheme that guarantees employment opportunities for eligible individuals in both rural and urban areas through various employment guarantee programs. The government plans to offer 125 days of work in each region, benefiting those in need of livelihood support.

Right to Guaranteed Social Security Pension: As part of the Act, the government intends to provide a social security pension to certain categories of people who cannot participate in the workforce, including the specially disabled, widows, and elders. This provision aims to provide financial assistance to those unable to work.

Gig Workers Welfare Act: The proposal includes the enactment of a Gig Workers Welfare Act, which will establish welfare and development funds for gig workers. This move is aimed at providing social security and support to workers in the gig economy.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE SCHEME

Challenges in Urban Implementation: While the Act includes provisions for urban employment guarantee schemes, it may face challenges in implementation. Unlike rural areas, where demand for work is seasonal, urban regions have a more complex employment landscape, making the scheme's design and execution more intricate.

Availability of Suitable Projects: Ensuring suitable public works projects in urban areas poses a concern. Urban local bodies may have limited capacity to manage such initiatives effectively, affecting the successful implementation of the employment guarantee scheme.

Fiscal Constraints: Rajasthan's high debt burden and fiscal constraints might impact the effective execution of the minimum guaranteed income scheme. The state's allocation towards more productive forms of expenditure could be limited due to financial obligations.

WAY FORWARD

Focus on Employment Opportunities: To enhance the effectiveness of the scheme, the government should create more employment opportunities at the lower end of the skill spectrum. Skill development and vocational training programs can empower individuals to access decent livelihood options.

Comprehensive Social Support: Besides income support, the government should ensure access to quality healthcare and education to create paths for upward mobility. A holistic approach to social support can uplift vulnerable sections of society and improve their overall well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023 proposes significant reforms in social security by ensuring minimum guaranteed income, employment opportunities, and social security pension for eligible individuals. While implementing the scheme in urban areas poses challenges, a comprehensive approach to employment generation and social support can enhance its effectiveness and uplift the socio-economic status of the vulnerable population.

GOVERNOR-STATE TUSSEL IN TAMIL NADU

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ GS2-Centre State Government Relations
- ❑ PSIR-Federalism

Context:Tamil Nadu Governor N.Ravi removed the Minister without the recommendation of Council of Ministers.

On July 8, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin wrote a letter to President Droupadi Murmu, expressing his concerns about the actions of state Governor N Ravi, which he believes pose a threat to democracy. The Chief Minister stated that the Governor's conduct has been unconstitutional and he has consistently disregarded the elected government and legislature, even causing delays in assenting to Bills.



The conflict between the Chief Minister and the Governor has been ongoing since N Ravi assumed office in 2021. In his letter, MK Stalin described the Governor as unsuitable for the position and urged the President to take appropriate action to safeguard the essence of the Constitution by considering the removal of N Ravi from the high constitutional office.

It is worth noting that Tamil Nadu has a history of voicing criticisms about the post of Governor, with

the state expressing its reservations about the role of the Governor in a democratic setup for nearly five decades.

Role of Governor in Centre State relations: Historical Overview

In 1967, Indian politics witnessed a significant shift. Until then, both state and national elections were held simultaneously, and the Indian National Congress dominated the electoral landscape. However, during the 1967 General Elections, the Congress, though still winning 283 seats out of 520 in the Lok Sabha, failed to secure a thumping majority for the first time. Additionally, it lost nine states, including Madras (now Tamil Nadu).

This election occurred in the aftermath of Jawaharlal Nehru's death, the defeat in the 1962 war with China, and a less-than-optimal economic situation, which left many voters disillusioned with the party.

The emergence of new regional parties and leaders at the state level, along with a changing Congress leadership at the Centre, put Centre-state relations to the test. Parties like the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, and state governments in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and the North-East hoped for a review of the Constitutional scheme governing Centre-State relations and dispute resolution mechanisms.

In response to these demands, the government established the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in 1969, tasked with examining

Centre-State relationships. The ARC recommended that Governors should be appointed by the President after consulting with the Chief Ministers, and they should perform their constitutional roles while submitting periodic reports on administration.

Despite the calls for reform, the ARC largely favored maintaining the existing system, believing it was capable of addressing any future issues. However, in 1973, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi presented a memo from the state that criticized the ARC's stance. The memo expressed concern over the Centre and Parliament's frequent interference in state subjects, creating an impression of excessive supervision of the country's entire administration by the Centre.

TAMIL NADU AND ITS RECORD IN CENTRE STATE RELATIONS

After assuming office as the Chief Minister in 1969, Karunanidhi proposed the formation of an expert committee to address the relationship between the Center and the States in a federal system, in line with the longstanding aspirations of Tamil Nadu's major political parties, the AIADMK and the DMK. Subsequently, the committee, led by PV Rajamannar, a former Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, was appointed by the Tamil Nadu government, and its report was released in 1971.

The primary objective of the Rajamannar Commission was to examine the constitutional provisions concerning the Center-state relations and suggest appropriate amendments to grant maximum autonomy to the States. The committee made some noteworthy recommendations. Notably, it proposed that recruitment to all-India services like the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service should be done through the transfer of existing state gazetted officers or direct recruitment, thereby bringing these services under the control of the States.

Regarding the role of the Governor, the commission suggested inserting a new clause in the Constitution, allowing the President to issue "Instruments of Instructions" to the Governors. These instruments would provide guidelines on matters where the Governor should consult the Central Government or where the Central Government could issue directives. Additionally, the commission recommended either eliminating Articles 356 and 357, which deal with the Center's power to impose an emergency in the States, or providing sufficient safeguards in the Constitution to protect the States from arbitrary actions of the ruling party at the Center.

In response to the Rajamannar Committee's report, the Tamil Nadu government presented its views on State Autonomy and the report in the state's Legislative Assembly in 1974. The government criticized the office of Governor, considering it a relic of the British colonial system, and the method of appointment as outdated in a democratic setup. It argued that the Governor, being appointed by and accountable to the Central Government, might not fully understand local conditions and the political situation. The government also questioned the expenditure incurred on the Governor's office, stating that it did not align with the principles of a socialist society.

The Tamil Nadu government put forward alternative proposals, suggesting that in cases of the Chief Minister's vacancy due to death or resignation, the successor should be elected within a fixed period, or else the Assembly would be automatically dissolved. During this time, the Chief Justice of the State could temporarily assume administrative responsibilities.

Despite the Tamil Nadu government's recommendations and criticism, none of the proposed reforms were accepted. In recent times, the DMK party, having faced challenges with Governor N Ravi, has revisited the issue of the

Governor's post. In December 2022, MLA T R B Rajaa referred to the post of Governor as 'probably the most useless' thing in democracy, drawing inspiration from a Tamil saying by DMK founder CN

Annadurai, suggesting that a State does not need a Governor, much like a goat does not require a beard, implying their unnecessary existence.

TELANGANA HIGH COURT VERDICT ON EUNUCHS ACT

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ GS2:Civil Liberties
- ❑ PSIR:Civil Liberties Movement

Context: Pointing out that the law “criminalises the entire transgender community”, a bench of the Telangana High Court struck down the law. They also directed the government regarding welfare measures and reservation for the community.

On Thursday, July 6, the Telangana High Court declared the Telangana Eunuchs Act of 1919 as “unconstitutional.” The court deemed it to be an unjust interference in the private lives of transgender individuals and a violation of their dignity.

Chief Justice Ujjal Bhuyan and Justice CV Bhaskar Reddy presided over the Bench and ruled that the Act infringed upon the transgender community's fundamental rights. Specifically, it was found to be in violation of their right to equality as enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution, as well as their right to privacy and dignity protected under Article 21.



WHAT WAS THE TELANGANA EUNUCHS ACT?

The former Andhra Pradesh (Telangana Area) Eunuchs Act, initially enacted in 1919 during the rule of Hyderabad Nizam, applied to individuals known as “eunuchs.” The Act defined “eunuchs” as “all persons of the male sex who openly admit to being impotent or exhibit clear signs of impotence upon medical examination.”

Under this legislation, eunuchs were required to register themselves with the authorities, providing details of their places of residence. This registration was deemed necessary because they were suspected of being involved in activities like kidnapping or castrating boys, as well as engaging in unnatural offenses or aiding in such acts.

The Act granted authorities the power to arrest transgender individuals without a warrant and subject them to imprisonment for up to two years if they were found dressed in female attire or engaging in activities such as singing, dancing, or participating in public entertainment on the streets or in public spaces. Furthermore, if a transgender person was found in the company of

a boy under the age of sixteen years, they could face imprisonment.

Critics argued that the Act was outdated and did not align with modern values. One of the contentious elements was the reference to “unnatural offences,” which had its roots in IPC Section 377, a provision that criminalized homosexuality. However, this section was later struck down by the Supreme Court in 2018.

It is essential to recognize that this information reflects historical context, and societal views have evolved significantly since the enactment of the Act. Many activists and advocates have fought for the rights of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, seeking the repeal or amendment of such laws to ensure equal treatment and protection under the law.



CASE IN DETAIL

In the case of *V. Vasanta Mogli vs. The State of Telangana*, three connected PILs (public interest litigations) were jointly addressed and resolved on July 6.

In September 2018, transgender activist Vyjayanti Vasanta Mogli, along with others, filed petitions asserting that certain laws were “unconstitutional, discriminatory, and stigmatized the eunuch and transgender community.” In response to the first PIL filed in this matter, the Telangana HC ruled that no arrests or prosecutions would be carried out under the Act.

The second petition requested the Telangana Government to formulate a comprehensive policy

safeguarding the rights of transgender individuals, including provisions for reservations in education and employment. Additionally, it sought the establishment of Transgender Welfare Boards, similar to those present in West Bengal, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Maharashtra.

The third PIL sought relief for transgender people during the Covid-19 pandemic, including access to rations, healthcare facilities, and other necessities. It also aimed to extend the benefits of the state’s Aasara Scheme to transgender individuals. The Aasara Scheme, initiated in 2014, provides a monthly pension of Rs 1,000 to the most vulnerable sections of society, such as the disabled, HIV/AIDS patients, widows, etc., and was later revised to Rs 2,016 in 2019.

WHAT HAS THE TELANGANA HIGH COURT SAID?

In a significant decision, a bench comprising Chief Justice Bhuyan and Justice Reddy of the Telangana High Court struck down a law that had serious implications for the transgender community. The court held that this law criminalized the entire transgender community, a stance that was found to be in violation of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

The court specifically pointed out that the law infringed upon Article 14, which guarantees the right to equality, and Article 21, which protects the right to life and personal liberty. The definition of “eunuch” used in the law was also deemed inconsistent with the definition of a “transgender person” under Section 2(k) of the Transgender Persons Act of 2019. Furthermore, it contradicted the interpretation given by the Supreme Court regarding the term “transgender.”

The Telangana Eunuchs Act drew unfavorable comparisons with the notorious Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which had criminalized specific tribal groups during British rule. This draconian provision had similarly categorized eunuchs

and necessitated the maintenance of a register containing their details. While the British-era law underwent frequent amendments and was eventually abolished, the Telangana law had remained unchanged.

By striking down the law, the Telangana High Court has taken a significant step towards upholding the rights and dignity of the transgender community and safeguarding their constitutional guarantees of equality and personal liberty.

RESERVATION FOR TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

☐ GS2: Social Justice

Context: In response to a clarification sought by the Bombay High Court, the Maharashtra government said on June 13 that it will be difficult to provide “additional reservations” to transgender persons in education and public employment, given the reservation that exists so far for various communities in India.

Advocate General Birendra Saraf, representing the Maharashtra government, expressed difficulties in providing additional reservations for transgender persons due to the existing extent of vertical and horizontal reservations. This matter is currently pending before the Supreme Court. On June 27, there was a protest in Mumbai where transgender persons voiced their disagreement with the state’s stance.

In India, the fight for horizontal reservation rights has been ongoing among trans persons for a considerable period. Prominent activists, including Grace Banu, Living Smile Vidya, and Disha Pinky Shaikh, along with Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi activists, have all raised their voices in support of the demand for reservation.



WHAT HAVE THE COURTS SAID ON RESERVATION FOR THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY?

In the landmark case of National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA) v. Union of India in 2014, the Supreme Court of India ruled in favor of transgender persons' rights. The court recognized transgender individuals as belonging to a socially and educationally disadvantaged class. As a result, the judgment asserted that transgender persons are entitled to reservation benefits, which aim to provide them with equal opportunities in education and public employment.

The court directed both the Central Government and State Governments to take necessary measures to acknowledge transgender persons as socially and educationally disadvantaged citizens. This recognition would enable them to avail all types of reservation benefits, including those related to admissions in educational institutions and appointments to public positions.

While the NALSA judgment acknowledged the entitlement to reservation, it did not specify whether these reservations should be vertical or horizontal in nature, leaving it open for further interpretation and implementation by the concerned authorities.

WHAT IS HORIZONTAL RESERVATIONS?

In India, there are affirmative action policies aimed at addressing historical disadvantages faced by certain communities. These policies can be categorized into vertical and horizontal reservations.

Vertical reservations focus on addressing social asymmetry due to the caste system, as well as social and educational backwardness among Other Backward Classes (OBCs). They include reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and OBCs.

On the other hand, horizontal reservations cut across all vertical groups and provide affirmative policies for disadvantaged groups within categories. For instance, disabled individuals are entitled to horizontal reservation in all vertical categories, irrespective of whether they are considered general or reserved.

Some states, such as Uttarakhand and Bihar, have introduced policies that guarantee horizontal reservation for women. This means that women belonging to the SC category, for example, can avail of reservation benefits based on both their caste and gender. Transgender individuals are also advocating for similar horizontal reservation rights.

WHAT IS THE DEMAND FOR HORIZONTAL RESERVATION?

The issue at hand pertains to the necessity of instituting mandatory provisions for a historically marginalized community in society, while acknowledging the various components of their social identity.

According to a study conducted by the National Human Rights Commission, in 2017, only 6 percent of transgender individuals were formally employed. A considerable segment of the community found themselves involved in informal work, such as begging and sex work, which have been criminalized in India through various Acts and laws. However, transgender individuals often resort to such occupations due to cultural practices and the need for survival.

The interpretation of the NALSA verdict has predominantly leaned towards advocating reservations for transgender people within the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. This interpretation likely arose from the court recognizing the community as "a socially and educationally backward class." Nevertheless, despite this acknowledgement, no practical implementation of such reservations has taken place thus far.

Furthermore, activists from the transgender community argue that this approach could adversely affect transgender individuals from Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi backgrounds. They may face a dilemma, having to choose between availing reservation benefits based on their caste or tribal identity versus their gender identity. This potentially creates a situation where one aspect of their identity might be prioritized at the expense of the other.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR ON HORIZONTAL RESERVATIONS?

Since the landmark NALSA judgment, the Central government has not taken any concrete steps to ensure the implementation of reservation rights for transgender individuals.

Back in 2015, Rajya Sabha DMK MP Tiruchi Siva introduced the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, which was developed in consultation with the transgender community. This Private Member's Bill aligned with the NALSA judgment and included provisions for reservation of jobs in both the public and private sectors for transgender individuals. Although the Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha, it faced rejection in the Lok Sabha. Instead, the Centre introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, which lacked any provision for reservations.

Subsequently, in 2018, a parliamentary standing committee, chaired by BJP MP Ramesh Bais, was

established under the Ministry of Social Justice. This committee also recommended reservations for transgender persons in accordance with the NALSA judgment. However, when the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was passed, it did not include any provisions for reservation, either vertical or horizontal.

In contrast, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, included provisions for horizontal reservation for disabled individuals, ensuring their representation in various spheres under the Central government.

On a state level, some progress has been made. In 2015, Tamil Nadu categorized "transgender or eunuch (thirunangai or aravani)" as transwomen and included them in the Most Backward Classes (MBC) category. Karnataka became the first and only state to provide one percent horizontal reservation to transgender individuals in 2021 following the Sangama v State of Karnataka case. Similarly, in April of this year, Madhya Pradesh included transgender persons in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.

Despite these state-level initiatives, there has been a lack of comprehensive action from the Central government to implement reservation rights for transgender individuals, leaving their representation and opportunities for socio-economic growth unaddressed.

THE CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- GS2:** Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.
- PSIR:** Principal Organs of the Union Government: Envisaged role and actual working of the Executive, Legislature, and Supreme Court.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) lodged a complaint with the Election Commission (ECI), urging action against political parties that failed to disclose the criminal records of their candidates, as mandated by the Supreme Court and the ECI. Concerns regarding the criminalization of politics have long been raised by activists and independent electoral watchdogs like ADR, highlighting the substantial threat it poses to the democratic system.

BACKGROUND OF THE PETITION

In 2018, the Supreme Court, in response to a petition filed by the Public Interest Foundation, made it compulsory for political parties to publicize the details of candidates with pending criminal cases.

In February 2020, while hearing a contempt petition related to non-compliance with its 2018 order, the court reiterated the requirement for parties to disclose candidate details, including the reasons for selecting candidates with pending criminal cases.

However, data analysis conducted by ADR on elections in Karnataka, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh revealed an increase in the number of candidates with criminal records compared to previous elections. ADR filed a petition in 2022, seeking contempt proceedings against various political leaders for non-compliance. The Supreme Court dismissed the petition in 2023 and directed ADR to pursue remedies with the ECI, prompting ADR to write the letter to the ECI.

UNDERSTANDING CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS

“Criminalization of politics” refers to the infiltration of individuals with criminal and corrupt backgrounds into the political system. These individuals exploit their positions of power and

influence, prioritizing personal agendas over the welfare of the nation and its people.

RECENT TRENDS

Data from ADR indicates a steady increase in the number of candidates with criminal charges being elected to Parliament since 2004.

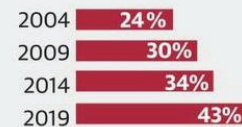
The percentage of Members of Parliament (MPs) with pending criminal cases rose from 24% in 2004 to 43% in 2019.

A recent ADR report on the Karnataka elections highlighted that approximately 45% of the candidates had criminal cases registered against them, with nearly 30% accused of serious offenses such as rape and murder.

Cause for concern

The Supreme Court on Thursday flagged the alarming increase in incidence of criminals in politics

MPs with pending criminal cases:



■ The 2018 Constitution Bench judgment that formed the basis for Thursday's verdict said: Rapid criminalisation of politics cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should begin by "cleansing" political parties



No political party offers an explanation as to why candidates with pending criminal cases are selected as candidates

JUSTICE NARIMAN, on February 13, 2020



CAUSES OF CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA

Attraction of Strongmen: Frustrated by the government's inability to address socio-economic and political concerns, the public gravitates toward individuals with a criminal image who possess power and wealth, expecting them to fulfill their needs.

Vote Bank Politics: Criminals' money and muscle power enable political parties to secure votes. India's electoral politics, influenced by factors such as caste, ethnicity, and religion, allows candidates

to overcome reputational damage caused by criminal charges.

Black Money in Elections: Elections rely heavily on funding, and candidates with criminal records often possess significant wealth, allowing them to gain advantages in campaigns and enhance their “winnability.” Research indicates that candidates with tainted reputations are three times more likely to win elections than those with clean records.

Lack of Intra-party Democracy: Political parties in India often lack internal democratic processes, and candidature decisions are predominantly made by elite party leadership. Politicians with criminal records often evade scrutiny by local party workers and organizations.

Inadequate Deterrence: The low conviction rates of MPs and MLAs, along with trial delays, fail to deter political parties from fielding candidates with criminal backgrounds.

Loopholes in the Functioning of the Election Commission: While the Election Commission requires candidates to disclose property details, pending court cases, and convictions while filing nomination papers, these measures have not been stringent enough to sever the nexus between crime and politics.

IMPACTS OF CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA

Undermines Democracy: Elected representatives with criminal backgrounds erode trust and confidence in the democratic system, which relies on the credibility of those governing on behalf of the people.

Poor Governance: Individuals with criminal records often lack the necessary skills, education, and ethical understanding to govern effectively. Their decisions may prioritize personal interests over the welfare of their constituents.

Cultivates a Culture of Impunity: Criminalization fosters a culture where individuals believe they can commit crimes without facing consequences, leading to increased crime rates and a disregard for the rule of law.

Encourages Corruption: Politicians with criminal backgrounds are more likely to engage in corrupt practices, further eroding public trust in the government.

Impact on Economic Development: Corruption and mismanagement associated with criminal politicians deter domestic and foreign investment, hampering economic growth and exacerbating poverty and inequality.

Hampers Social Development: Policies driven by corruption and self-interest impede social development initiatives in areas such as healthcare, education, and welfare programs, hindering the upliftment of marginalized groups.

Taints International Reputation: The criminalization of politics tarnishes India’s international standing, making it challenging to build beneficial relationships with other countries and international organizations.

EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

Legal Reforms: Strengthening laws regarding the disqualification of candidates with criminal backgrounds. For instance, the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommended amending Section 8 of the Representation of People Act (RPA) to disqualify individuals facing charges related to grave offenses and corruption.

Time-Bound Justice Delivery System: Establishing a fast-track judicial process to expedite trials and ensure swift justice, weeding out corrupt and criminal elements from the political system.

Pressure on Political Parties: Holding political parties accountable for their choices and ensuring they adhere to the rule of law.

Strict Enforcement of Directives: The Election Commission should rigorously enforce Supreme Court directives. Non-compliant parties should face penalties, including fines, and in extreme cases, deregistration.

Internal Democracy in Political Parties: Promoting internal democracy within political parties, enabling party members to have a say in candidate selection, thereby fostering integrity.

Implementing Recommendations: Implementing the recommendations of committees such as the Vohra Committee (1993) and the Goswami Committee, as well as law commission reports, which focus on tackling the criminalization of politics.

Use of Technology: Leveraging technology to expedite trials and provide easy access to candidate information. Online platforms could maintain publicly accessible databases of criminal records for all political candidates.

SC JUDGEMENTS ON CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA

- ❑ Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2002):
 - The Supreme Court ruled that every candidate contesting an election must declare their criminal and financial records, as well as educational qualifications.
- ❑ Ramesh Dalal vs. Union of India (2005):
 - The Supreme Court held that a sitting Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of Legislative

Assembly (MLA) would be disqualified from contesting elections if convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more.

- ❑ Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013):
 - The Supreme Court declared that any MP or MLA convicted of a crime and sentenced to a prison term of two years or more would be disqualified from holding office.
- ❑ Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014):
 - The Delhi High Court held that a person cannot be disqualified from contesting elections solely based on being charged with a criminal offense. However, it also emphasized that political parties should refrain from fielding candidates with criminal backgrounds.
- ❑ Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2019):
 - The Supreme Court directed political parties to publish the criminal records of their candidates on their websites, social media platforms, and in newspapers. The court also mandated the Election Commission of India (ECI) to create a framework for effective dissemination of information on candidates' criminal records.

CONCLUSION

Addressing the criminalization of politics requires comprehensive reforms, including legal, judicial, and systemic changes. Strengthening laws, ensuring swift justice, and promoting transparency and accountability in political parties are crucial steps toward restoring public trust and upholding the integrity of the democratic system.

CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS: ADR APPROACHED THE ECI SEEKING ACTION AGAINST POLITICAL PARTIES

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ GS2: Electoral System and Representation of People's Act.
- ❑ PSIR: Politics of Representation and Participation.

Context: For years, activists and independent electoral watchdogs like ADR have been raising concerns over political parties fielding candidates with criminal antecedents. After the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, according to ADR, 43% of the newly-elected MPs had pending criminal cases against them.

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an electoral watchdog established in 1999 by a group of professors from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, on June 19 wrote to the Election Commission seeking action against parties that fail to publish details of criminal antecedents of candidates as per orders of the Supreme Court and the poll panel.



In its letter, ADR has asked the EC to take strict action against parties that are violating the orders, including de-registering them. ADR has also asked the ECI to publish a list of defaulting parties and impose fines on them. (File)

“ADR is seeking strict action to be initiated against the defaulting political parties, which had contested 2023 Assembly elections held in Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Karnataka, 2022 Assembly elections held in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur and Punjab and 2021 Assembly elections held in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and UT of Puducherry,” the letter said.

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WHAT HAS THE SUPREME COURT SAID?

Hearing a petition filed by **Public Interest Foundation**, the **Supreme Court on September 25, 2018**, made it mandatory for political parties to publish the details of criminal cases pending against their candidates, including on their websites, in a format prescribed by the Election Commission of India. While candidates did declare the cases pending against them in their election affidavits to the ECI before the ruling, the Supreme Court order made it mandatory for the information to be widely publicised



It directed parties to publish the details of criminal cases pending against a candidate in bold letters

and told the candidate with pending cases to inform the party about these cases. The court also ordered that the candidate and the party have to publish the information at least thrice after filing the nomination.

“We are inclined to say so, for in a constitutional democracy, criminalisation of politics is an extremely disastrous and lamentable situation. The citizens in a democracy cannot be compelled to stand as silent, deaf and mute spectators to corruption by projecting themselves as helpless... Disclosure of antecedents makes the election a fair one and the exercise of the right of voting by the electorate also gets sanctified. It has to be remembered that such a right is paramount for a democracy,” the court had observed in its judgement.

Subsequently, in February 2020, while hearing a contempt petition regarding its 2018 order not being implemented, the apex court reiterated that the parties would have to publish the details of candidates with pending criminal cases. It also added that they would have to include the reasons for selecting such a candidate.

“The reasons as to selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate concerned, and not mere ‘winnability’ at the polls,” the court said. It said the information would have to be published in one local vernacular newspaper, one national newspaper and on the official social media platforms of the political party within 48 hours of the selection or not less than two weeks before the first date of nominations, whichever is earlier. The parties would then have

to submit a compliance report with the ECI within 72 hours.

HOW ARE POLITICAL PARTIES FLOUTING THE SUPREME COURT'S ORDERS?

According to ADR, political parties are flouting the Supreme Court's orders and the ECI's subsequent directions. Writing to the ECI on June 19, ADR said there was “wilful disobedience” by parties. It said it had analysed the forms C2 and C7, which are the ECI's prescribed formats for submitting the information and found many shortcomings.

ADR also mentioned that many political parties did not have functional websites to publish the information, and those that did, had not maintained the information and/or had inaccessible website links. While the Supreme Court had said that a party cannot use “winnability” as a reason for selecting a candidate with criminal antecedents, the ADR letter point out that parties were citing “chances of winning, the popularity of the person” as among the reasons. The parties were also “copy-pasting” the similar justifications for multiple candidates.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

ADR brought the situation to the apex court's notice and was directed, on March 17, to “pursue its remedies before the Election Commission of India”. This led the election watchdog to write the letter to ECI on June 19. In its letter, ADR has asked the EC to take strict action against parties that are violating the orders, including de-registering them. ADR has also asked the ECI to publish a list of defaulting parties and impose fines on them.

LAW COMMISSION SEEKS VIEWS ON UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- GS2-Directive Principles of State Policy.
- PSIR-Salient Features of Indian Constitution.

Context:The 22nd Law Commission of India Wednesday (June 14) sought the views of religious organisations and the public on the issue of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

The Commission is chaired by former Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi. Retired High Court judge Justice K T Sankaran, Professor Anand Paliwal, Professor D P Verma, Professor Raka Arya and M Karunanithi are its members.

A notice issued by the Commission said those interested and willing may present their views within 30 days.

This comes eight months after the Centre told the Supreme Court that the Constitution obligated the State to have a UCC for its citizens, saying that people of different religions and denominations following different property and matrimonial laws was an “affront to the nation’s unity”.

Responding to petitions before the Supreme Court for uniformity in laws governing matters of divorce, succession, inheritance, adoption and guardianship, the Centre, in October 2022, had told the apex court that the Constitution obligated the State to have a UCC for its citizens. It had also submitted that the matter would be placed before the 22nd Law Commission.

WHY HAS THE OPPOSITION OPPOSED THE MOVE?

The Congress has led the charge against the move, saying the 21st Law Commission had said that it is “neither necessary nor desirable at this stage” to have a Uniform Civil Code. The Congress told the 22nd Law Commission that it should remember that the interests of the nation are distinct from the political ambitions of the BJP.

The JD(U), RJD, the Left and the Trinamool Congress have also slammed the Government over the move. However, the Sena (UBT) and the AAP, parties who have previously voiced support for a UCC, have remained silent.

What did the 21st Law Commission say on the matter?

Underlining that the Uniform Civil Code is “neither necessary nor desirable at this stage”, the 21st Law Commission of India, in 2018, argued for reform of family laws of every religion through amendments and codification of certain aspects so as to make them gender-just.

In its ‘Consultation Paper on Family Law Reforms’, the Law Commission took a stand in favour of “equality ‘within communities’ between men and women” (personal law reform), “rather than ‘equality between’ communities” (UCC).

“Cultural diversity cannot be compromised to the extent that our urge for uniformity itself becomes a reason for threat to the territorial integrity of the nation,” the paper said, emphasising that celebration of the diversity of Indian culture must not disprivilege specific groups. It further noted that “women must be guaranteed their freedom of faith without any compromise on their right to equality” as it would be unfair to make women choose between one or the other.

The current Law Commission’s directive on the issue, while not making any recommendations, again raises the matter.

“It is strange that the Law Commission is seeking a fresh reference, when in its press release it acknowledges that its predecessor, the 21st Law Commission, had published a consultation paper on the subject in August 2018. No reasons are given for why the subject is being revisited, except for vague references to the relevance and importance of the subject, and also to various court orders,” said Congress communication head Jairam Ramesh.

WHAT IS UNIFORM CIVIL CODE?

A UCC would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities, in

their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.

Currently, Indian personal law is fairly complex, with each religion adhering to its own specific laws. Separate laws govern Hindus including Sikhs, Jains and Buddhist, Muslims, Christians, and followers of other religions.

As Faizan Mustafa, expert of constitutional law, wrote for The Indian Express, “Moreover, there is diversity even within communities. All Hindus of the country are not governed by one law, nor are all Muslims or all Christians. For instance, in the Northeast, there are more than 200 tribes with their own varied customary laws. The Constitution itself protects local customs in Nagaland. Similar protections are enjoyed by Meghalaya and Mizoram. Even reformed Hindu law, in spite of codification, protects customary practices.

The exception to this rule is the state of Goa, where all religions have a common law regarding marriages, divorces, and adoption.

WHAT DOES THE CONSTITUTION SAY ABOUT A UCC?

Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a UCC for citizens throughout the territory of India.

Article 44 is among the Directive Principles of State Policy. Directive Principles are not enforceable by court, but are supposed to inform and guide governance.

“However, in some senses, Article 44 is unique in this manner. While Article 44 uses the words “state shall endeavour”, other Articles in the ‘Directive Principles’ chapter use words such as “in particular strive”; “shall in particular direct its policy”; “shall be obligation of the state” etc. Furthermore, the phrase “by suitable legislation” is absent in Article 44. All this implies that the duty of the state is greater in other directive principles than in Article 44,” Mustafa wrote.

WHY IS THERE NO UNIFORM CODE FOR PERSONAL LAW?

Article 25 lays down an individual’s fundamental right to religion; Article 26(b) upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to “manage its own affairs in matters of religion”; Article 29 defines the right to conserve distinctive culture. An individual’s freedom of religion under Article 25 is subject to “public order, health, morality” and other provisions relating to fundamental rights, but a group’s freedom under Article 26 has not been subjected to other fundamental rights.

“I would also urge the Law Commission to go back to the Constituent Assembly debates,” RJD Rajya Sabha member Manoj Kumar Jha pointed in a newsreport. Jha argued that the reason why the Assembly did not implement a UCC was the “mistrust” between different communities. He said that in an India where such mistrust and enmity has not been resolved, a UCC would only deepen the divides.

SO, WHAT’S NEXT?

Over the next 30 days, the Law Commission will receive views of the public and stakeholders.

The notice said the stakeholders concerned are at liberty to make submissions in the form of consultation/discussion/working papers on any of the issues pertaining to the UCC to the Member Secretary, Law Commission of India. “If need be, the Commission may call upon any individual or organisation for a personal hearing or discussion,” it said.

After reviewing the submissions, the Law Commission will again make observations/recommendations regarding a UCC, which may or may not differ from the previous Commission’s observations.

On the political front, the UCC issue has been at the core of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s agenda

for decades. It has frequently cited Article 44 to support its case. With the upcoming 2024 General

Elections, BJP is likely to vocally raise the issue once again.

LAW COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON SEDITION: ADDRESSING LIMITATIONS AND SAFEGUARDING FREE SPEECH

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **GS2:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- ❑ **PSIR:** Salient Features of the Indian Constitution

News: The 22nd Law Commission of India was headed by Ritu Raj Awasthi. The Commission has said that the sedition needs to be retained, but certain amendments could be made for greater clarity regarding its usage.

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF SEDITION LAW IN INDIA?

Sedition was included in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in 1870 and refers to any action that seeks to bring contempt or hatred towards the Government of India. It encompasses spoken or written words, signs, and visible representations. Sedition cases carry a maximum punishment of life imprisonment and are classified as “cognizable” (allowing arrest without a court warrant) and “non-bailable” and “non-compoundable” offenses.

HISTORY OF SEDITION LAW IN INDIA

The origins of sedition laws can be traced back to 17th century England, and it was subsequently incorporated into the IPC in 1870. Initially, the section was introduced to address increasing Wahabi activities between 1863 and 1870, which posed a challenge to the colonial government.

Notable sedition trials involving Indian nationalist leaders took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One such trial involved Jogendra Chandra Bose, the editor of the newspaper Bangobasi, who criticized the Age of Consent Bill for its perceived threat to religion and coercive impact on Indians. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, for his writings in Kesari, and

Mahatma Gandhi also faced sedition charges, with Gandhi famously referring to sedition as “the prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen.”

SIGNIFICANT JUDGMENTS RELATED TO SEDITION LAW AFTER INDEPENDENCE?

- ❑ In 1951, the **Punjab High Court** declared Section 124A unconstitutional. The Allahabad High Court reached a similar conclusion in 1959, ruling that the section undermined the essence of free speech.
- ❑ In the case of **Kedar Nath Singh v State of Bihar in 1962**, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Section 124A (sedition) on the grounds that it was necessary for the state to protect itself. However, the Court emphasized that citizens have the right to criticize or comment on the government through speech or writing, as long as it does not incite violence or aim to create public disorder.
- ❑ In the case of **P. Alavi vs State of Kerala in 1982**, the Supreme Court held that slogans and criticism directed at Parliament or the judiciary do not amount to sedition.

- ❑ **In Balwant Singh v State of Punjab in 1995,** the Supreme Court acquitted individuals who had chanted slogans like “Khalistan Zindabad” of sedition charges. The Court ruled that the mere act of raising slogans by two individuals alone cannot be considered sedition, nor can it be regarded as an attempt to incite hatred or disaffection against the government.

Law Commission’s recommendations regarding Sedition

The Law Commission has put forth several recommendations concerning the offense of sedition:

- ❑ **Existing laws do not cover all offenses:** The Law Commission highlights that laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the National Security Act (NSA) do not automatically cover all the elements of the offense outlined in Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- ❑ **Eliminating Section 124A can harm the accused:** Without a provision like Section 124A, expressions that incite violence against the government would be tried under special laws and counter-terror legislation, which often have stricter provisions to deal with the accused.
- ❑ **Colonial origin is not a sole reason for repeal:** While some argue that sedition laws are remnants of colonial rule and should be repealed on that basis, the Law Commission points out that many aspects of the Indian legal system, police force, and the concept of an All-India Civil Service are also colonial legacies. Therefore, the colonial origin alone does not justify the repeal of a specific legal provision.
- ❑ **Misuse is not sufficient grounds for repeal:** The Commission acknowledges that various laws can be misused by individuals with malicious intent. However, it suggests that any alleged misuse can be addressed by establishing procedural safeguards.

- ❑ **Establishment of procedural guidelines:** The Law Commission recommends that the government issue model guidelines to prevent the misuse of Section 124A. These guidelines would serve as procedural safeguards to curb any potential abuse of the sedition law by law enforcement authorities.

It’s important to note that these recommendations are specific to the context of sedition laws in India and reflect the Law Commission’s perspective on the matter. The implementation of these recommendations would depend on the legislative and policy decisions taken by the government

SOME OF THE CONCERNS RAISED

Critics, such as **Kapil Sibal**, have expressed concerns regarding the Law Commission’s recommendations for retaining the sedition law:

- ❑ **Increased discretion and harsher punishments:** Critics argue that the recommendations would grant more discretionary power to impose severe punishments under the sedition law. The use of vague terms such as “tendency” and “inclination” opens the law to subjective interpretations, potentially leading to misuse and abuse.
- ❑ **Conceptual confusion:** There is a concern that the Law Commission may have a conceptual confusion regarding the distinction between criticism of the government and acts against the State, which are punishable under different legislative enactments. This confusion could lead to misunderstanding and misapplication of the sedition law.
- ❑ **Silencing dissent:** Critics argue that the sedition law has been used in recent times to stifle dissent, targeting journalists, academics, political opponents, and students, particularly from minority communities. The Law Commission’s recommendations could further contribute to silencing opposition and suppressing protests.

❑ **Draconian nature:** Critics argue that the recommendations seek to make the sedition law even more draconian. Even a mere tendency or inclination to incite violence or cause public disorder could fall under the purview of sedition, potentially curbing free speech and expression.

❑ **Incompatibility with democracy:** The Indian Penal Code already contains provisions like Section 153A, which enables the arrest of numerous protesters without a warrant. Enhancing the sedition law is seen as inconsistent with the principles of a democratic society that encourages pluralism and argumentative discourse.

Overall, critics believe that the government should not accept the Law Commission's

recommendations for retaining the sedition law, as they may exacerbate concerns regarding freedom of speech, expression, and dissent.

CONCLUSION

It is important to recognize that not every irresponsible exercise of the right to free speech and expression should be labelled as seditious. While safeguarding national integrity is crucial, it is equally important to prevent the misuse of sedition laws as a means to suppress free speech. Dissent and criticism play a vital role in fostering a healthy and vigorous public debate on policy matters within a thriving democracy. Consequently, any limitations on freedom of speech and expression should be subject to thorough scrutiny to ensure that they do not impose unnecessary restrictions.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND ADVANCING LOCAL BODIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION REPORT

RELEVANCE

Syllabus:

- ❑ **GS2:** Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.
- ❑ **PSIR:** Grassroots Democracy: Panchayati Raj and Municipal Government

Context: Local body elections in West Bengal are scheduled for July. Ever since the notification of polls, seven persons from prominent political parties have died. Hence, calls have been made to look into the 15th finance commission's report deeply.

INTRODUCTION

The 15th Finance Commission report had put forward numerous recommendations aimed at improving the functioning of local bodies in India.

APPROACH OF PREVIOUS FINANCE COMMISSIONS

Previous Finance Commissions, from the 11th to the 14th, have made recommendations for local bodies. They have primarily focused on two aspects:

1. **Increased Funds:** Grants recommended by successive Finance Commissions have witnessed a significant rise in absolute terms. For instance, the grants suggested by the 14th Finance Commission were three times higher than those recommended by the 13th Finance Commission, for both rural and urban local bodies.

2. **Varying Criteria:** Each Commission has employed different criteria while determining resources for local governments. While population

and geographical area were commonly considered, other factors varied.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION

The 15th Finance Commission has put forth several notable recommendations to strengthen local bodies:

- 1. State Finance Commissions (SFCs):** The report strongly emphasizes the establishment of SFCs in all states. It urges states to act upon the recommendations of SFCs and submit an action taken report to the state legislature by March 2024. Non-compliance with the SFC constitution would lead to the withholding of grants, contingent on certification from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- 2. Grants to Local Governments:** The commission has proposed earmarking 60% of funds for national priorities, such as drinking water supply, rainwater harvesting, and sanitation. Key recommendations in this area include:
 - a. Providing a fixed amount instead of a proportion of the divisible tax pool to ensure predictable funding.
 - b. Introducing entry-level conditions for local bodies to access grants, including online availability of provisional and audited accounts.
- 3. Integration of Financial Management Systems:** The report underscores the need for transparent audit and functioning of local bodies through the integration of financial management systems.
- 4. Urbanization as an Engine of Growth:** Recognizing the importance of urbanization, the report suggests several measures, including:
 - a. Establishing the Million-Plus Cities Challenge Fund to incentivize performance in areas such as air quality improvement and meeting service level benchmarks.

- b. Monitoring and addressing informal burning and spontaneous combustion at urban landfills.
- c. Allocating basic grants based on population for non-million-plus cities and providing grants to Cantonment Boards falling within a state's territory.

5. Other Recommendations

- a. Involving Panchayati Raj Institutions in supervising primary healthcare institutions to strengthen the overall healthcare system.
- b. Introducing a performance-based challenge fund of Rs. 8,000 crore for states to incubate new cities.
- c. Recommending a constitutional amendment for revising the professions tax.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations outlined by the 15th Finance Commission report offer valuable insights into addressing the challenges faced by local bodies in India. By implementing these recommendations and adopting a comprehensive approach, the government can empower and enhance the functioning of local bodies, fostering effective governance and sustainable development. However, the challenges faced by these bodies are multifaceted, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to address them comprehensively.

ENRICH YOUR ANSWER

The High Court order

The Calcutta High Court has directed the deployment of central forces in all districts of West Bengal for the upcoming local body elections. The court justified its decision by stating that the State government and the State Election Commission (SEC) lack the necessary resources to conduct the elections smoothly across the entire state on a single day. It clarified that the cost of deploying central forces would be borne by the Central government, not the State government.

In response to the High Court order, both the SEC and the West Bengal government have approached the Supreme Court to challenge the decision.

Previous local body elections in West Bengal have faced several challenges

1. In 2013, the SEC itself sought Supreme Court intervention for the deployment of central forces during the elections.
2. During the 2018 local body polls, central forces were not deployed, and a significant number of seats were won by the ruling party without any opposition candidates. Opposition parties were reportedly prevented from fielding candidates in these seats.
3. In the current elections, there have been reports of intimidation of candidates, resulting in the inability of opposition parties to file

nominations in about 50 out of the 341 blocks of the state.

To address these challenges, the Governor has established a peace room where citizens can register their grievances related to the elections. These grievances will be forwarded to the State government and the SEC for consideration. The Governor has also urged the state government to take violence-related complaints seriously.

CONCLUSION

As West Bengal was one of the first states to establish a three-tier panchayat system for democratic decentralization, it is crucial for all stakeholders, including political parties, to ensure that the process of electing panchayat functionaries does not descend into lawlessness and chaos.

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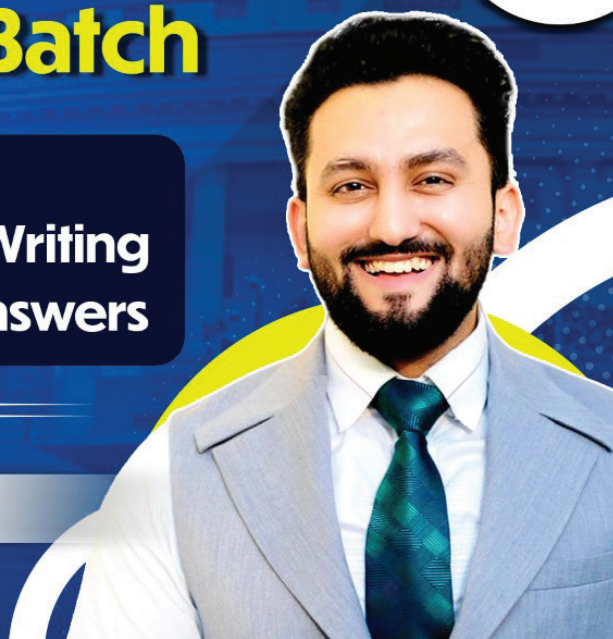
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MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1) Discuss the factors that contribute to South Asia being regarded as the most disintegrated region in the world, both economically and politically.

Introduction: Defining South Asia and Regional Integration

South Asia refers to the southern region of Asia, encompassing countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It is characterized by its geographical and ethno-cultural aspects. Despite experiencing significant economic growth in recent years, South Asia contributes only 3 percent to the global gross domestic product, and a substantial portion of its population lives below the poverty line of \$1.25 per day. The region faces formidable challenges posed by climate change, environmental degradation, and growing inequalities, which threaten its development and prosperity.

Regional cooperation and integration hold immense potential to accelerate economic growth, reduce poverty and economic disparities, and address the complex task of managing regional public goods in South Asia. However, it is noteworthy that the region remains among the least integrated in the world.

Low Economic and Political Integration in South Asia

- ❑ Economically, South Asia exhibits minimal levels of intra-regional trade and investment, making it one of the least integrated regions globally. According to the World Bank's report titled "A Glass Half Full: The Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia," intra-regional trade in South Asia amounts to only one-third (\$23 billion) of its potential (\$67 billion), accounting for a mere 5-6% of the region's total trade.
- ❑ On the political front, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has made limited progress in resolving bilateral disagreements and conflicts, hindering overall advancements within the group. C. Raja Mohan asserts that a dysfunctional SAARC undermines the vision of a cohesive South Asian region. Similarly, Prof S.D. Muni argues that a stagnant SAARC will make India's neighborhood policy more challenging and tarnish its international image, as evidenced by India's unsuccessful attempts to influence its neighbors in relation to China.

Prof S.D Muni highlights the following factors contributing to the low economic and political integration in South Asia:

- ❑ Bilateral issues, such as territorial disputes between India and Pakistan, river water sharing issues between India, Pakistan, and India-Bangladesh, and the issue of terrorism originating from Pakistan, have overshadowed South Asian integration.
- ❑ The lack of interregional connectivity in South Asia impedes the development of interdependence through trade and investment.
- ❑ India's perceived "Big-Brotherly" attitude and interference in the domestic affairs of smaller neighboring countries have made them cautious about India's intentions. For instance, India's economic blockade of Nepal in 2015 strained relations.
- ❑ Growing resentment towards Indian diplomatic behavior has compelled smaller neighbors to seek closer ties with China, often referred to as playing the "China card."

Way Forward for Regional Integration

As proposed by Harsh.V.Pant, the following steps can foster regional integration:

- ❑ India should demonstrate a sense of belonging to the region and a genuine desire to work with its neighbors to achieve greater integration and cooperation.
- ❑ India must adopt a more subtle diplomatic approach, shedding its aggressive stance in dealing with complex situations. Diplomatic success lies in persuading smaller neighbors to accept India's position through nuanced negotiations rather than imposing it, which could backfire.

2) How does China's increasing influence impact the bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka, and what steps can be taken to strengthen ties between the two countries?

China's expanding presence in Sri Lanka is raising concerns regarding the bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka.

- ❑ The presence of China poses a threat to maritime security as a permanent People's Liberation Army (PLA) presence in the eastern Indian Ocean limits the deployment options of the Indian Navy and neutralizes India's geographical advantage in these waters.
- ❑ For instance, Sri Lanka had approved a Chinese firm, SinostarEtechwinee Joint Venture, which is located just 50 km from the Tamil Nadu coast. This decision shows a preference for China over India.
- ❑ China is seen as a more reliable partner when it comes to enabling domestic economic development, ensuring timely project completion, cost-effectiveness, and infrastructure quality, among other factors.
- ❑ In contrast, India took five months to approve a loan moratorium requested by Colombo, while China promptly approved an additional loan from its development bank.
- ❑ The impact on trade is evident as Chinese imports reduced by 8% in 2022, whereas imports from India experienced a decline of approximately 19%.

To reinvigorate India-Sri Lanka ties, several steps can be taken:

- ❑ **Exploring new domains:** India has a stronger presence in sectors such as education, healthcare, and tourism, which can be leveraged to enhance collaboration with Sri Lanka.
- ❑ **Leveraging India's Soft Power:** Expanding the footprint of Indian information technology companies in Sri Lanka can create job opportunities and contribute to the development of the island nation's service economy.
- ❑ **Sharing experience:** India can share its own experience in managing minority rights and diverse populations as Sri Lanka embarks on the challenging task of drafting a constitution.
- ❑ **Strengthening cultural relations:** Both countries can establish a corridor focused on Buddhism knowledge and tourism, fostering cultural ties.
- ❑ **Cooperation in maritime security:** Given their shared interest in ensuring maritime security and safety, India and Sri Lanka should collaborate in this area as Indian Ocean maritime countries.

In conclusion, addressing the concerns arising from China's growing influence and implementing measures to enhance collaboration can help strengthen the Indo-Sri Lanka bilateral relationship.

3) In light of the recent political crisis in Maharashtra it can be said that Anti-defection law has failed to serve its purpose and needs a sincere overhaul. Discuss

The Tenth Schedule, commonly known as the Anti-defection Law, was incorporated into the Constitution in 1985 through the 52nd Amendment Act. Its primary aim is to prevent legislators from switching sides

and ensure a stable government. However, despite its implementation, the issue of defection persists, and there have been several instances of alleged violations in various states such as Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Nagaland, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in recent years. This has led to a culture of acceptance of defections, prompting concerns that the Constitutional provisions related to the law have been rendered ineffective.

Several shortcomings and misinterpretations of the law have contributed to its reduced effectiveness:

- ❑ One significant drawback is the absence of a specified time-period for the Presiding Officer to decide on disqualification pleas, resulting in unnecessary delays.
- ❑ In recent times, MLAs have gradually broken away in small groups to join the ruling party, as observed in Telangana and Karnataka and recently in Maharashtra (First Shinde group broke from Shiv Sena and joined hands with BJP to form the government, followed by Ajit Pawar camp who broke the ranks of NCP). In some instances, more than two-thirds of the opposition has defected to the ruling party.
- ❑ The term “**voluntarily giving up party membership**” can be misinterpreted, as it does not equate to resigning from the party.

Furthermore, the law has been criticized for limiting the freedom of MPs/MLAs to vote in line with their conscience and the interests of their electorates. Moreover, assigning adjudication powers to the Speaker/Chairman, who may have party loyalties, presents another weakness.

In light of these issues, there have been arguments for an overhaul of the law, proposing the following reforms:

1. Introducing a mandatory time limit within which the Presiding Officer must dispose of proceedings under the law.
2. Restricting the application of the law to confidence and no-confidence motions, as recommended by the Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms in 1990, or only during situations where the government’s stability is at risk, allowing MPs to express themselves freely without fear of a whip.
3. Extending the law to pre-poll alliances and requiring partners of such alliances to inform the Election Commission before elections.
4. Implementing an amendment that necessitates all types of defectors, whether individual or in groups, to resign from their seats and contest fresh elections.
5. The Supreme Court has attempted to address the loopholes through various judgments, such as the Kihoto Hollohan case.

It is important to note that the focus should not be on whether such a law is necessary but rather on how the current legal framework can be amended and overhauled to achieve its original objective of providing a stable and responsible government.

4) Discuss the implications of the NATO Plus status offered to India by the United States, taking into consideration the role of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The NATO Plus status offered to India by the United States has significant implications in the geopolitical landscape, particularly in the context of China’s growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. This move reflects the efforts to strengthen security cooperation between India and the United States and counterbalance China’s assertive behaviour.

Firstly, the NATO Plus status signifies a deepening strategic partnership between India and the United States. It would provide India with access to advanced military technologies, intelligence-sharing platforms, and interoperability with other NATO member states. This enhanced defense cooperation would bolster India's defense capabilities and potentially deter China's aggressive actions in the region.

Secondly, the NATO Plus status strengthens India's position as a key player in the Indo-Pacific region. As China's influence grows, India seeks to balance its power and safeguard its strategic interests. The inclusion of India in the NATO Plus framework not only reinforces India's regional standing but also signifies a united front against China's expansionist policies.

However, the China angle in this development cannot be overlooked. China views the growing ties between India and the United States, particularly in the security realm, as a challenge to its regional aspirations. China's assertiveness in territorial disputes, such as the South China Sea and the border tensions with India, has raised concerns among neighboring countries. The NATO Plus status to India could further exacerbate the already strained India-China relations.

China is likely to perceive this development as an attempt to contain its rise and could potentially respond with diplomatic or military measures. It may intensify its efforts to strengthen alliances and partnerships in the region, such as with Pakistan, to counterbalance the growing influence of the United States and its allies.

Moreover, the NATO Plus status to India may impact China's own strategic calculations. It could prompt China to adopt a more assertive and aggressive stance in the region, further fueling regional tensions and security dilemmas. The possibility of an intensified arms race and increased military posturing cannot be discounted.

In conclusion, the NATO Plus status offered to India by the United States holds significant implications in the context of China's role in the Indo-Pacific region. While it strengthens the India-U.S. strategic partnership and enhances India's defense capabilities, it also adds another dimension to the complex dynamics between India and China. It remains to be seen how China responds to this development and whether it leads to a further escalation of regional tensions or paves the way for constructive engagement and dialogue.

5) Examine the impact of India's new policy towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on its pursuit of strategic autonomy and regional engagement.

India's new policy towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) holds significant implications for its pursuit of strategic autonomy and regional engagement.

Strategic Autonomy: India's new policy reflects its pursuit of strategic autonomy can be defined as the ability to independently shape its foreign policy and engage with regional and global actors. By actively participating in the SCO, India seeks to enhance its voice and agency in regional decision-making processes. It aims to leverage the SCO platform to advance its own interests, rather than being subsumed by the agendas of other major powers within the organization.

Regional Engagement: Through the SCO, India seeks to foster closer ties and cooperation with Central Asian countries, emphasizing shared security concerns, economic development, and connectivity. This regional engagement aligns with India's broader objective of deepening its presence in Eurasian geopolitics and strengthening its relationships with neighbouring countries.

Multi-alignment: India's new policy towards the SCO aligns with its strategy of multi-alignment, which involves maintaining relationships with multiple powers and regional organizations to safeguard its interests. By actively participating in the SCO, India can balance its relationships with other major powers within the region, such as China and Russia. This multi-alignment approach allows India to diversify its partnerships and prevent over-dependence on any single actor.

Geopolitical Dynamics: The power relations between India, China, and Russia within the organization, highlight the complexities and challenges India faces in navigating these relationships. India's new policy seeks to strike a delicate balance between cooperation and competition with these powers, particularly in areas of security, trade, and connectivity.

Security Cooperation: India aims to collaborate with other member states to address shared security concerns, including terrorism, extremism, and separatism. India's active engagement in security platforms within the SCO contributes to regional stability and strengthens its position as a responsible regional actor.

Economic Cooperation: India's emphasis is on enhancing trade, investment, and connectivity within the region. This economic cooperation aligns with India's broader economic objectives, including reducing over-dependence on any single market and diversifying its economic partnerships.

In conclusion, India's new policy towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization reflects its pursuit of strategic autonomy, regional engagement, and multi-alignment. Through active participation in the SCO, India aims to shape the regional agenda, collaborate on security issues, and enhance economic cooperation.

6). Give arguments in favour and against Uniform Civil Code. 15 Marks

Introduction

Uniform civil code is the constitutional mandate to replace the personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in India with a common set governing every citizen. **Article 44** of the Directive Principles sets its implementation as duty of the State. First demand for UCC was made by All India Women Conference in 1930s.

Arguments in favour

Supporters argue that a secular republic needs a common law for all citizens rather than differentiated rules based on religious practices. This was a key issue debated during the writing of the Constitution, with passionate arguments on both sides.

During constituent assembly debates, **Rajkumari Amrit Kaur** argued: "One of the factors that have kept India back from advancing to nationhood has been the existence of personal laws based on religion which keep the nation divided into watertight compartments in many aspects of life."

Another argument for UCC reason is gender justice. The rights of women are usually limited under religious law, be it Hindu or Muslim. The practice of triple talaq is a classic example. It is important to note that B.R. Ambedkar fought hard for the passage of the Hindu Code Bill because he saw it as an opportunity to empower women. The great Muslim social reformer **Hamid Dalwai** also made the rights of women a central part of his campaign for a uniform civil code.

The nationalists argue that a common code for all citizens on the lines of western nations will strengthen the nationalistic feelings, which remains divided because of different personal laws. Thus, UCC will lead to national integration.

A common codified law will also reduce the scope for political mobilization on the basis of religion and reduce the intermixing of religion and politics, thus reducing the scope for communalisation of political sphere.

It is often argued that since India is a secular, democratic republic and since its Constitution guarantees minorities the right to follow their own religion, culture and customs, implementing a common code of personal laws covering property, marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession would go against India's secular fabric.

Arguments against UCC

Flavia Agnes says that it is only directed at the Muslim law and the discriminatory aspects of the Hindu law are not coming into focus. It is not just law; we also need to examine the Hindu ethos and cultural practices which are anti-women.

Another argument is that uniformity of rights is more important and not a uniform law which will not be accepted by minority communities. This argument perceives any attempt to introduce a UCC as tantamount to State interference in religious affairs.

In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, arguing against UCC, Naga groups stated that "It will cause social disorder, and if a Uniform Civil Code is introduced covering the entire country, it shall cause so much hardship and social disorder to the Nagas as the personal and social life of the Nagas are quite distinct from the rest of people in the country."

Painting a bigger picture of the debate surrounding the UCC necessarily involves addressing the perceived conflict between multiculturalism and universality as well.

The Law Commission has sought the views of people on the implementation of UCC, which faced stiff opposition from the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB).

Conclusion

The debate should be on the rights of women within the geographical territory of India governed by a Constitution that promises equal rights to all its citizens and not on the religious validity of practices that impinge on such rights. The issue is far more complex and would require a detailed analysis of the gaps in the existing laws of all communities, from the perspectives of women's empowerment.

SCHOLARS DIGEST: KNOW YOUR SCHOLARS

MICHAEL FOUCAULT



INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault, a prominent French philosopher and social theorist, has made significant contributions to the field of political science. Through his interdisciplinary approach, Foucault has challenged conventional understandings of power, knowledge, and discourse, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of political systems.

POWER AND DISCIPLINE

Foucault's ideas on power go beyond traditional notions of coercion or domination. He argues that power is not solely exercised by oppressive forces, but is diffused throughout society. Foucault introduces the concept of disciplinary power, which operates through surveillance, regulation, and normalisation within institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals. These institutions, rather than being purely repressive, produce disciplined and docile bodies, shaping individuals' behaviours and identities.

POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

Foucault examines the intricate relationship between power and knowledge. He challenges the idea that knowledge is neutral or objective, arguing that it is inherently tied to power dynamics. Foucault introduces the concept of

"power-knowledge," suggesting that knowledge is a form of power that enables certain discourses and excludes others. He emphasises the role of institutions, experts, and social practices in constructing knowledge and shaping societal norms.

DISCOURSE AND THE PRODUCTION OF TRUTH

Foucault emphasises the role of discourse in the production of truth and the exercise of power. Discourse refers to the language, ideas, and practices that shape our understanding of reality. Foucault argues that discourses are not simply reflections of objective truth, but are constructed through power relations. He explores the ways in which dominant discourses marginalise certain groups, enforce social norms, and maintain existing power structures.

GOVERNMENTALITY AND BIOPOLITICS

Foucault's later work focuses on the concept of governmentality, which refers to the techniques and strategies employed by governments to govern populations. He examines the shift from sovereign power to biopolitics, where the focus is not only on controlling individuals but also managing populations, health, and welfare. Foucault explores how biopolitics operates through techniques such as surveillance, statistics, and regulation to govern and manage populations.

CONCLUSION

Michel Foucault's ideas have had a profound impact on political science by challenging traditional conceptions of power, knowledge, and discourse. His insights have encouraged scholars to critically analyse the complex dynamics of political systems

and institutions. By emphasising the interplay between power, knowledge, and discourse, Foucault's work has provided valuable tools for understanding the intricacies of governance, social control, and resistance in modern society.

HANS JOACHIM MORGENTHAU



INTRODUCTION

Hans Joachim Morgenthau, born on February 17, 1904, in Coburg, Germany, and passing away on July 19, 1980, in New York, New York, U.S., was a prominent German-born American political scientist and historian. He gained recognition for his expertise as a leading analyst, focusing on the significance of power in the realm of international politics.

EARLY LIFE&EDUCATION

Morgenthau's academic journey commenced in Germany, where he pursued his education at the esteemed Universities of Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich. Following his studies in Germany, he furthered his knowledge through postgraduate work at the Graduate Institute for International Studies in Geneva. After being admitted to the bar in 1927, he gained valuable experience by serving as acting president of the Labour Law Court in Frankfurt.

In 1932, he had the opportunity to teach public law in Geneva for a year. However, the political climate drastically changed with Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, compelling him to extend his stay in Switzerland until 1935. During this period, he also taught in Madrid from 1935 to 1936.

Due to the troubling developments in Europe, Morgenthau emigrated to the United States in 1937, where he would later become a naturalized citizen in 1943. Throughout his American academic career, he contributed his expertise as a professor at various institutions, including Brooklyn College (1937–39), the University of Missouri–Kansas City (1939–43), the University of Chicago (1943–71), the City College of the City University of New York (1968–74), and the New School for Social Research (1974–80).

MAJOR WORKS

In 1948, Morgenthau published “Politics Among Nations,” a highly esteemed study that introduced the classical realist approach to international politics. In this seminal work, Morgenthau argued that politics operates under distinct and unchangeable laws of nature, enabling states to deduce rational and objectively correct actions by understanding these laws. Central to his theory was the notion that power stands as the primary objective in international politics, defining a nation’s interests.

Morgenthau’s approach centered around the state, rejecting the idea that a state’s moral aspirations should be equated with the universal

objective moral laws. Instead, he emphasized that all state actions are driven by the pursuit of acquiring, showcasing, or enhancing power. He advocated for acknowledging the nature and limitations of power and advocated for the use of conventional diplomatic methods, including the willingness to compromise.

In summary, Morgenthau’s “Politics Among Nations” laid the foundation for classical realism in international relations, stressing the centrality of power and state interests, while also cautioning against conflating moral aspirations with the practical realities of politics. He advocated for embracing traditional diplomatic approaches and finding common ground through compromise.

HANNAH ARENDT: EXPLORING POLITICAL PHENOMENA THROUGH CRITICAL ANALYSIS



INTRODUCTION

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) was a renowned political philosopher whose works continue to shape and challenge our understanding of politics. Through her unique lens, she examined various political phenomena and concepts, offering profound insights that resonate within the field of political science.

THE NATURE OF POWER

Arendt’s examination of power is a key aspect of her political thought. She argued that power is not

merely coercive force but a collective phenomenon that emerges from the actions and interactions of individuals in a public realm. Her emphasis on power as a relational concept informs discussions on power dynamics, democratic participation, and the role of citizens in political processes.

THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY

Arendt delved into the concept of authority, highlighting its distinction from power. She viewed authority as rooted in legitimacy, consent, and respect rather than coercion. Her analysis sheds

light on the sources of authority, the relationship between authority and obedience, and the erosion of authority in modern societies.

TOTALITARIANISM AND THE BANALITY OF EVIL

Arendt's seminal work on totalitarianism, particularly in "The Origins of Totalitarianism," remains highly influential. She examined the rise of totalitarian regimes, the erosion of individual freedoms, and the manipulation of truth in such systems. Her concept of the "banality of evil" challenged prevailing notions of evil as a result of extraordinary acts, emphasizing instead the ordinary individuals who participate in oppressive systems.

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

Arendt explored the distinction between the public and private realms, highlighting their significance in political life. She argued that genuine political action occurs in the public realm, characterized by plurality, freedom of speech, and public deliberation. In contrast, the private sphere represents the realm of necessity and personal affairs. Her analysis continues to shape

discussions on the role of public engagement and the importance of political participation.

THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

Arendt critically examined the impact of modernity on the human condition. She analyzed the loss of meaningful public spaces, the rise of bureaucracy, and the challenges of individual identity in mass societies. Her insights into the disintegration of public life and the consequences for human agency and political action offer valuable perspectives for understanding contemporary political challenges.

CONCLUSION

Hannah Arendt's contributions to political science have been far-reaching and continue to provoke intellectual inquiry and debate. Her writings on power, authority, totalitarianism, the public sphere, and the human condition provide valuable frameworks for analyzing political phenomena and understanding the complex dynamics of our contemporary political landscape. By engaging with Arendt's ideas, political scientists can deepen their understanding of the intricacies of power, authority, and the nature of politics itself.

JACQUES DERRIDA



INTRODUCTION

Jacques Derrida, (born July 15, 1930, El Biar,

Algeria—died October 8, 2004, Paris, France), French philosopher whose critique of Western

philosophy and analyses of the nature of language, writing, and meaning were highly controversial yet immensely influential in much of the intellectual world in the late 20th century.

EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION

Derrida was born to Sephardic Jewish parents in French-governed Algeria. Educated in the French tradition, he went to France in 1949, studied at the elite *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS), and taught philosophy at the Sorbonne (1960–64), the ENS (1964–84), and the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (1984–99), all in Paris. From the 1960s he published numerous books and essays on an immense range of topics and taught and lectured throughout the world, including at Yale University and the University of California, Irvine, attaining an international celebrity comparable only to that of Jean-Paul Sartre a generation earlier.

MAJOR WORKS

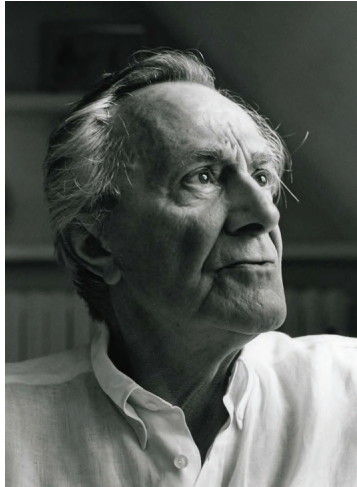
Derrida is most celebrated as the principal exponent of deconstruction, a term he coined for the critical examination of the fundamental conceptual distinctions, or “oppositions,” inherent in Western philosophy since the time of the ancient Greeks. These oppositions are characteristically “binary” and “hierarchical,” involving a pair of terms in which one member of the pair is assumed to be primary or fundamental, the other secondary or derivative. Examples include nature and culture, speech and writing, mind and body, presence and absence, inside and outside, literal and metaphorical, intelligible and sensible, and form and meaning, among many others. To “deconstruct” an opposition is to explore the tensions and contradictions between the hierarchical ordering assumed or asserted in the text and other aspects of the text’s meaning, especially those that are indirect or implicit. Such an analysis shows that the opposition is not natural or necessary but a product, or “construction,” of the text itself.

In the 1960s Derrida’s work was welcomed in France and elsewhere by thinkers interested in the broad interdisciplinary movement known as structuralism. The structuralists analyzed various cultural phenomena—such as myths, religious rituals, literary narratives, and fashions in dress and adornment—as general systems of signs analogous to natural languages, with their own vocabularies and their own underlying rules and structures, and attempted to develop a metalanguage of terms and concepts in which the various sign systems could be described. Some of Derrida’s early work was a critique of major structuralist thinkers such as Saussure, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, and the intellectual historian and philosopher Michel Foucault. Derrida was thus seen, especially in the United States, as leading a movement beyond structuralism to “poststructuralism,” which was skeptical about the possibility of a general science of meaning.

RELEVANCE TODAY

One might distinguish in Derrida’s work a period of philosophical deconstruction from a later period focusing on literature **and emphasizing the singularity of the literary work and the play of meaning in avant-garde writers such as Genet, Stéphane Mallarmé, Francis Ponge, and James Joyce.** His later work also took up a host of other issues, notably the legacy of **Marxism** (*Spectres de Marx: l’état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* [1993; *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*]) and psychoanalysis (*La Carte postale: de Socrate à Freud et au-delà* [1980; *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*]). Other essays considered political, legal, and ethical **issues, as well as topics in aesthetics and literature.** He also addressed the question of **Jewishness and the Jewish tradition in *Shibboleth* and the autobiographical “Circumfession” (1991).**

JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD AND HIS MAIN IDEAS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE



INTRODUCTION

Jean-François Lyotard, a renowned French philosopher, made significant contributions to postmodern philosophy. His ideas challenged traditional notions of truth, power, and narratives, influencing various fields such as philosophy, sociology, and cultural studies. This article delves into Lyotard's main ideas and their implications, highlighting his concept of incredulity towards metanarratives, critique of grand narratives, and the relationship between language and knowledge.

INCREDULITY TOWARDS METANARRATIVES

Lyotard questioned the legitimacy of metanarratives, which are overarching narratives claiming to provide comprehensive understandings of the world. Metanarratives include concepts like progress, enlightenment, or Marxism. Lyotard argued that these narratives had lost credibility, as society became increasingly skeptical of their claims to truth and universality. He advocated for embracing micro-narratives, recognizing the diversity and incommensurability of different perspectives and experiences.

CRITIQUE OF GRAND NARRATIVES

A central aspect of Lyotard's work was his critique of grand narratives and their connection to power.

He argued that grand narratives often functioned as tools of domination, allowing those in power to legitimize their control over society. By imposing a singular narrative, those in authority marginalize alternative viewpoints and suppress dissent. Lyotard believed that by dismantling grand narratives, we create space for a multiplicity of voices and foster a more democratic and inclusive society.

LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE

Lyotard explored the relationship between language and knowledge, emphasizing the limitations and complexities of linguistic representation. He rejected the idea that language could provide an objective and transparent representation of reality. Instead, he argued that language is inherently unstable, fragmented, and subject to different interpretations. Knowledge, according to Lyotard, is contingent upon language games, which are socially constructed systems of meaning. These language games shape our understanding of reality, but they are not universally valid or comprehensive.

THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

Lyotard's ideas were influential in defining the postmodern condition. He described the

postmodern era as characterized by a skepticism towards grand narratives, a celebration of diversity, and a recognition of the fragmentation of knowledge. In the postmodern condition, truth becomes a matter of individual interpretation and subjective experience. This challenges traditional notions of authority and encourages a constant reassessment of knowledge and its foundations.

IMPLICATIONS AND CRITICISMS

Lyotard's ideas have both positive and negative implications. On one hand, his emphasis on the plurality of narratives and the rejection of grand narratives allows for a more inclusive and democratic society, where diverse perspectives are valued. It promotes critical thinking, as individuals are encouraged to question dominant narratives and engage in dialogue. On the other hand, critics argue that Lyotard's ideas can lead to a relativistic stance, where all narratives are considered equally valid, undermining the pursuit of objective truth.

Furthermore, some critics argue that Lyotard's work lacks concrete solutions or a coherent alternative to grand narratives. They suggest that while skepticism towards metanarratives is valuable, it is essential to find a balance between acknowledging the limitations of overarching narratives and maintaining a shared understanding of the world.

CONCLUSION

Jean-François Lyotard's ideas have left a significant impact on postmodern philosophy and the understanding of knowledge, power, and narratives. His skepticism towards metanarratives and emphasis on the plurality of narratives challenged established notions of truth and authority. While his ideas have faced criticism, they continue to stimulate intellectual debates and encourage critical engagement with dominant discourses.

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ENRICH YOUR ANSWERS

1. "Knowledge is power"- Foucault. Elaborate

Intro → start with post modernist idea - meta narratives
→ book name of Foucault - 'history of sexuality'

Body → establish knowledge-power connection
→ knowledge flows in society like blood in capillaries
→ Man is product of discourses
→ Concept of biopower and governmentality

Criticism → element of universalism
→ no alternatives provided

Conclusion → enriches and establishes political science as a borderless & bottomless sea (Dakshott)

2)

Q1) Compare Ambedkar and Gandhi's views on Social Justice.

Intro: Start answer by defining social justice.
Also give general introduction about Gandhi & Ambedkar

Body

A) (Mention the differences between views of Gandhi & Ambedkar)

- ① Ambedkar was critic of Manusmriti (Manu's law) while Gandhi believed in Varna system.
- ② Ambedkar held Vedas and Manusmriti responsible for social injustice while Gandhi didn't believe in it.
- ③ To achieve social justice
→ Ambedkar emphasised on Affirmative Actions
→ Gandhi emphasised on social reforms (raising the conscience of people)
- ④ Ambedkar pre-conditioned social justice to Nationalism while Gandhi believed that freedom struggle will result into social justice.

B) (Mention similarities)

- ① Both believed in social justice and eradication of poverty
- ② Both have vision of egalitarian society.
Ambedkar → a society free of contradictions
Gandhi → Ramrajya.

(Conclusion)

Can mention that both Gandhi and Ambedkar's ideas on social justice found place in Indian Constitution

3) Discuss Hannah Arendt's analysis of the role of ideology in modern totalitarian regimes. (2017)

- Introduce Arendt → Book name, methodology
 - ↓
 - The origins of Totalitarianism
 - ↓
 - Phenomenology
- Background → Fascist regime of Germany
- Define ideology and its role in propaganda
- Ideology as a justification for extreme measures, violence, loyalty. → 'unifying force'
- Touch upon other factors - Social, Economic as contributors
- Conclusion → highlight role of public sphere, civic republicanism (Aristotle)

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What is the focus area of the recently enacted Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023?
 - (a) Right to minimum guaranteed income
 - (b) Right to guaranteed employment
 - (c) Right to guaranteed social security pension
 - (d) All of the above
2. The World Bank played a significant role in mediating the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan. Which of the following rivers are covered by the treaty?
 - (a) Indus, Ganges, and Yamuna
 - (b) Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab
 - (c) Ganges, Yamuna, and Brahmaputra
 - (d) Ganges, Jhelum, and Chenab
3. Recently, there has been a growing trend of using the judicial route to resolve disputes arising from the construction and design aspects of run-of-river hydroelectric projects. What is the main purpose of the recent arbitration initiated by Pakistan at the Permanent Court of Arbitration?
 - (a) To address matters concerning the certain design elements of the Kishanganga and Ratle projects
 - (b) To resolve disputes related to water sharing between India and China
 - (c) To determine the navigation rights in the Indus River
 - (d) To resolve disputes related to water pollution in the Indus River
4. According to the Constitution of India, it is the duty of the President of India to cause to be laid before the Parliament which of the following?
 1. The Recommendations of the Union Finance Commission
 2. The Report of the Public Accounts Committee
 3. The Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General
 4. The Report of the National Commission for Scheduled CastesSelect the correct answer using the codes given below :
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 and 4 only
 - (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
5. Which of the following is/are among the Fundamental Duties of citizens laid down in the Indian Constitution?
 1. To preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture
 2. To protect the weaker sections from social injustice
 3. To develop the scientific temper and spirit of inquiry
 4. To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activitySelect the correct answer using the codes given below :
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
6. The distribution of powers between the Centre and the States in the Indian Constitution is based on the Act provided in the
 - (a) Morley-Minto Reforms, 1909
 - (b) Montagu-Chelmsford Act, 1919
 - (c) Government of India Act, 1935
 - (d) Indian Independence Act, 1947
7. With reference to Indian History, the Members of the Constituent Assembly from the Provinces were
 - (a) directly elected by the people of those Provinces
 - (b) nominated by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League
 - (c) elected by the Provincial Legislative Assemblies
 - (d) selected by the Government for their expertise in constitutional matters

8. NATO's principle of collective defense is enshrined in which article of the NATO treaty?
 (a) Article 2 (b) Article 5 (c) Article 7 (d) Article 10
9. Which of the following countries is often referred to as a "non-NATO ally" of the United States?
 (a) United Kingdom (b) India (c) Germany (d) Japan
10. The NATO-led military operation in Afghanistan, launched in 2003, is known as:
 (a) Operation Enduring Freedom (b) Operation Desert Storm
 (c) Operation Iraqi Freedom (d) Operation Allied Force
11. What is the main objective of the SCO?
 (a) Promote economic cooperation among member states
 (b) Enhance military capabilities for regional defense
 (c) Address border security concerns
 (d) Facilitate cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts
12. The regional anti-terrorism structure of the SCO is headquartered in which city?
 (a) Moscow (b) Beijing (c) Tashkent (d) Astana (Nur-Sultan)
13. Under the Constitution of India, which one of the following is not a fundamental duty?
 (a) To vote in public elections (b) To develop the scientific temper
 (c) To safeguard public property (d) To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals
14. Consider the following provisions under the Directive Principles of State Policy as enshrined in the Constitution of India:
 1. Securing for citizens of India a uniform civil code
 2. Organizing village Panchayats
 3. Promoting cottage industries in rural areas
 4. Securing for all the workers reasonable leisure and cultural opportunities
 Which of the above are the Gandhian Principles that are reflected in the Directive Principles of State Policy?
 (a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
15. Which of the following special powers have been conferred on the Rajya Sabha by the Constitution of India?
 (a) To change the existing territory of a State and to change the name of a State
 (b) To pass a resolution empowering the Parliament to make laws in the State List and to create one or more All India Services
 (c) To amend the election procedure of the President and to determine the pension of the President after his/her retirement
 (d) To determine the functions of the Election Commission and to determine the number of Election Commissioners.
16. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution of India have a bearing on Education?
 1. Directive Principles of State Policy 2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
 3. Fifth Schedule 4. Sixth Schedule
 5. Seventh Schedule
 Select the correct answer using the codes given below :
 (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 3, 4 and 5 only (c) 1, 2 and 5 only (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
17. Which of the following is not a tier of Panchayati Raj institutions?
 (a) Gram Panchayat (b) Block Panchayat (c) District Panchayat (d) State Panchayat
18. Which state in India was the first to implement the Panchayati Raj system?
 (a) Rajasthan (b) Kerala (c) Maharashtra (d) West Bengal

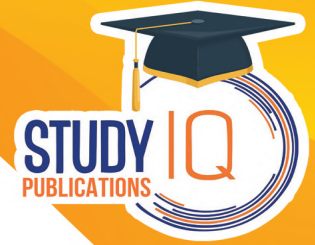
19. Which of the following states has the highest number of Gram Panchayats in India?
 (a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Maharashtra (d) Bihar
20. Sedition is punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to:
 (a) 3 years (b) 7 years (c) 10 years (d) Life imprisonment
21. The offense of sedition involves:
 (a) Inciting violence against a specific community
 (b) Criticizing the government's policies and actions
 (c) Promoting religious harmony and peaceful coexistence
 (d) Engaging in anti-national activities
22. The offense of sedition is a:
 (a) Non-cognizable offense (b) Bailable offense (c) Compoundable offense (d) Cognizable offense
23. The offense of sedition is a:
 (a) State subject under the Indian Constitution (b) Concurrent subject under the Indian Constitution
 (c) Union subject under the Indian Constitution (d) Residuary subject under the Indian Constitution

Answers

1. (d) All of the above
2. (b) Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab
3. (a) To address matters concerning the certain design elements of the Kishanganga and Ratle projects
4. (c) CAG gives three audit reports to president which are laid by the president before both the houses of the parliament. Subsequently the Public Accounts committee examines them and reports its findings to the parliament.
5. (c) All the statements except 2 regarding the Fundamental Duties of citizens are correct.
6. (c) Distribution of power between the Centre and the States in the Indian Constitution is based on the Government of India Act. 1935.
7. (c) The members of the constituent Assembly from the provinces were indirectly elected by the members of the provincial assemblies, who themselves were elected on a limited franchise.
8. (b) Article 5
9. (a) India
10. (a) Operation Enduring freedom
11. (a) Promote economic cooperation among member states
12. (c) Tashkent
13. (a) To vote in public elections is not a fundamental duty.
14. (b) Organizing village Panchayats and promoting cottage industries in rural areas are the Gandhian principles that are reflected in the Directive Principles of State Policy.
15. (b) Rajya Sabha can pass a resolution empowering the parliament to make laws in the state list and to create one or more All India Services. This is a special power that has been conferred on the Rajya Sabha by the constitution.
16. (d) The items DPSP, Rural and Urban Local Bodies, 6th Schedule, 7th Schedule provide provision for education.
17. (d) State Panchayat
18. (a) Rajasthan
19. (a) Uttar Pradesh
20. (c) 10 years
21. (b) Criticizing the government's policies and actions
22. (d) Cognizable offense
23. (b) Concurrent subject under the Indian Constitution

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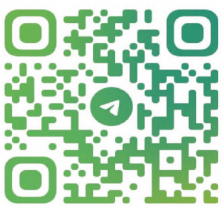
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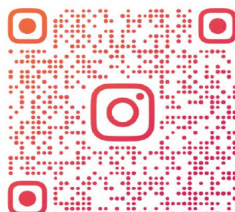


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