



# PSIR

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Political Science & International  
Relations Optional

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**Shashank Tyagi**

Faculty PSIR Optional, StudyiqIAS  
Ex. Consultant, Office of Minister  
Social Welfare, GNCTD



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# NEWS LETTER

## GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE

### Sudan Conflict and India's Evacuation Diplomacy

#### Relevance

##### ☐ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Recent developments in Indian Foreign Policy: India's position on the recent crises.
- **GS2:**
  - ✓ Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
  - ✓ Indian diaspora.

**In News:** At least 56 civilians have been killed and 595 people, including combatants, have been wounded in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, since fierce fighting broke out between the country's army and paramilitary forces.

#### ROOTS OF SUDAN'S ONGOING CONFLICT

The conflict in Sudan dates back to April 2019 when the long-serving authoritarian President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown by military generals following a countrywide uprising against him.

Despite Bashir's ouster, civilians continued their demonstrations, seeking democratic elections and the establishment of a civilian government. This led to the formation of the Sovereignty Council, a power-sharing body of military officers and civilians, to lead Sudan to elections by the end of 2023. Abdalla Hamdok was appointed as the Prime Minister for the transitional period.

#### OVERTHROW OF HAMDOK'S GOVERNMENT

However, the military overthrew Hamdok's government in October 2021, announcing that it would hold power until elections are held in July 2023. This coup led to a deterioration in relations between the military and the Rapid Support Force (RSF), which was founded by Bashir to crush a rebellion in Darfur over 20 years ago due to political and economic marginalization of the local people by Sudan's central government. The RSF has been accused of widespread atrocities.

#### DETERIORATING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THE RSF

One of the main points of contention between the military and the RSF is the inclusion of the 100,000-strong RSF into the army and who would lead the new force. The violence erupted as members of the RSF were redeployed around the country in a move that the army saw as a threat.

#### SUDAN'S STRATEGIC LOCATION AND AGRICULTURAL WEALTH

Sudan is in a volatile region bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel region, and the Horn of Africa. Its strategic location and agricultural wealth have attracted regional power plays, further complicating the transition to a civilian-led government.

### WESTERN POWERS' CONCERNS OVER A RUSSIAN BASE ON THE RED SEA

Western powers fear the potential for a Russian base on the Red Sea, which Sudanese military leaders have expressed openness to.

### INDIA LAUNCHES 'OPERATION KAVERI' TO EVACUATE NATIONALS FROM SUDAN

India has launched 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its nationals from violence-hit Sudan. The mission involves positioning two transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and a naval ship at a key port in Sudan. The operation is named after River Kaveri, one of the major rivers flowing through the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in India. The river is considered sacred and worshipped as the goddess Kaveriamma by the people of the region. India's contingency plan aims to ensure the safe evacuation of its stranded nationals from Sudan.

### INDIA'S COORDINATION WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN SUDAN EVACUATION

India is coordinating efforts with other countries that have the most civilians and resources in Sudan to ensure the safe evacuation of its nationals. The U.S., the U.K., the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are among the countries involved in the coordination of logistics, timing of evacuation operations, and even using Saudi and French planes. India's past experience in similar operations is also helping in a quick evacuation.

### CHALLENGES FOR INDIA IN ANY CONFLICT

The Sudan evacuation highlights the particular challenges India faces in any conflict, given that it has about 14 million non-resident Indians and more than seven million Indian tourists and travellers each year.

Many NRIs work in vulnerable jobs, such as nurses in Iraq or Yemen, students in Ukraine, and labourers in Libya, Syria, and Lebanon.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CRISES

The Parliamentary Standing Committee for External Affairs recommended that the government form a standard operating procedure and a special force to deal with such crises. The government should consider this recommendation, and the procedure must be devoid of political grandstanding or finger-pointing. India's reputation for rescuing every single citizen in times of crisis must be maintained.

### THE WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The ongoing conflict in Sudan has once again highlighted the need for India and the international community to have a strong and coordinated response to evacuate their citizens during times of crisis. India has been successful in using its diplomatic skills and resources to conduct operations such as 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its nationals from Sudan.

However, India must also take proactive steps to prevent its citizens from getting caught up in such conflicts, including the formation of a standard operating procedure and a special force to deal with such crises.

The international community must work towards bringing the warring parties in Sudan to agree to a ceasefire and ensure the transition that was promised in 2019. It is essential to protect the lives and livelihoods of lakhs of Indians who work and live across the world, including those in volatile regions like Sudan.

### ENRICH YOUR ANSWERS

#### **Dutch Disease and its impact on the Sudan Civil War**

The Sudan Civil War is more than just a power struggle between two branches of the country's armed forces. It is also a manifestation of the **Dutch disease phenomenon**, which is affecting numerous countries in Africa and beyond.

Dutch disease in economics refers to a phenomenon in which a country experiences uneven growth across sectors due to the discovery of natural resources. This is because the chronic dependence on the export of these natural resources hollows out other sectors of the economy.

After South Sudan's secession in 2011, Sudan's economy was severely undermined by the loss of oil revenue, which constituted more than 50% of the Sudanese government's revenues and 95% of its exports. As a result, Sudan remains one of the poorest countries globally, with its 46 million people living on an average annual income of \$750 per capita. The dependence on oil exports made the economy vulnerable to external shocks, and when the global oil prices fell in 2014, it caused a severe economic downturn in Sudan.

Moreover, the illegal extraction of natural resources by local warlords, owing to fragile governance-security structures, has further worsened the situation in Sudan. This has led to conflicts between different ethnic groups and armed factions, exacerbating the violence in the country.

The implications of failure to manage natural resources can be deep and far-reaching, not only in economic terms but also in terms of security. Therefore, the country needs to take necessary steps to come out of this situation. For instance, Kazakhstan's National Fund, financed by oil, gas, and mineral revenues, serves as a model for managing natural resources. By following similar strategies, Sudan can mitigate the impact of Dutch disease and improve its economic and security conditions.

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# SCO and the Comprehensive National Power (CNP) of China, India and Pakistan

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

#### – PSIR:

- ✓ Regionalisation of World Politics: EU, ASEAN, APEC, AARC, NAFTA.
- ✓ India and the Global Centres of Power: USA, EU, Japan, China and Russia.

#### – GS2:

- ✓ Regional groupings and agreements
- ✓ India and its Neighborhood Relations

**In News:** The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) ministerial summit took place in Delhi. India, Pakistan and China are its members among others.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. Its ability to cope with intra-state and inter-state conflicts among member states is under scrutiny.

One internal contradiction is Russia's war in Ukraine which is raising questions about Moscow's capacity to sustain primacy in its backyard. Another contradiction is China's rise, increasing the prospects for Beijing's emergence as the dominant force in inner Asia.

### **INTERNAL CONFLICTS IN SCO**

Serious conflicts between India and China, Delhi and Islamabad, as well as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, exist in the SCO. Preventing conflict between member states and associates is a high priority for the SCO, but its record here is not impressive. Afghanistan's internal instabilities have been a significant driver for the SCO, but it has not been able to play the role of the regional security arbiter. In January 2022, there was a major internal upheaval in Kazakhstan, and it was not the SCO but the Russian army that intervened to stabilise the situation.

### **ISSUES BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIAN REGIMES AND RUSSIA**

Russian leaders have often dismissed Central Asian states as artificial nations. Vladimir Putin's vision of the Russian world underlines Moscow's special responsibility to protect Russian minorities beyond its formal borders. No Central Asian neighbour has endorsed the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia is deeply entrenched within the Central Asian state system, with strong ties to local elites and security establishments.

Many Central Asians work in Russia and send valuable remittances home. After Ukraine, the Central Asian states are looking to intensify their diversification strategies to reduce their reliance on Russia.

Kazakhs talk about "multi-vector diplomacy," and some regional actors are seeking to expand their influence in Russia's backyard. Turkey and Iran are two prime examples, along with China's rising role in these countries.

### **DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS ABOUT CHINA'S GROWING INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Some observers argue that China's growing regional influence will come at Russia's expense. Others point to the fact that Russia and China have drawn closer than ever before, with little reason to quarrel over Central Asia. Moscow's muscle and Beijing's money provide a sensible basis for their strategic division of labour in Central Asia, keeping the Western powers out of the region.

A third argument agrees that China has no reason to replace Moscow as the main power in Central Asia in the near term but warns against underestimating Beijing's long-term ambitions in the region. Beijing provides explicit support to the sovereignty of the Central Asian states, and as per Chinese President Xi Jinping, China will continue to resolutely support Kazakhstan in protecting its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

### **INDIA'S OPTIONS AT SCO**

India's engagement with the SCO was premised on Russian primacy in the region and Moscow's support of India's regional interests. For India, a strong and independent Russia is critical for maintaining the inner Asian balance. However, India is in no position to ensure Moscow's strategic autonomy from Beijing, as that depends on Russian strategic choices. India must now protect its own interests in the SCO amidst a rapidly changing regional power distribution in China's favour.

The SCO's ability to cope with intra-state and inter-state conflicts among member states is under scrutiny, and it has not been able to play the role of the regional security arbiter. Central Asian states are looking to intensify their diversification strategies to reduce their reliance on Russia, while China's growing influence in the region is raising concerns about Beijing's long-term ambitions.

### **UNDERSTANDING CNP**

#### **WHAT IS CNP?**

In recent years, the power dynamics in South Asia have undergone significant changes, with China emerging as a major player in the region. To understand this shift, it is important to examine the **Comprehensive National Power (CNP)** of the three major players in the region: China, India, and Pakistan.

CNP takes into account a combination of factors such as:

- 1) the size and growth of the economy
- 2) the strength and cohesion of society
- 3) the firepower and quality of the military, to trade and soft power.

CNP is also defined by how a nation affects its friends, adversaries, and neighbors.

#### **CNP OF PAKISTAN:**

- Pakistan is currently at its weakest since the eve of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.
- Its economy is bankrupt, and the growth rate for this year is only 0.5 percent.
- The income gap between Pakistan and not just India, but all of the Subcontinent, is widening.
- Pakistan is ruled by a coalition government, and its support for the Taliban and its ideological victory in Afghanistan have left it without any support from other countries. Even the Gulf Arabs have moved on from their commitment to Pakistan and its demands.
- Pakistan is now merely a vassal state of China, and it has to compete with other powerful vassal states of China such as Russia.
- Pakistan is left with only one card to play, i.e., India, and it keeps the Indian military engaged along the western borders which is valuable to China.

#### **CNP OF CHINA COMPARED TO INDIA:**

- China has witnessed growth in almost all areas, including technology, trade, military power, social cohesion, and rising global stature.
- This has enabled China to close the gap with the US and larger Western powers and increase the gap with the rest, especially India.
- The war in Ukraine has made Russia more dependent on China.
- In contrast, India on no parameters of CNP has narrowed the gap with China.

- ❑ India has grown phenomenally in many areas, but the inherited gap with China is too much. Even if India grows faster now, the distance between the two will increase.
- ❑ China's economy is more than five times India's, and even if Chinese growth slows down to less than half of India's, the gap will still rise.
- ❑ China has also stretched India's military along both frontiers, and India has no option except to deploy its military along the borders.

#### **CNP OF INDIA:**

- ❑ India's CNP, when compared to previous years, has improved.
- ❑ India's is a remarkable success story of a country becoming so enormously powerful long before it became rich.
- ❑ However, India faces a strategic challenge of the triangulation between China and Pakistan.
- ❑ India needs to take efforts to close its growing gap with China while defending itself from China and Pakistan.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, understanding the Comprehensive National Power of China, India, and Pakistan is crucial to understanding the power dynamics in South Asia.

While China has emerged as a major player in the region, Pakistan is left in a precarious position and has become a vassal state of China.

India, on the other hand, has shown significant growth in many areas, but it still faces a strategic challenge of triangulation between China and Pakistan.

As the region continues to evolve, it will be interesting to see how the CNP of each country changes and what impact this has on the power dynamics in South Asia.

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# Russian Deputy Prime Minister Visits India

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global Centres of Power: USA, EU, Japan, China and Russia.
- **GS2:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**In News:** Recently, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister visited India and participated in the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation meeting.

### RELEVANT QUOTES:

“India and Russia share a special relationship that has stood the test of time. Our ties are based on mutual respect, trust and strong goodwill.”  
– Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

“India and Russia are not just friends, but we are family. Our friendship is built on a strong foundation of history, culture and shared values.”  
– Vladimir Putin, President of Russia

“India and Russia are two great powers that can contribute significantly to world peace and stability. We must work together to address global challenges and promote a more equitable and just world order.”  
– Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India

“India and Russia have a time-tested strategic partnership that has withstood the test of time. Our cooperation is not limited to bilateral issues, but extends to global issues as well.”  
– Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia

“India and Russia are natural partners. Our cooperation in the fields of defence, energy, trade and investment has tremendous potential and we must work to realize it fully.”  
– Sushma Swaraj, former External Affairs Minister of India

### KEY DISCUSSIONS DURING THE VISIT

The visit saw a significant focus on bilateral trade between India and Russia. Bilateral trade between the two countries has increased by 2.6 times in the past year, surpassing the 2025 target.

Both countries have demanded more market access and the use of national currencies to circumvent sanctions.

Russia has also requested that Indian companies increase exports in road construction and pharmaceuticals.

Progress has also been made in negotiations for an FTA between India and the Eurasian Economic Union. The two countries acknowledged that India-Russia ties are among the “stadiest of the major relationships of the world.”

### INDIA-RUSSIA TIES DURING THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS

Since the beginning of Russia's war in Ukraine, western sanctions have significantly cut Russian exports. As a result, Russia has increasingly turned to countries like India and China, which do not join the sanctions, to export resources.

For example, India's oil imports from Russia have jumped from a negligible 0.2% since the war to a massive 28% of India's total oil intake. However, these trade relations have faced Western accusations that India is “benefitting from the war.”

### CONCLUSION

The recent visit of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister to India highlighted the importance of the growing bilateral trade relationship between the two countries. Progress in negotiations for an FTA between India and the Eurasian Economic Union is also significant.

However, India's trade relations with Russia and other countries facing Western sanctions have faced criticism from the West. Despite this, India and Russia's ties remain among the stadiest of major relationships in the world.

# WTO Rules Against India in Telecom Equipment Import Case

## Relevance

### ❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global South: Leadership role in the demand for NIEO and WTO negotiations
- **GS2:** International Institutions.

**In News:** Recently, WTO has ruled against India's Tariff rates, on the complaint filed by EU.

### RELEVANT QUOTES:

"The WTO is a global forum for trade liberalization. It has helped to create a more open and predictable trading system, which benefits everyone." – Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the WTO

"The WTO is the only organization that deals with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible." – Roberto Azevêdo, former Director-General of the WTO

"The WTO is a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system. It has played a critical role in expanding global trade and reducing poverty." – Jim Yong Kim, former President of the World Bank

"The WTO provides a framework for trade that is based on rules and transparency. It is essential for ensuring that the benefits of trade are widely shared and that trade contributes to sustainable development." – Christine Lagarde, former Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund

"The WTO is a vital institution for ensuring that trade benefits everyone. It is a force for peace and prosperity in the world." – Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

## INTRODUCTION

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has ruled against India in a case brought by several of its trading partners. The issue was high Customs duties imposed by the Indian government on the import of telecommunications equipment, including mobile phone handsets.

Initially, India was taken to the dispute resolution panel of the WTO by the European Union (EU). It was later joined by other major partners and participants in the supply chain, including Japan and Taiwan.

## POSITIVES OF INDIA'S HIGH TARIFF POLICY

From the view of the nation's interest, these tariffs have directly led to an increase in investment and the growth of the electronics manufacturing sector.

Mobile phone production and exports have grown in recent years. However, its exports have not outpaced its imports. India has become a large importer of electronic components and sub-assemblies, while local value addition remains low.

## ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH INDIA'S HIGH TARIFF POLICY

Value addition in the mobile industry in India has been low, barely crossing the 10 percent level. Therefore, the electronics sector continues to be a major component of India's trade deficit. Growth, wage level, and job creation in the sector will remain below India's competitors unless it introduces more open policies that do not rely on tariffs and protectionism.

Tariffs are a tax paid by Indian consumers. They will have to purchase mobile phones and other electronics equipment at a higher price. In Digital India, imported equipment is also input into basic economic value addition by many Indians. Tariffs reduce the welfare of the people and make India a high-cost and uncompetitive economy.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

There are geo-political implications of high tariffs. It can result in alienating its closest economic and geopolitical partners. Moreover, with an increase in protectionist measures globally, Indian exporters can be vulnerable to retaliatory measures by trading partners. This can lead to a negative impact on India's growth and employment.

Instead of relying on tariffs, Efficiency improvements, and coherent policies should be prioritised. The electronics sector is not an infant industry in India that must be protected. Instead, it should be given the right competitive pressure and policy environment to become world-class.

The government will definitely appeal against this ruling. However, the WTO appellate body has been rendered dysfunctional by the United States' decision to veto any nominees.

### **CONCLUSION**

India needs to move away from a high tariff policy and focus on efficient, coherent policies that can help its electronics sector grow and become more competitive globally. While the tariffs may have provided a boost in the short-term, they come with long-term costs that could hamper India's economic growth and geopolitical relations.

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# Refugee Crisis Affecting India's Relations with Neighbours

## Relevance

### □ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and South Asia: Impediments to regional cooperation: River water disputes; illegal cross-border migration; Ethnic conflicts and insurgencies; Border disputes.
- **GS2-** India and its Neighborhood.

**Context:** About India's refugee influx.

**In News:** Military operations in Myanmar have sent more refugees across the border to Mizoram.

### RELEVANT QUOTES:

"We have a moral obligation to protect refugees and asylum seekers. They are not a burden, they are an opportunity for us to show compassion and solidarity."  
– Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

"Refugees are not criminals, they are victims of war and persecution. We must treat them with dignity and respect."  
– Malala Yousafzai

"No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark."  
– Warsan Shire

"Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world. They have been uprooted from their homes and communities, and are often living in extremely difficult conditions. It is our duty to provide them with the protection and assistance they need."  
– Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees

"Refugees are not a burden on society, they are an asset. They bring skills, talents and diversity to our communities."  
– António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

The military coup in Myanmar in 2021 has led to an influx of over 40,000 refugees from Myanmar into Mizoram, India. Many of these refugees are from the Chin community, which shares ethnic ties with the Mizos. The Mizoram government has shown a tolerant attitude towards these refugees. However, India as a whole has no clear refugee policy and is unprepared to handle large flows of refugees.

## INDIA'S HISTORY OF HOSTING REFUGEES

India has hosted some of the largest refugee flows in history and follows the principle of non refoulement. This includes hosting Tibetan refugees, millions of displaced individuals during Bangladesh's 1971 liberation war, and Sri Lankan Tamils fleeing the civil war.

## CONCERNS WITH INDIA'S APPROACH TO REFUGEES

India's current system is ill-equipped to handle large flows of refugees. The lack of a clear path forward, including translocation to a third country, and the inability to provide adequate humanitarian assistance can lead to local resentment against refugees.

Additionally, an increase in Myanmar refugees has led to an increase in criminal activities, smuggling, and drug trafficking in border areas. Ad-hoc policy decisions, such as not providing shelter to adequate numbers of Afghan refugees who worked with India and the former Afghanistan government, may also arise without a clear refugee policy.

## THE WAY FORWARD

India needs a clear refugee framework to address the current challenges. Instead of a patchwork of rules and Acts, the government should work towards a national law on refugees. As India continues to grow as a major economy and global player, a comprehensive review of its refugee management mechanism is essential.

## CONCLUSION

India's approach to refugees needs significant improvement to address current challenges effectively. A clear national policy on refugees is necessary to ensure that refugees receive adequate humanitarian assistance and have a clear path forward. With a comprehensive review of its refugee management mechanism, India can continue to support those fleeing persecution and conflict.



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# Nagorno Karabakh Issue

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Recent Developments in India's Foreign Policy.
- **GS2:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

**Context:** Armenia Azerbaijan Rivalry.

**In News:** Recently Azerbaijan said that it had established a checkpoint at the start of the Lachin corridor, the only land route linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, a step that was followed by claims of border shootings by both Azeri and Armenian forces.

### **WHAT IS NAGORNO-KARABAKH?**

Nagorno-Karabakh, known as Artsakh by Armenians, is a landlocked mountainous area in the South Caucasus. It was claimed by both Azerbaijan and Armenia after the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917 and has remained a point of tension ever since. The territory is internationally recognised as part of oil-rich Azerbaijan, but its inhabitants are predominantly ethnic Armenians and have their own government which has enjoyed close links to the government in neighbouring Armenia but has not been officially recognised by it or other U.N. member states.

Armenians, who are Christians, claim a long historical dominance in the area, dating back to several centuries before Christ. Azerbaijan, whose inhabitants are mostly Muslim, links its historical identity to the territory too. It accuses the Armenians of driving out Azeris who lived nearby in the 1990s. It wants to gain full control over the enclave, suggesting ethnic Armenians take Azeri passports or leave.

### **WHAT IS THE HISTORY?**

Over the centuries, the enclave has come under the sway of Persians, Turks, Russians, Ottomans and Soviets. After the Russian revolution of 1917, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over the region. When the Bolsheviks took over Azerbaijan, Armenia agreed to Bolshevik control, ushering in the Sovietisation of the whole of the Caucasus.

Karabakh, with its borders redrawn to include as many Armenians as possible, remained as part of the Azeri Soviet Republic but with autonomy. Its name was the "Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast".

### **FIRST KARABAKH WAR**

As the Soviet Union crumbled, what is known as the First Karabakh War erupted (1988-1994) between Armenians and their Azeri neighbours. About 30,000 people were killed and more than a million people displaced.

Azerbaijan lost a chunk of its territory with Armenians left in control of most of Karabakh, alongside extra territory around Karabakh's perimeter. Azerbaijan vowed to take back control over the territory.

### **44-DAY WAR IN 2020**

In 2020, after decades of skirmishes, Azerbaijan began a military operation which became the Second Karabakh War swiftly breaking through Armenian defences. Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, won a resounding victory in the 44-day war, taking back parts of Karabakh.

The use of drones bought from Turkey and Israel was cited by military analysts as one of the main reasons for Azerbaijan's victory. Several thousand people were killed.

Russia, a treaty ally of Armenia which also has good relations with Azerbaijan, stepped in to negotiate a ceasefire. Under the deal, Azerbaijan was handed all of the territories surrounding Karabakh. That left ethnic Armenians in Karabakh with a much smaller territory. Armenia cast the war's outcome as a disaster and unrest broke out in Yerevan.

The deal provided for Russian peacekeepers to deploy to Karabakh to guard the only road left linking the enclave with Armenia – the so-called Lachin corridor – and construction of a new route along the corridor. Azerbaijan pledged to guarantee the safety of traffic along the corridor in both directions.

Fighting continued to break out after the ceasefire, and in December 2022 Azeri civilians identifying themselves as environmental activists began a blockade of the Lachin corridor, closing Karabakh to all but Russian peacekeepers and Red Cross convoys.

Azerbaijan denied it had fully blockaded the road, saying that some convoys and aid were allowed through.

### **WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH?**

Recently, Azerbaijani troops set up a new checkpoint, near the Armenian border at the beginning of the Lachin corridor, in what Armenia has said is an explicit violation of the November 2020 truce. Azerbaijan said the move, which threatens to cut Karabakh off entirely, was aimed at ending Armenian arms supplies to what it calls a separatist administration.

The United States said it was deeply concerned by the move and called for free and open movement along the corridor.

The Kremlin said there was no alternative to the 2020 ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and that it was working on talks between Baku and Yerevan. The crisis on the Lachin corridor has strained ties between Russia and Armenia. Armenia has repeatedly called for Moscow to enforce the November 2020 ceasefire and open the Lachin corridor, while Moscow has said Armenia is refusing peace talks with Azerbaijan.

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# Remembering Armenian Genocide

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- PSIR: Contemporary Global Concerns: Human Rights

**Context:** SRI LANKAN Economic Crisis.

**In News:** This year marks the 108th year of Armenian Genocide.

108 years ago April 24, 1915, the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) began rounding up Armenian political and cultural leaders in Constantinople, marking the beginning of what would come to be known as the Armenian genocide.

Over the next year or so, over a million Armenians would die — executed, murdered, or left to die of exhaustion and starvation. Many others would be exiled, losing their homeland forever.

In the century since, the term “genocide” is still not universally applied to the Armenian tragedy, though support for that is growing.

Turkey, meanwhile, insists what happened was not genocide, contests the number of victims, and punishes citizens who dispute the official version: Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk and Booker Prize nominee Elif Shafak, both of whom faced legal proceedings, are a case in point.

**Let us try to understand ,What exactly was done to the Armenians before World War I? What is the official definition of genocide, and what is the debate around whether or not the Armenian massacre can be called one?**

### **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ARMENIANS?**

Armenians are an ancient people, whose traditional homeland by the beginning of the 20th century was divided between the Russian and the Ottoman empires. In the Ottoman Empire, dominated by Muslims, Armenians were a Christian, well-off minority. On account of their religion, they faced discrimination, which they had been protesting against and demanding greater say in the government. This had led to resentment and attacks against the community.

By the beginning of the 1900s, the once vast and mighty Ottoman Empire was in the throes of a churn, territories at its far-flung borders breaking away and the ones at its heart restive for change.

In 1908, a revolution brought a group called the Young Turks to power, and paved the way for the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Ittihad ve Terakki Jemiyeti, forming the government. This regime wanted ‘Turkification’ of the empire and was hard on minorities.

In August 1914, World War I broke out, and the Ottoman Empire joined forces with Germany and Austria-Hungary against Russia, Great Britain and France. The war brought antipathy towards Armenians to a boil, especially as some Armenians were sympathetic to Russia and even willing to help it in the war. Soon, the Armenians as a whole were seen as a threat. On April 14, 1915, crackdown on the community began in earnest with the arrest of prominent citizens in Constantinople, many of whom were executed. The government then ordered forcible eviction of Armenians.

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum says on its website, “Fearing that invading enemy troops would induce Armenians to join them, in spring 1915 the Ottoman government began the deportation of the Armenian population from its northeastern border regions. In the months that followed, the Ottomans expanded deportations from almost all provinces regardless of distance from combat zones. The victims of the Armenian genocide include people killed in local massacres that began in spring 1915; others who died during deportations, under conditions of starvation, dehydration, exposure, and disease; and Armenians who died in or en route to the desert regions of the southern Empire [today: northern and eastern Syria, northern Saudi Arabia, and Iraq]. In addition, tens of thousands of Armenian children were forcibly removed from their families and converted to Islam.”



Rouben Paul Adalian, the director of the Armenian National Institute in Washington, DC, writes on the museum's website, "A sizable portion of the deportees, including women and children, were indiscriminately killed in massacres along the deportation routes. The cruelty characterizing the killing process was heightened by the fact that it was frequently carried out by the sword in terrifying episodes of bloodshed...The government had made no provisions for the feeding of the deported population. Starvation took an enormous toll much as exhaustion felled the elderly, the weaker and the infirm. Deportees were denied food and water in a deliberate effort to hasten death. The survivors who reached northern Syria were collected at a number of concentration camps whence they were sent further south to die under the scorching sun of the desert."

### **WHAT TURKEY CLAIMS HAPPENED?**

Over the years, Turkey has expressed condolences over the deaths, but has stidently refused to accept that the Armenian massacre was a planned genocide. The website of its foreign ministry has a chapter dedicated to "The Armenian Allegation of Genocide: The issue and the facts".

The website says, "... during these waning days of the Ottoman Empire did millions die, Muslim, Jew, and Christian alike. Yet Armenian have attempted to extricate and isolate their history from the complex circumstances in which their ancestors were embroiled. In so doing, they describe a world populated only by white-hatted heroes and black-hatted villains. The heroes are always Christian and the villains are always Muslim."

The website goes on to say that "prior to World War I, fewer than 1.5 million Armenians lived in the entire Ottoman Empire. Thus, allegations that more than 1.5 million Armenians from eastern Anatolia died must be false"; "Armenian losses were few in comparison to the over 2.5 million Muslim dead from the same period"; "it was the Ottoman Armenians' violent political alliance with the Russian forces, not their ethnic or religious identity, which rendered them subject to the relocation"; that during the relocation, the government did try to protect the unpopular Armenians but the local populations attacked them; and that Armenian claims of torture and excesses depend on dubious historical sources.

### **WHAT EXACTLY IS GENOCIDE?**

According to the United Nations website, "The word 'genocide' was first coined by Polish lawyer Raphäel Lemkin in 1944 in his book Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. It consists of the Greek prefix *genos*, meaning race or tribe, and the Latin suffix *cide*, meaning killing."

While the term "genocide" is often used loosely in a variety of circumstances, the United Nations definition of the term is narrow and strict.

It says a crime of genocide includes two main elements, "a mental element: the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such, and a physical element, which includes the following five acts, enumerated exhaustively: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

The intent part here is crucial. Also, the members of the attacked group must have been attacked because they are members of the group, and not as individuals, for the crime to qualify as a genocide.

As the UN says, "The intent is the most difficult element to determine. To constitute genocide, there must be a proven intent on the part of perpetrators to physically destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Cultural destruction does not suffice, nor does an intention to simply disperse a group... the target of destruction must be the group, as such, and not its members as individuals."

### **RECOGNITION OF ARMENIAN 'GENOCIDE'**

As of today, 32 countries, including the US, France, Germany, recognise the Armenian genocide. India does not, nor does the UK. The US joined this group only in 2021, under President Joe Biden, and support from other countries too was slow in coming.

Turkey's geopolitical importance has meant that not a lot of governments want to pick issues with it on the Armenian issue. Although most countries have condemned the tragedy, the use of 'genocide' has been avoided, as the term was coined only in 1944 and because Turkey has always claimed that there is no proof the deaths were planned and targeted.

The modern state of Armenia has in the past sought better ties with Turkey, although the two are now locked in a tussle over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, an Armenian-dominated part of Azerbaijan where Turkey supports Azerbaijan.

On Sunday 23rd April 2023, about 10,000 people bearing torches marched through Armenia's capital, Yerevan. While the march was in the memory of the past tragedy, activists also burnt the flags of Turkey and Azerbaijan, as present tensions continue to simmer.



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# What is Labour Day or May Day, and Why is it Celebrated on May 1?

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Marxism and Working Class Movements.
- **GS2:** Pressure Groups.

**Context:** International Labour Day or May Day.

## HISTORY OF MAY DAY

The decision to mark May 1 as May Day was taken in memory of Chicago's Haymarket Affair, which took place in 1886, during a protest in support of workers' rights. The incident resulted in the death of seven police officers and at least four civilians.

May 1 is marked as May Day, also referred to as International Workers' Day and Labour Day in different countries across the world. The Day commemorates the contributions of workers and the labour movement.

Although observed as an ancient northern hemisphere spring festival initially, May 1 became associated with the labour movement in the late 19th century, after trade unions and socialist groups decided to designate it as a day in support of the working class people.

The decision was taken in memory of Chicago's Haymarket Affair, which took place on May 4, 1886, when a violent clash broke out between the police and labour protestors. The incident happened after a bomb went off at Haymarket Square in Chicago, where the police had arrived to break a peaceful rally. Ultimately, seven police officers were killed and 60 others were injured before the violence ended. It's estimated that four to eight civilians died and 30 to 40 were wounded.

Many of the protestors, who were demonstrating against workers' rights violations, long work hours, poor working conditions, low wages and child labour, were arrested and served terms of life imprisonment, death sentences, etc., and those who died were hailed as "Haymarket Martyrs". The Haymarket Affair had a lasting effect on the workers' movement and helped push forward the demands for better working conditions across the world.

## MAY DAY CELEBRATION ACROSS THE WORLD

The US formally recognised Labor Day as a federal holiday in 1894, and it continues to be celebrated every year on the first Monday of September. Soon, Canada also followed suit. However, it took another 22 years and countless protests for America to recognise eight-hour work days.

Although the US and Canada observed the first Monday of September as Labor Day, others decided to mark the occasion on a different date. In 1889, The Second International, an organisation of socialist and labour parties, announced that May 1 would be marked as International Workers' Day from then on.

Five years later, the International Socialist Congress in Amsterdam called on "all Social Democratic Party organisations and trade unions of all countries to demonstrate energetically on the First of May for the legal establishment of the 8-hour day, for the class demands of the proletariat, and for universal peace," and made it "mandatory upon the proletarian organisations of all countries to stop work on May 1, wherever it is possible without injury to the workers."

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the celebration was embraced by the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc nations during the Cold War— becoming a national holiday in many of them. Parades were a part of the celebration— the one at Moscow's Red Square was attended by top Communists leaders and displayed Soviet military might.

## MAY DAY IN INDIA

In India, May Day was first celebrated on May 1, 1923, after the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan was initiated and Comrade Singaravelar (SingaraveluChettiar) helmed the celebrations. In two meetings — one at Triplicane Beach and the second at

the beach opposite Madras High Court — the Comrade, known for being one of the leaders of the Self Respect movement in the Madras Presidency and for his fight for the rights of backward classes, passed a resolution stating the government should allow everybody a national holiday on Labour Day.

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# European Union Members Approve Carbon Market Scheme, Other Climate Laws

## Relevance

### Syllabus:

- PSIR: Contemporary Global Concern: Global Warming

**Context:** Climate related legislations by EU.

**In News:** EU countries have given the final sign-off for a series of new climate change-related laws, which seek to create financial incentives for keeping emissions in check, and penalties for failing to do so.

The 27 member states in the EU on April 25, 2023 approved a revamp to the bloc's so-called carbon market, which is set to make it more costly to pollute for businesses in Europe, sharpening the main tool the EU has to discourage carbon dioxide emissions in the industrial sector.

The changes to the EU's Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), more commonly called the bloc's carbon market, are one of five new laws given final approval on Tuesday after being proposed by the European Commission and after a favorable vote at the European Parliament last week.

The approval was announced amid a meeting of the bloc's environment ministers in Brussels.

### **WHAT IS THE CARBON MARKET?**

Since 2005, European factories and power plants have had to purchase permits to cover their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with the prices becoming more prohibitive as their usage increases against norms for their sectors.

The idea is to create financial incentives for keeping emissions in check, and penalties for failing to — and to generate funds for climate-related projects. It applies to power-generation industries, energy-intensive industries and the aviation sector. Eventually it will be expanded to cover greenhouse gases other than CO<sub>2</sub>, such as methane and nitrogen oxides.

The law's existence has coincided with emissions from those sectors falling by 43% in the EU but what share of that might be correlation and what share might be coincidence is harder to ascertain, amid various partially-related breakthroughs helping to limit emissions.

The changes will set more stringent targets and tougher penalties as time passes. "The new rules increase the overall ambition of emissions reductions by 2030 in the sectors covered by the EU ETS to 62% compared to 2005 levels," the EU said of the changes. The free permits granted to companies for lower levels of emissions will be gradually phased out, by 2034 for heavy industries and by 2026 for the aviation sector, for instance.

There had been some resistance to the changes within the bloc, which are roughly two years in the making. Only 23 of 27 EU members voted in favor; Poland and Hungary opposed it, Belgium and Bulgaria abstained. Critics like Poland had argued that the targets were too ambitious and would place an unfair strain on industry.

Some EU policies and laws — international sanctions are one example of current relevance amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine — require unanimous approval from member states, but for most a qualified majority vote suffices.

### **WHAT ELSE WAS APPROVED?**

The changes to the ETS are part of the EU's "Fit for 55" package of climate plans, a reference to its goal of reducing carbon emissions by 55% by 2030 compared with a 1990 benchmark.

Four more alterations were approved. The first is a plan to incorporate parts of the shipping industry into the ETS, meaning they too will need to buy permits to cover their emissions at times. A new, separate ETS will be established for the buildings and road transport sectors and some others, mainly small industry according to the EU. Changes specifically tailored to the aviation sector were also approved.

The EU will also introduce what it calls its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which concerns products imported from outside the EU for carbon-intensive industries.

According to the EU, its aim is “to prevent ... that the greenhouse gas reduction efforts of the EU are offset by increasing emissions outside its borders through the relocation of production to countries where policies applied to fight climate change are less ambitious than those of the EU.”

Finally, the EU is setting up what it calls a **Social Climate Fund**. It “will be used by member states to finance measures and investments to support vulnerable households, micro-enterprises and transport users and help them cope with the price impacts of an emissions trading system for the buildings, road transport and additional sectors,” the EU said.

The bulk of the funds would hail from the carbon market revenues generated by the ETS, with member states contributing the rest.



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# India's G20 Presidency Year: Recalling its Diplomatic Role in the Korean War Seven Decades Ago

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- PSIR: India and Global Centers of Power.

**Context:** India's G20 Presidency and its quest for responsible seat at world affairs.

**In News:** In its G20 year, India has declared it will represent the voice of the "Global South" for peace. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that "This is not the era of war" has won him plaudits from the Western alliance that is backing Ukraine.

In the early 1950s, Jawaharlal Nehru made a huge diplomatic push to end the war between the two Koreas. India's efforts then met with limited success — and in its G20 year, any role that Delhi might want to play in the Russia-Ukraine war is likely to be informed by its experience from 70 years ago.

In its G20 year, India has declared it will represent the voice of the "Global South" for peace. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that "This is not the era of war" has won him plaudits from the Western alliance that is backing Ukraine. It has given rise to expectations in some quarters that India, which often casts itself in the role of "Vishwaguru", could use its good offices with both Kyiv and Moscow to help bring the war to an end.

It has also rekindled interest in the only other diplomatic intervention by India in a distant war seven decades ago — one that revealed both its international heft as well as exposed its limitations.

### **OUTBREAK OF THE KOREAN WAR**

As the 1950 Korean War pitted Cold War opponents against each other, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made a huge diplomatic push to prevent an escalation into another world war, and for the parties to arrive at a quick ceasefire.

The efforts were only partially successful. Even so, India is counted among the countries that contributed to bringing the war to a close. New Delhi also discharged an important role in the months after the truce, as chair of a committee to repatriate prisoners of war.

In a 2013 essay, 'Between the Blocs: India, the United Nations, and Ending the Korean War', published in The Journal of Korean Studies, British historian Robert Barnes documented the efforts of Nehru and his envoys to bring the war to a "swift conclusion, prevent the UN from adopting a policy that might lead to its escalation, and to reconcile the divergent positions of the two superpower blocs".

A couple of attempts by India to bring about a ceasefire ended in failure. However, its 1952 proposals for the exchange of prisoners enabled the July 1953 armistice agreement, which marks 70 years this year.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. The peninsula had been divided at the end of World War II along the 38th Parallel, with Soviet and US forces occupying the North and South respectively. In 1948, after the two Koreas declared themselves separate countries, and held their own elections, the occupying forces departed. However, neither the North nor the South accepted the other and to this day, both claim the entire Korean peninsula and the islands on either side.

### **INDIA AT THE UN**

At the time of the invasion, India was among the six non-permanent members of the Security Council, and held its rotating presidency that month. Three resolutions on the war came up in quick succession.

\* The USSR was boycotting due to the UN's refusal to replace Taiwan with the People's Republic of China in the Security Council — and with no threat of a Soviet veto, the US moved the first resolution on the same day as the invasion, calling for a withdrawal of North troops from South territory.

New Delhi voted in favour, pleasantly surprising the US. Barnes wrote that India's UN representative Benegal Rau and the UK representative persuaded the US to tone down the language of the resolution — calling the North's action a “breach of peace” rather than an “act of aggression”.

\* A second US-sponsored resolution on June 27 asked UN members to offer “such assistance as may be necessary” to South Korea to repel the invasion. President Harry S Truman announced he would deploy the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan strait, and step up assistance to the French in Indo-China.

Rau initially refused to vote, but Nehru eventually accepted the resolution after the British High Commissioner in India conveyed there was “no room for neutrality when it came to aggression”.

\* India abstained on the third resolution on July 7, which gave US forces command over combined international forces under UN auspices. Not wanting to be seen as shirking an international call to duty by the UN, India sent the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance, which did outstanding work treating wounded soldiers.

Nehru's view at this time was that giving the People's Republic of China admission into the Security Council could provide resolution in Korea. The USSR returned to the Security Council at the end of August, and blocked further US resolutions, including one on sanctioning China.

Due to the Soviet vetoes, the US shifted the action to the UN General Assembly. Here India failed in an effort to block a US-British resolution for UN forces to cross into North Korea. As international troops crossed the 38th Parallel, Chinese forces entered the fray, and it seemed the crisis might spiral out of control.

Nehru's proposal for a truce, and talks with the communist side on Korea and Taiwan after cessation of hostilities found traction at the UN. Rau was appointed to a three-member committee to come up with ceasefire proposals that were overwhelmingly approved by the General Assembly.

But Beijing rejected the proposals, and in February 1951, a US resolution in the General Assembly for sanctioning China was adopted with a decisive majority. Stung by repeated failure, Nehru cooled off.

### **INDIA AND PRISONERS OF WAR**

Months later, in 1952, when the Panmunjom talks for an armistice between the UN and the communist side (comprising Chinese and North Korean officials) unravelled over the fate of the PoWs, India got into the act again. The UN negotiators insisted that no PoW would be repatriated against his will — by their count, only 70,000 of 170,000 prisoners in their custody wanted to be sent back. The communists wanted a full exchange.

Nehru put the forceful V K Krishna Menon on the job of finding a way to break the impasse. Backed by Britain and Canada, Menon proposed a commission of four representatives, two from each bloc — Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland — plus a fifth country as “umpire”, that would take charge of all PoWs at war's end. Those willing to be repatriated would be sent home immediately; the fate of the unwilling would be decided over the next six months. The UNGA adopted the proposal, but with the Soviet bloc opposing and China rejecting, it had to be shelved.

But when armistice negotiations resumed in April 1953, the proposal became the basis for the eventual solution on the PoWs. A Neutral Nations Repatriation Committee was set up with the same four member countries. India was selected to chair the committee; Nehru sent Lt Gen K S Thimayya for the job, and P N Haksar as his political adviser.

The committee would hold the PoWs for 90 days; the Korean conference would discuss the fate of the unrepatriated for 30 days; after this the prisoners would be either released or handed over to the UN General Assembly. Maj Gen S S P Thorat was appointed Commander of the Custodian Force India, which would take custody of over 22,000 PoWs who were unwilling to go back.



**THE ARMISTICE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED ON JULY 27, 1953.**

As the world grapples to find an end to the war in Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's invitation to President Xi Jinping to visit his country has led to speculation that Beijing, after stitching up the Saudi-Iran peace deal, might be readying for a more high-profile peacemaking role.

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has said he wants to launch a "peace club" of countries, including China and India, that can work together to find a way out in Ukraine. Any role India might want to play is likely to be informed by its experience in trying to end another war, 70 years ago.



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## The NCERT Controversy: Politicalization or Rationalisation?

### Relevance

#### ❑ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.
- **PSIR:** Statutory Institutions/Commissions

**Context:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has made 1,334 changes in 182 books to its syllabus for various classes.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has recently implemented modifications in its syllabus for various classes, involving 1,334 alterations in 182 books. Among the changes are the removal of some texts related to the Mughal era, the Delhi Sultanate, and the involvement of Hindu extremist organizations in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

While the NCERT has explained that the changes are aimed at rationalizing and reducing the content load, they have faced criticism for being politically motivated and revisionist. These modifications have sparked concerns about their potential impact on India's education system, as well as its collective memory and national identity.

### WHAT ARE THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE NCERT SYLLABUS?

**Class 12 History:** Chapters related to the Mughal Empire have been removed from the textbook 'Themes of Indian History-Part II.'

**Class 12 Civics:** Chapters like 'American Hegemony in World Politics' and 'The Cold War Era' have been removed from the Civics textbook.

**Class 12 Indian Politics after Independence:** Two chapters, 'Rise of Popular Movements' and 'Era of One Party Dominance,' have been removed.

**Class 10 Democratic Politics-2:** Chapters such as 'Democracy and Diversity,' 'Popular Struggles and Movements,' and 'Challenges of Democracy' have been dropped.

**Class 11 Themes in World History:** Chapters like 'Central Islamic Lands,' 'Clash of Cultures,' and 'Industrial Revolution' have been removed.

**Other changes:** Content on the government's ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) following Gandhi's assassination. References to Nathuram Godse's background and his connection to extremist Hindu newspapers.

#### Previous changes:

30% of the NCERT syllabus was removed as part of the syllabus rationalisation in 2022. The process resulted in the removal of sections from the curriculum, including lessons on Gujarat riots, Mughal courts, the Emergency, the Cold War, and the Naxalite movement, among others.

### THE NCERT USED SEVERAL CRITERIA FOR THE RECENT REVISION OF TEXTBOOKS, INCLUDING:

a) **Removing overlapping content among different subjects in the same class.** This ensures that students are not burdened with the same content in multiple subjects, and instead can learn different concepts in each subject.

- b) **Removing similar content in the lower or higher class in the same subject.** This ensures that students are not learning the same material repeatedly, and that the content is appropriately sequenced and challenging.
- c) **Including content that is easily accessible to children and can be learned through self-learning or peer learning.** This helps students to become independent learners and develop their critical thinking skills.
- d) **Removing content that is not relevant** in the present context. This ensures that the textbooks are up-to-date and reflect current knowledge and practices.
- e) **Reducing the difficulty level of the content.** This ensures that the textbooks are accessible to a wide range of learners and that students are not discouraged by overly complex material.

### **WHAT IS THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE CHANGES IN THE NCERT SYLLABUS?**

The rationale behind the changes in the NCERT syllabus can be seen from multiple perspectives:

- ❑ **The previous syllabus is not aligned with new educational policies:** It is essential to revise and align the current NCERT syllabus with the new education policy to ensure that it meets the updated objectives, priorities, and guidelines.
- ❑ **Outdated content:** Some parts of the syllabus may contain outdated or irrelevant information, which may not be applicable or useful for students in the contemporary context.
  - o For example, issues like Swachh Bharat, Digital India, GST, 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', demonetisation etc are missing in the current syllabus.
- ❑ **Bias and controversy:** The NCERT syllabus has faced criticism for potential biases and controversies in its content. This could include the portrayal of historical events, political issues, or cultural aspects that may be seen as promoting a particular viewpoint or ideology.
  - o For example, the book on Politics in Independent India has chapters on 'the era of one-party dominance'. Under this section, the nature of the dominance of the Congress, Socialist, Communist Party, Communist Party of India, Bharatiya Jana Sangh etc, were being taught to the students.
- ❑ **Lack of inclusivity:** The syllabus may not adequately represent the diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds of India, which can lead to a lack of understanding and appreciation of the country's rich heritage and diversity.
  - o For example, more space was given to the Mughal Empire.
- ❑ **Heavy workload to students:** The NCERT syllabus is often criticized for being too vast and demanding, leading to a high workload for students, which can have negative impacts on their mental and physical well-being.
- ❑ **Addressing feedback from educators and stakeholders:** Changes may be made based on feedback from teachers, students, and other stakeholders to ensure that the curriculum remains effective and engaging.

### **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THE NEW CHANGES IN THE NCERT SYLLABUS?**

- ❑ **Inclusion of Modern Schemes and Programs:** The changes in the NCERT syllabus have included references to modern schemes and programs introduced by the Indian government, such as Digital India, Make in India, and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. This helps students to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and be more informed citizens.
- ❑ **Increased Emphasis on Ancient Indian Knowledge:** The revised syllabus places greater emphasis on ancient Indian knowledge and practices, such as yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedic mathematics. This helps students to appreciate their cultural heritage and understand the value of traditional practices.
- ❑ **Focus on Nationalist Figures:** The changes have given greater recognition to nationalist figures who played an important role in India's struggle for independence but were overlooked in the past. For example, the new textbooks include more information about freedom fighters like Veer Savarkar, Subhash Chandra Bose, and Sardar Patel.
- ❑ **Reduced Content Load:** The rationalisation of the syllabus has resulted in a reduction of 30% of the content load, which means that students have to study fewer topics in each subject. This helps to reduce the burden on students and enables them to focus more on understanding the concepts in depth.

- ❑ **Updated Content:** The revised syllabus includes updated content to reflect the latest developments in various fields, such as science, technology, and social issues. This helps students to keep pace with the rapidly changing world and be better prepared for the future.

#### **CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGES IN NCERT SYLLABUS:**

- ❑ **Implementation Challenges:** Implementing the new syllabus may pose challenges due to the sudden removal of certain topics and the addition of new ones. Teachers may require additional training, and schools may need to invest in new resources such as updated textbooks and teaching aids.
- ❑ **Controversial Changes:** The removal of certain topics, such as the Mughal era and Gandhi's assassination, has been controversial and raised concerns about the government's motives. Some believe that these changes are politically motivated or an attempt to rewrite history to fit a specific agenda.
- ❑ **Impact on Student Learning:** There is a risk that some of the changes made to the NCERT syllabus may negatively impact student learning. For instance, the removal of certain historical events or figures may lead to an incomplete or biased understanding of the subject matter.
- ❑ **Resistance to Change:** Some stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, may resist the changes made to the NCERT syllabus. They may argue that the changes are unnecessary or undermine the credibility of the education system.
- ❑ **Unequal Access to Resources:** The changes made to the NCERT syllabus may require schools to invest in new resources that may not be affordable for all schools. This could result in unequal access to resources and opportunities for students, depending on their socioeconomic background.
- ❑ **Impact on Standardized Tests:** Changes to the syllabus could have an impact on standardized tests and college admissions, as these exams often test knowledge based on the old syllabus.

#### **WHAT IS THE RESPONSE OF THE NCERT EXPERT TEAM TO VARIOUS MEDIA DEBATES?**

According to the NCERT expert team, the allegations about deleting the Mughal period from the syllabus are incorrect. They clarify that the rationalization of the syllabus has included the same topics in different subjects or classes. For instance, the Class XII History textbook has a theme on the Mughals, covering important facets related to the society and economy of the medieval period. Similarly, the Class XI textbook refers to Babur, Akbar, and the construction of the Taj Mahal.

The expert team refutes claims that the changes made to the syllabus are politically motivated. The committee deemed the mention of Nathuram Godse's caste in the Class XII History textbook inappropriate, and the section "Controversies regarding Emergency" was dropped. The reprinted version retains enough information about the crisis of democratic order and abuse of power for students to understand the developments related to the imposition of the Emergency.

#### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE**

- ❑ Encourage constructive dialogue among all stakeholders, including educators, students, parents, and policymakers, to address concerns and ensure that changes in the syllabus meet the needs of students and society.
- ❑ Conduct thorough research and analysis before making any changes to the syllabus to ensure that they are evidence-based and have a sound pedagogical rationale.
- ❑ Ensure that the revised syllabus promotes diversity and inclusivity, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and varied experiences of Indian society.
- ❑ Provide adequate training and professional development opportunities for teachers to effectively teach the revised syllabus.
- ❑ Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of changes in the syllabus to identify and address any issues that may arise.

Any changes to the NCERT syllabus should prioritize the best interests of students and society, keeping in mind the principles of diversity, inclusivity, and quality education for all.

# Constitution of India Was Shaped by Ambedkar's Ideas on Fraternity and Democracy

## Relevance

### Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.
- **PSIR:** Making of the Indian Constitution

**Context:** Ideals and principles contained in constitution.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Constitution of India is considered one of the most progressive and comprehensive constitutions in the world. It was drafted by the Constituent Assembly, and its ideas took shape long before India gained its independence.

The ideas of the Constitution were influenced by many thinkers, but the role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the Drafting Committee, is widely acknowledged. Let us explore how Ambedkar's ideas on fraternity and democracy shaped the Indian Constitution and the challenges that India still faces in upholding these principles.

## **THE IDEA OF THE CONSTITUTION**

The idea of the Indian Constitution was initially proposed by M.N. Roy in December 1934. It became an official demand of the Indian National Congress in 1935 and was officially adopted in the Lucknow session in April 1936, presided by Jawaharlal Nehru.

## **AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS ON FRATERNITY**

- Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians. It is the principle that gives unity and solidarity to social life.
- Ambedkar believed that without fraternity, equality and liberty would not be very useful.
- The idea of fraternity is closely linked to that of social solidarity, which is impossible to accomplish without public empathy.

The text of the Indian Constitution explains the implications of other principles and the duties arising from them. But it is not the case with fraternity.

- Article 51A refers to the duty of every citizen to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India.
- Sir Ernest Barker, a political philosopher, distinguishes between the psychological fact of common emotion and the political principle of fraternity.

## **AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS ON WORKING FOR DEMOCRACY IN INDIA**

- Ambedkar believed that democracy is prone to change in form and purpose. Its purpose in our times is the welfare of the people.
- Democracy is a method of government by discussion. It brings revolutionary changes to the economic and social life of people without bloodshed.

**The following are some of the requirements to maintain democracy:**

- There must not be inequalities in society.
- There must be equality of law as well as equal protection of law and observance of constitutional morality.

- ❑ There must be no tyranny of the majority over the minority.
- ❑ A functioning moral order in society and a public conscience are essential.

#### **THE REALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN INDIA**

- ❑ Inequalities continue to persist in India, including those emanating from the caste system.
- ❑ The democratic opposition has progressively declined in substance.
- ❑ Equality in law does not necessarily mean equal protection of the law.
- ❑ There is little regard for constitutional morality.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD FOR DEMOCRACY IN INDIA**

- ❑ India has immense diversity, and there is an unfortunate legacy of violence at birth that persists and takes different forms.
- ❑ There is a need for constitutional principles in individual and collective terms.
- ❑ A sense of fraternity is needed as an essential virtue. This cannot be merely in formal terms. It has to be imbibed individually and collectively.
- ❑ There is a need to invest in democracy with moral content at the individual and collective levels. It has to take the shape of an imperative.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The Indian Constitution was shaped by the ideas of many great thinkers, but Ambedkar's ideas on fraternity and democracy played a significant role in its formation. The Constitution is a reflection of India's aspiration for equality, liberty, and fraternity. However, the ground reality is different, and India still faces many challenges in upholding these.

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*By -* **Shashank Tyagi**

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# The Need for an Updated Caste Census in India

## Relevance

### ❑ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.
- **PSIR:** Caste, Religion, and Ethnicity in Indian Politics.

**Context:** Recently, various political parties are demanding an updated caste census. This highlights an emerging consensus among the political parties on the need for a caste census.

### RELEVANT QUOTES:

“Caste is a social evil that has plagued India for centuries. It is an injustice that must be eradicated.” – B.R. Ambedkar

“Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire, which prevents the Hindus from co-mingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind.” – Mahatma Gandhi

“The caste system is a social hierarchy that is based on discrimination and exploitation. It is an affront to human dignity and a violation of human rights.” – Kailash Satyarthi

“Caste is a disease of the mind. It is an obstacle to the progress of the nation. We must uproot it.” – Swami Vivekananda

“Caste is a notion that separates people on the basis of birth. It has no place in a modern, democratic society.” – Shashi Tharoor

Recently, various political parties in India have been demanding an updated caste census. This demand has sparked an emerging consensus among political parties about the need for a caste census.

### THE PRESENT FORM OF THE CENSUS COLLECTED CASTE-BASED DATA

The Census of India is enumerating caste-based data and publishes regular detailed tables based on that. However, these tables are available for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) alone and not for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and the residual category of “Others.”

### THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE DEMAND FOR AN UPDATED CASTE CENSUS

There are several reasons for demanding an updated caste census:

1. Firstly, the recent expansion of reservation benefits to economically weaker sections among “forward” castes using income criteria has made it necessary to update the caste census.
2. Secondly, the Mandal Commission report of 1980, which is the basis for identifying backwardness and determining the extent of reservation to the Other Backward Classes, was based on caste census data of 1931. This outdated data is used to evaluate existing reservation quotas or assess demands for reservation policies.
3. Thirdly, an updated caste census will serve as a legal imperative and allow the government to answer the Supreme Court’s call for quantifiable data.
4. For the SC and ST social groups, the percentage of seats reserved is proportional to the share of these groups in the country’s population. However, this is not the case for the OBC group. The OBC groups are demanding a proportionate share of the reservation. At present, central and state governments have gone to the extent of extending reservations to various communities to fulfil political favouritism. A reliable estimate of caste will remove such political favouritism.

## **ENRICH YOUR ANSWERS**

### **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)**

Caste as a category was enumerated as part of a nationwide Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) in 2011-12 to identify beneficiaries for various government programmes. The SECC has since been adopted by most government programmes, including for the identification of beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act. As part of the SECC data on caste was collected but was kept apart from other socioeconomic indicators.

## **THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CASTE CENSUS IN 2011**

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census in 2011 created many concerns associated with the data:

1. Firstly, there were issues in defining castes. The criteria described by the government in 2011 created many concerns associated with the data.
2. Secondly, the recorded data of 46 lakh different castes, sub-castes, caste/clan surnames require adequate breakdown before being used for proper enumeration.
3. Lastly, the survey was conducted without utilizing the Census Commissioners and the Office of the Registrar General properly.

Data from an all-India caste enumeration might create pressure from OBC representatives for a larger chunk of reservations as pressure groups arise from within this vast social group. The government must use the existing SECC data on caste. Since caste does not change over the years, India's SECC data is still reliable. This will allow a better understanding of the socio-economic status of various castes.

## **THE CHALLENGES IN CREATING AN UPDATED CASTE CENSUS**

Creating an updated caste census faces several challenges:

1. Firstly, the government has already postponed the long-delayed 2021 Census, which raises the question of the government's present capacity to conduct an effective caste census.
2. Secondly, there is a risk of objectification of caste identities, even though the Constitution seeks to build a casteless society.

## **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

An adequate consolidation of caste/sub-caste names into social groups, along with the synonymy of the self-identified group names, should be done before conducting the survey.

Enlisting these groups against the OBC/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes lists for each State is also necessary. However, addressing socioeconomic inequities through reservation quotas might not make advancement to a truly casteless society.

## **ENRICH YOUR ANSWERS**

### **Supreme Court Judgement:**

A Supreme Court judgement in 2022 made empirical estimates of different castes conditional for reservation in local bodies.

### **Government Committee Analysis:**

The government set up a committee to analyse the data on caste from the SECC under the chairmanship of Arvind Panagariya. But there has been little progress since then and the data has not been released.

### **State-Level Census**

Karnataka conducted its own caste census in 2017. However, even the results of that census have not been released. Another caste census is currently underway in Bihar.



# Supreme Court's Ruling on Freedom of Press in India

## 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

**Context:** The Supreme Court in the *Madhyamam Broadcasting Limited vs Union of India* case, annulled the Union government's telecast ban on the Malayalam news channel.

### RELEVANT QUOTES

"Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy." – Walter Cronkite, American journalist

"A free press can, of course, be good or bad, but, most certainly without freedom, the press will never be anything but bad." – Albert Camus, French philosopher

"Freedom of the press, if it means anything at all, means the freedom to criticize and oppose." – George Orwell, British author

"The liberty of the press is essential to the security of the state." – John Adams, American Founding Father and second President of the United States

"The press should be not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but also a collective organizer of the masses." – Vladimir Lenin, Russian revolutionary and politician

The Centre said that the media channel has alleged links with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JEIH).

The Supreme Court in its ruling on the *Media One* case made the following observations:

- ❑ The court pointed out that Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JEIH) is not a banned organization, so linking the media channel with it cannot affect the sovereignty and integrity of the nation.
- ❑ The court acknowledged that restrictions on press freedom could lead to a homogenised view on various issues, which could pose grave dangers to democracy.
- ❑ The court suggested the appointment of an amicus curiae, who could be given access to the material whenever the state claims immunity from disclosure.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RULING ON FREEDOM OF PRESS IN INDIA

The ruling on the *Media One* case has significant implications for the freedom of press in India. It highlights:

- ❑ The importance of an independent press for the robust functioning of a democratic republic.
- ❑ The fact that anti-establishment views of media channels are not adequate grounds for invoking the national security exception to free speech.
- ❑ The need for greater openness and more freedom of the press, without which both justice and democracy are incomplete.
- ❑ Standards for restrictions based on national security and the use of sealed envelopes by the Centre.
- ❑ Enforcing the established principle of natural justice, ensuring relevant material must be disclosed to the affected party along with the right to appeal.

### FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN INDIA

Article 19 of the Constitution protects the freedom of the media in India, subject to reasonable restrictions.

However, there is no benchmark to test the reasonableness of a restriction, which has resulted in governments at all levels using restrictions arbitrarily to clamp down on journalists and restrict media freedom in India.

## **INCONSISTENT COURT JUDGMENTS**

Over the years, the court judgments on free speech have varied significantly. Senior advocates have noted that depending on the judges and the specific case, the outcome of a matter can be completely different.

For instance, the Supreme Court (SC) is presently examining “hate speech” without defining the term.

In 2010, a SC bench upheld the ban on a book critical of Islam, citing the importance of public interest and peace in the country.

On the other hand, in 2017, the court refused to ban a book that allegedly defamed the entire vysya community.

Additionally, a recent trial court ruling upheld a complaint against Rahul Gandhi for alleged remarks on the surname Modi, for which he was sentenced to two years in prison for defamation.

## **THE NEED FOR CONSISTENT GUIDELINES**

To ensure consistent guidelines for free speech, the SC needs to maintain a uniform approach. Leaving matters to individual judges and specific cases will only result in contradictory guidelines on free speech.

To prevent such inconsistencies, the SC should establish a full bench of seven or nine judges.

This bench can review all free speech judgments, both at the apex court and the high court levels, to bring out the actual limits to free speech and the legitimate exercise of this right.

It can also define hate speech clearly and lay down guidelines for police forces to determine when a speech constitutes a threat to public order.

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# 50 Years of Kesavananda Bharti Case

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Indian Constitution: Historical underpinnings.
- **PSIR:** Salient Features of Indian Constitution.

**Context:** 50 Years of Basic Structure Doctrine by Indian Supreme Court.

Fifty years ago, on April 24, 1973, the Supreme Court delivered its judgment in Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru and Ors vs State of Kerala and Anr, the landmark case that redefined the relationship between Parliament and the Constitution.

By the narrowest possible margin of 7-6, a 13-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled that the “basic structure” of the Constitution is inviolable, and cannot be amended by Parliament.

### Kesavananda Bharati case

The extent of Parliament’s power to amend the Constitution was the backdrop of the tussle between the executive and the judiciary in the first two decades of the republic. In its judgments in the first string of cases, the Supreme Court viewed the *I C Golaknath & Ors vs State Of Punjab & Anrs* (Feb 27, 1967), the Supreme Court reversed its earlier verdicts and ruled that Parliament cannot amend the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Parliament responded by amending the Constitution to give itself the power to amend any part of the Constitution — and passed a law that it cannot be reviewed by the courts. This scope of the power to amend — especially when the right to property (which was a fundamental right at the time) was impacted by the land ceiling laws — was the central challenge in the Kesavananda case. power to amend the Constitution as unfettered, but that view changed subsequently.

In its majority ruling, the court held that fundamental rights cannot be taken away by amending them. It said that Parliament had vast powers to amend the Constitution, and upheld the land ceiling laws — but it drew the line by observing that certain parts are so inherent and intrinsic to the Constitution that even Parliament cannot touch it. The court ruled that in spirit, the amendment would not violate the “basic structure” of the Constitution.

### Strong opinions and drama

The 68-day hearing is perhaps the longest in the history of the Supreme Court. Several commentators have noted that from the beginning, the 13-judge Bench, also the largest so far, was sharply divided. **Justice P Jaganmohan Reddy**, one of the seven judges who would form the majority, recalled the acrimony in his autobiography, **The Judiciary I Served**. He cited instances of his colleagues answering questions that were put to counsel by judges on the ‘other’ side.

The late T R Andhyarujina, a former Solicitor General of India who was jurist H M Seervai’s junior on the case, recalled in his book an incident when Justice S N Dwivedi, one of the six judges who would later form the minority, spoke in a way that was perceived to be pro-government.

“Are you prepared to say that the fundamental right to property can be amended? If so, I am prepared to procure from Parliament that all other fundamental rights can be left unamended,” Justice Dwivedi asked Nani Palkhivala, who was arguing for the petitioners. (Kesavananda Bharati Case: The Untold Story of Struggle for Supremacy by Supreme Court and Parliament)

The hearing began in early October 1972 and went on until March 1973, with breaks for New Year’s and Holi. Justice M H Beg fell ill and was hospitalised twice during the hearing, which added to the delay. The fact that then Chief Justice of India S M Sikri was due to retire on April 25, 1973, added to the pressure of closing the hearing fast.

Tensions ran high among the lawyers, even among those who were on the same side. Then Attorney General for India Niren De, who would appear for the Centre, had lost a string of cases on the right to property issue. The government wanted Seervai to argue — according to Andhyarujina’s account, Seervai agreed on the condition that he would lead the arguments instead of the AG.

When arguments began, De occupied the first seat, and showed no indication of giving up his right for Seervai. Palkhivala had opened the arguments for the petitioners, which went on for about 30 days. Eventually, De told the court that since he would be busy at a conference overseas, Seervai would open the arguments for the government.

Seervai, who was briefed by the State of Kerala, opposed His Holiness Sri Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalavaru, the lead petitioner who lent his name to the title of the case. Kesavananda Bharati had been the head seer of the Edneer Mutt in Kerala's Kasaragod district since 1961.

### **An aborted case review**

In 1975, two years after the Kesavananda Bharati ruling, the Supreme Court sought to reconsider the verdict. On November 10, 1975, a 13-judge Bench, headed by then Chief Justice of India A N Ray, sat to review the "correctness of the basic structure doctrine". The country was four-and-a-half months into Indira Gandhi's Emergency at the time.

That same day — November 10, 1975 — a five judge Bench of the Supreme Court had delivered its judgment in the Indira Gandhi v Raj Narain case, popularly known as the Election Case, affirming the principles laid down in the Kesavananda ruling. The five judges on this Bench were also part of the Bench constituted to hear the Kesavananda review.

For more than two days, the 13-judge Bench heard arguments from Palkhivala, who had represented the petitioners in Kesavananda. However, no judicial record of this review hearing exists, because it was abandoned midway. Fali Nariman referred to this as a "non-case", and the constitutional historian Granville Austin wrote that this moment marked a definite assertion of the judiciary against the majoritarian Parliament of the time. (Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience)

In his book Constitutional Law of India, Seervai, who appeared for the government in the Kesavananda case, wrote about the so-called attempt to review the basic structure doctrine. "Arguments were hurt for two days, but on 12 November 1975, as soon as the court assembled, Chief Justice Ray informed the parties that the Bench had been dissolved," Seervai wrote.

"The sequence of events would suggest that Chief Justice Ray realised, before 10 November 1975, that his brother judges in the Election case were not likely to depart from the theory of the basic structure, and it would also suggest that the two days' hearing before the Bench of 13 judges, satisfied him that the doctrine of the basic structure would not be considered by the present Bench," Seervai said.

### **Kesavananda Bharati case and its legacy: How Supreme Court has invoked the basic structure doctrine over the years**

Over the decades, the basic structure doctrine has been criticised repeatedly — for diluting the principle of separation of powers and undermining the sovereignty of Parliament, and as a vague and subjective form of judicial review.

The seminal ruling in Kesavananda Bharati, in which the Supreme Court laid down the "basic structure" doctrine on the limits of Parliament's power to amend the Constitution, completes 50 years on Monday.

Over the decades, the basic structure doctrine has been criticised repeatedly — for diluting the principle of separation of powers and undermining the sovereignty of Parliament, and as a vague and subjective form of judicial review.

A scrutiny of the application of the doctrine over the past half century reveals a telling pattern: although the highest court has invoked "basic structure" sparingly, it has mostly struck down amendments where judicial powers have been curtailed. Consider:

- ❑ Since 1973, the year of the Kesavananda Bharati judgment, the Constitution has been amended more than 60 times. In these five decades, the Supreme Court has tested constitutional amendments against the doctrine of basic structure in at least 16 cases.
- ❑ In nine of these 16 cases, the Supreme Court has upheld constitutional amendments that had been challenged on grounds of violation of the basic structure doctrine. Six of these cases relate to reservations — including the quota for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Economically Weaker Section (EWS), and reservations in promotions.
- ❑ The Supreme Court has struck down a constitutional amendment entirely just once — The Constitution (Ninety-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014, which established the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), the body that would have been responsible for the appointment and transfer of judges, replacing the current Collegium system. The

amendment was struck down by a five-judge Constitution Bench in 2015 on the grounds that it threatened “judicial independence”, which the court ruled was a basic feature of the Constitution.

- ❑ In six instances since 1973, including the Kesavananda ruling itself, the Supreme Court has “partially struck down” a constitutional amendment. In all these cases, the provision that was struck down related to the denial of judicial review.

Just one of these six rulings involve an amendment that was not made during the Indira Gandhi era — in *Kihoto Hollohan*, which dealt with the Tenth Schedule.

**Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu And Others (1992):** The Supreme Court upheld The Constitution (Fifty-second Amendment) Act that introduced the Tenth Schedule or the so-called “anti-defection law” in the Constitution. The only portion of the amendment that was struck down was the one that stated that the decisions of the Speaker relating to disqualification cannot be judicially reviewed.

In 2021, a three-judge Bench of the court struck down a portion of The Constitution (Ninety-seventh Amendment) Act, 2011, but on procedural — not basic structure — grounds. The amendment changed the legal regime for cooperative societies, and the court ruled that cooperative societies within a state, as opposed to inter-state, would fall under the State List, which means that a constitutional amendment relating to it must be ratified by half the states as prescribed in the Constitution. (*Union of India vs Rajendra N Shah*, 2021)

**Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru and Ors vs State of Kerala and Anr (1973):** While the court upheld the land ceiling laws that were challenged, it struck down a portion of the 25th Amendment (1972) which stated that “if any law is passed to give effect to the Directive Principles” it cannot “be deemed to be void on the ground that it takes away or abridges any of the rights contained in Article 14, 19 or 31”.

**Indira Gandhi v Raj Narain (1975):** The SC applied the principle laid down in the Kesavananda ruling for the first time in this case. It struck down The Constitution (Thirty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1975, which barred the Supreme Court from hearing a challenge to the election of President, Prime Minister, Vice-President, and Speaker of Lok Sabha.

**Minerva Mills Ltd vs Union Of India (1980):** The SC struck down a clause inserted in Article 368 (which gives the power and lays down the procedure to amend the Constitution), which said “there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution.”

**P Sambamurthy v State of Andhra Pradesh (1986):** The SC struck down a portion of the 32nd Amendment (1973), which constituted an Administrative Tribunal for Andhra Pradesh for service matters, taking away the jurisdiction of the High Court.

**L Chandra Kumar v Union of India (1997):** The top court struck down a portion of the 42nd Amendment, which set up administrative tribunals excluding judicial review by High Courts.

# Understand the Quote – ‘Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic’ - Mahatma Gandhi

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Local Self Government System in India.
- **PSIR:** Gandhian Gram Swaraj.

**Context:** Gandhi’s concept of Gram Swaraj and its inspiration for Panchayati Raj System in India

Marking a landmark law that came into effect on April 24, 1993, the National Panchayati Raj Day was the day when the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, vested constitutional status on Panchayati Raj institutions.

The law on the governance of India’s villages was also a manifestation of one of Mahatma Gandhi’s central principles. He often championed the idea of a Panchayati Raj setup, where local people participate in the functioning of their villages – in improving the condition of schools, roadways and water bodies.

In fact, Gandhi stated that after Indian independence from British rule in 1947, he wished for the Congress Party to transform into a volunteer organisation consisting of panchayat-like units in all Indian villages to interact with villagers for achieving swaraj. We explain what Gandhi meant when he spoke about the concept and why the law was a milestone.

### **WHAT WAS THE CONTEXT OF GANDHI’S QUOTE?**

Gandhi’s full quote, from a 1946 issue of the **Harijan** magazine, reads: **“Independence must mean that of the people of India, not of those who are today ruling over them... Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world.”**

In his various experiments against colonial forces and creating an alternative to their model of governance, Gandhi put forth values like ahimsa (non-violence) and satya (truth). But apart from ideology, he also gave practical steps for achieving true self-rule or swaraj. He said India must have panchayats, a setup where the village’s adults elect a council of five people and a head among them, as local representatives.

Although, Gandhi clarifies this does not mean not taking any help from the outside world, but simply that each person must be so capable as to take care of their own basic needs in life in harmony with nature and those around them.

This would mean contributing labour for public work like sanitation, growing food locally, creating a rotational force for guarding the village, ensuring education for all, wearing hand-spun khadi to promote local artisans, shunning intoxicants, etc.

### **WHERE DOES SWARAJYA IN VILLAGES FIT IN GANDHI’S IDEOLOGY?**

Gandhi said that in a structure composed of “innumerable villages there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom.” And so instead of a hierarchy of a powerful district or state or Centre, villages must be equal, important micro units from whom the Centre ultimately derives its power through coordination. This has also been termed “democratic decentralisation”.

He recognised the difficulties in achieving this, but added it was to be a template, saying, “If one man can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country, but perhaps for the whole world.” The idea also reflects his larger inclination towards preserving Indian traditions and resisting external forces.

## **WHAT WAS THE CONSTITUTION (73RD AMENDMENT) ACT OF 1992?**

Before the act, India's Constitution only mentioned a two-tier form of government and local institutions found a mention only in Directive Principles of State Policy – which is not enforceable by courts or bound to be followed, only meant as a guiding document for governments.

With a lack of focus here, absence of regular elections, insufficient representation of marginalised sections like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women, inadequate devolution of powers (transfer from a higher level of government to the lower levels) and lack of financial resources from the state and the Centre were some issues plaguing village-level governance.

Several committees were constituted for studying these issues, such as the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee and the Ashok Mehta Committee, which gave important recommendations. In the late 1980s, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi prioritised the issue and after cross-party support, the measure was finally passed. Being enshrined in law and an amendment to the Constitution meant these provisions could no longer be easily ignored. The 74th Amendment Act, passed in the same year, sought to look at local governance in urban areas and constituting municipal bodies.

## **WHAT DID THE ACT CHANGE?**

As The Indian Express noted in its 2018 editorial on 25 years of the act, “The Panchayati Raj Act not only institutionalised PRIs [Panchayati Raj Institutions] as the mandatory third tier of governance, it transformed the dynamics of rural development by giving a say to a large section of the people — significantly, women — in the administration of their localities.”

Here are some other key changes it brought:

- ❑ It said the state government may devolve powers for such bodies to implement schemes for economic development and social justice, authorise a Panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, and tolls and provide for making such grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State – a major move to help fund them.
- ❑ It mandated women's representation in one-third of the seats. Women now constitute more than 45 per cent of the nearly three million panchayat and gram sabha representatives in the country, standing in contrast to their representation in the current Lok Sabha, at 14 per cent. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups were also mandated to be assigned seats in proportion to their presence in the population.
- ❑ A five-year term was fixed for representatives, with a procedure given for conducting timely elections.
- ❑ It also noted that the Governor of a State would constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats and then recommend to her what their requirements are, how they can be met, etc.

## **AND HOW CAN THE ACT BE EVALUATED NOW?**

Undoubtedly, the act has been instrumental in involving more and more people in the democratic processes at a grassroots level. As James Manor notes in *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, decentralisation generally results in more transparency between the government and the people, better grievance redressal and better information flow. Manor notes how civil servants can gain timely news about developing health concerns or outbreaks in rural areas, for example, to suggest intervention.

However, he also noted that many of the initial worries – having to do with finances, real devolution and genuine representation of marginalised groups – remain. Too often, these are dependent on the approach of the political parties in states or a reluctance to cede power.

Notably, the domain of local governments comes under the State List as per Schedule 7 of the Constitution. Manor explained that this meant, “The amendments had to suggest more things than they required of the states.” State governments' varied responses have led to varying results of the act's impact across India.

In 2013, former MP Mani Shankar Aiyar headed a committee titled ‘Towards Holistic Panchayat Raj’ on evaluating the act 20 years after it came into effect. He also noted some steps to rectify these problems in an article in *The Indian Express*, ranging from financial incentivisation of the states to encourage effective devolution to greater involvement of these bodies in district-level planning.

# Supreme Court on Divorce

## Relevance

### ❑ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Salient Features of Indian Constitution.
- **PSIR:** Principal organs of Union Government: Judiciary

**Context:** A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on May 1, 2023 ruled that it can exercise its plenary power to do “complete justice” under Article 142(1) of the Constitution.

The process of obtaining a decree of divorce is often time-consuming and lengthy owing to a large number of similar cases pending before family courts.

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on May 1, ruled that it can exercise its plenary power to do “complete justice” under Article 142(1) of the Constitution to dissolve a marriage on the ground that it had broken down irretrievably, without referring the parties to a family court where they must wait 6-18 months for a decree of divorce by mutual consent.

The Bench led by Justice S K Kaul held that the court could, in the exercise of this power, waive the mandatory six-month waiting period for divorce under The Hindu Marriage Act (HMA), 1955, and allow the dissolution of the marriage on grounds of irretrievable breakdown even if one of the parties was not willing. (**Shilpa Sailesh vs Varun Sreenivasan case**)

### **WHAT IS THE CURRENT PROCEDURE FOR DIVORCE UNDER THE HINDU MARRIAGE ACT?**

Section 13B of the HMA provides for “divorce by mutual consent”. Both parties to the marriage must together file a petition to the district court “on the ground that they have been living separately for a period of one year or more, that they have not been able to live together and that they have mutually agreed that the marriage should be dissolved”.

Under Section 13B(2) of the Act, the parties must move a second motion before the court “not earlier than six months after the date of the presentation of the [first] petition...and not later than eighteen months after the said date, if the petition is not withdrawn in the meantime”.

### **THE MANDATORY SIX-MONTH WAIT IS INTENDED TO GIVE THE PARTIES TIME TO WITHDRAW THEIR PLEA.**

Thereafter, “the court shall, on being satisfied, after hearing the parties and after making such inquiry as it thinks fit...that the averments in the petition are true, pass a decree of divorce declaring the marriage to be dissolved with effect from the date of the decree”.

A petition for divorce by mutual consent can be moved only after a year of the marriage. However, Section 14 of the HMA allows a divorce petition sooner in case of “exceptional hardship to the petitioner or of exceptional depravity on the part of the respondent”.

A waiver of the six-month waiting period under Section 13B(2) can be sought in an exemption application filed before the family court.

In its 2021 ruling in **Amit Kumar vs Suman Beniwal**, the SC said, “Where there is a chance of reconciliation, however slight, the cooling period of six months from the date of filing of the divorce petition should be enforced. However, if there is no possibility of reconciliation, it would be meaningless to prolong the agony of the parties to the marriage.”

The process of obtaining a decree of divorce is often time-consuming and lengthy owing to a large number of similar cases pending before family courts.

### **And what is Article 142 of the Constitution?**

Under Subsection 1 of Article 142, the Supreme Court “may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter..., and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India”.



While the power available under Article 142 is sweeping, the SC has defined its scope and extent through its judgments. The majority opinion in Prem Chand Garg (1962) laid down that “an order to do complete justice...must not only be consistent with the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but it cannot even be inconsistent with the substantive provisions of the relevant statutory laws”. The seven-judge Bench in A R Antulay (1988) upheld Prem Chand Garg.

In the Bhopal gas tragedy case (Union Carbide Corporation vs Union of India, 1991) the SC underlined the wide scope of Article 142(1), which confers power “at an entirely different level and of a different quality”.

The present case was originally filed in 2014, where the parties sought a divorce under Article 142. While granting divorce to the parties, the SC said it can depart from procedure as well as existing substantive laws only if the decision to exercise the power under Article 142(1) is “based on considerations of fundamental general and specific public policy”.

The fundamental general conditions of public policy refer to the fundamental rights, secularism, federalism, and other basic features of the Constitution; specific public policy was defined by the court to mean “some express pre-eminent prohibition in any substantive law, and not stipulations and requirements to a particular statutory scheme”.

### **“IRRETRIEVABLE BREAKDOWN”**

What factors can courts consider while deciding if a marriage has irretrievably broken down? During the pendency of the case last year, the court said that it would determine what rules should be followed while dissolving marriages directly under Article 142 of the Constitution.

The first and most “obvious” condition is that the court should be fully convinced and satisfied that the marriage is “totally unworkable, emotionally dead and beyond salvation and, therefore, dissolution of marriage is the right solution and the only way forward”.

The court laid down the following factors:

- the period of time that the parties had cohabited after marriage;
- when the parties had last cohabited;
- nature of allegations made by the parties against each other and their family members;
- orders passed in the legal proceedings from time to time;
- cumulative impact on the personal relationship;
- whether, and how many attempts were made to settle the disputes by a court or through mediation, and when the last attempt was made.

The court also noted that the period of separation should be sufficiently long, and “anything above six years or more will be a relevant factor”.

It emphasised the need to evaluate the factors according to the economic and social status of the parties, including their educational qualifications; whether they have any children; their age; and whether the spouse and children are dependents.

# Use of Article 142 so far and its Criticism

## WHAT IS ARTICLE 142 OF THE CONSTITUTION?

Article 142 provides a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do “complete justice” between the parties, where, at times, the law or statute may not provide a remedy. In those situations, the Court can extend itself to put an end to a dispute in a manner that would fit the facts of the case.

## HOW HAVE COURTS EXERCISED THIS POWER?

While the powers under Article 142 are sweeping in nature, SC has defined its scope and extent through its judgments over time.

In the **Prem Chand Garg case**, the majority opinion demarcated the contours for the exercise of the Court’s powers under Article 142(1) by saying that an order to do complete justice between the parties “must not only be consistent with the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but it cannot even be inconsistent with the substantive provisions of the relevant statutory laws,” referring to laws made by Parliament. “Therefore, we do not think it would be possible to hold that Art. 142(1) confers upon this Court powers which can contravene the provisions of Article 32 (right to constitutional remedies),” it said.

The seven-judge bench in ‘Antulay’ upheld the 1962 ruling in ‘Prem Chand Garg.’

Notably, in the **Bhopal gas tragedy case (‘Union Carbide Corporation vs Union of India’)**, the SC in 1991 ordered UCC to pay \$470 million in compensation for the victims of the tragedy. In doing so, the Bench highlighted the wide scope of Article 142 (1), adding that it found it “necessary to set at rest certain misconceptions in the arguments touching the scope of the powers of this Court under Article 142(1) of the Constitution”.

Deeming the power under Article 142 to be “at an entirely different level and of a different quality”, the court clarified that “prohibitions on limitations on provisions contained in ordinary laws cannot, ipso-facto, act as prohibitions or limitations on the constitutional powers under Article 142”. Adding that it would be “wholly incorrect” to say that powers under Article 142 are subject to express statutory prohibitions, the court reasoned that doing so would convey the idea that statutory provisions override a constitutional provision.

## WHAT IS THE CRITICISM OF ARTICLE 142 AND HOW HAVE COURTS COUNTERED IT?

The sweeping nature of these powers has invited the criticism that they are arbitrary and ambiguous. It is further argued that the Court then has wide discretion, and this allows the possibility of its arbitrary exercise or misuse due to the absence of a standard definition for the term “complete justice”. Defining “complete justice” is a subjective exercise that differs in its interpretation from case to case. Thus, the court has to place checks on itself.

In 1998, the apex court in ‘**Supreme Court Bar Association vs Union of India**’ held that the powers under Article 142 are supplementary in nature and could not be used to supplant or override a substantive law and “build a new edifice where none existed earlier”.

The Court said that the powers conferred by Article 142 are curative and cannot be construed as powers “which authorise the court to ignore the substantive rights of a litigant while dealing with a cause pending before it”. Adding that Article 142 cannot be used to build a new edifice, ignoring statutory provisions dealing with a subject, the court also said that the provision cannot be used “to achieve something indirectly which cannot be achieved directly”.

More recently, in its 2006 ruling in ‘**A. Jideranath vs Jubilee Hills Co-op House Building Society**’, the Supreme Court discussed the scope of the power here, holding that in its exercise no injustice should be caused to a person not party to the case.

Another criticism of the powers under Article 142 is that unlike the legislature and the executive, the judiciary cannot be held accountable for its actions. The power has been criticised on grounds of the separation of powers doctrine, which says that the judiciary should not venture into areas of lawmaking and that it would invite the possibility of judicial overreach.

However, the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution was mindful of the wide-reaching nature of the powers and reserved it only for exceptional situations, which the existing law would have failed to anticipate.

Additionally, the apex court has imposed checks on its own power under Article 142. In 2006, the SC ruling by a five-judge Bench in '**State of Karnataka vs Umadevi**' also clarified that "complete justice" under Article 142 means justice according to law and not sympathy, while holding that it will "not grant a relief which would amount to perpetuating an illegality encroaching into the legislative domain."



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# The Subaltern School and Ranajit Guha's Contributions to South Asian Studies

## Relevance

### ☐ Syllabus:

- PSIR: Different Social and Political Perspectives of Indian National Movement.

**Context:** Historian Ranajit Guha, on the cusp of turning 100 this May, passed away at his residence in Vienna Woods.

The Subaltern School ushered in a new era in South Asian studies, attempting to provide a historical voice and agency to the subordinated sections of society. Guha ushered in a new way of studying South Asia, departing from the primacy of elitist concerns that had previously dominated scholarship. He, alongside his collaborators (many of whom were his students), began the Subaltern School, which remains one of the most influential post-colonial, post-Marxist schools in history.

Over time, the influence of this school has transcended South Asian history to shape scholarship from across the world and on various facets of life and society.

### RANAJIT GUHA AND THE BIRTH OF THE SUBALTERN SCHOOL

Born in Siddhakati, Backerganj (present-day Bangladesh) on May 23, 1923, Guha migrated to the UK in 1959. There he was a reader in history at the University of Sussex.

While studying and teaching Indian history, Guha recognised that mainstream historical narratives in and about India were grossly inadequate to study the complexity of India's past. Crucially, what traditional narratives missed was the voice of underclasses – the subaltern.

The term “subaltern” was first coined by Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci to refer to any class of people (for Gramsci, peasants and workers) subject to the hegemony of another, more powerful class. This term was picked up by Ranajit Guha and like-minded colleagues in the early 1980s in their attempt to “rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much of research and academic work” in the field of South Asian studies.

In the preface of the inaugural issue of the highly influential *Subaltern Studies*, Guha writes, “The word subaltern stands for ... ‘of inferior rank’. It will be used in these pages as a general attribute of subordination in South Asian society ... expressed in terms of caste, class, gender and office”. He continues, “subordination cannot be understood except as one of the constitutive terms in a binary relationship of which the other is dominance, for ‘subaltern groups are always subject to the activities of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up’.”

This is at the core of what *Subaltern Studies* is and why it was influential. Not only does Guha emphasise on subaltern concerns that have historically been missing from mainstream academia, here recognises the category of the subaltern as being constructed rather than essential, i.e. it is a product of the relationship of domination and subordination between elites and subalterns rather than some God-given, inevitable category.

This would lay the foundations of a school of historical study that would problematise age-old understandings in favour of a more nuanced reading of history and society.

### THE SUBALTERN SCHOOL AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT CAME TO BE

Mainstream scholarship on South Asia, prior to the Subaltern School, was either a product of colonial Eurocentrism or dominated by concerns of native elites, often heavily influenced by colonial frameworks and narratives themselves.

For instance, James Mills' three-part classification of Indian history into ancient (Hindu), medieval (Muslim) and modern (colonial and post-colonial) remains influential till date, having shaped generations of nationalist historians. However, not only is this an unthoughtful imposition of a prevalent framework used to study European history, this also misses out a diversity of experiences that should feature in historical study. Is history only the study of kings and rulers, defined in this

framework by their religious identity? What about the histories of untouchables, women, and traditionally non-dominant communities? What about the peasants and workers?

Even left-wing academics who ostensibly were writing about the masses were unable to completely shed European frameworks and Marxist orthodoxy which privileged class as the overarching category of historical analysis. They were oblivious or dismissive of specific Indian modes of subalternity and hence were unable to truly appreciate Indian society in its complex richness and nuance. The Subaltern School came and changed this.

In his enduring classic, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983), Ranajit Guha writes about peasant consciousness and different modes of expression of dissent by peasants in colonial India. While peasant resistance had been documented since the beginning of colonial rule, according to Guha, in colonial scholarship, “the sense of history (was) converted into an element of administrative concern”. Consequently, “the peasant was denied recognition as a subject of history in his own right even for a project that was all his own”.

Guha’s approach was fundamentally different. His work focussed on studying peasant insurgency from the perspective of the peasant. It provides insurgent peasants their own political agency rather than one supplied to them by native elites. Methodologically, even when Guha looks at commonly used historical sources such as colonial documents, his approach problematizes them, aware of the positionality of the creators and consequently, aware of possible biases in the sources themselves.

Some criticisms of the Subaltern School

While the Subaltern School has been extremely influential in guiding generations of scholarly work on South Asia and post colonial societies since the 1980s, it has not been without its critics.

### **CRITICISM OF SUBALTERN SCHOOL**

One of the main criticisms of the Subaltern School is its focus on agency at the expense of structure. Critics such as Vivek Chibber argue that the Subaltern School tends to overlook the ways in which social and political structures constrain the agency of subaltern groups. As a result, the Subaltern School has been accused of presenting an overly romanticised view of subaltern agency and resistance.

Furthermore, Chibber argues that the Subaltern School’s approach to politics tends to be overly focused on identity-based movements and resistance. He contends that this approach overlooks the importance of class-based politics and the potential for subaltern groups to engage in transformative struggles that challenge the existing economic and political structures. This is especially true of more recent work from the School.

Lastly, in a bid to problematize the Eurocentrism of traditional Marxists, the Subaltern School, according to Chhibber, has taken a turn in the opposite extreme, rejecting any form of universal theorising as incapable of explaining particularities of South Asia. Chhibber rejects this, arguing that “taking cognizance of certain universal forces is no impediment to also explaining diversity.”

### Aap Now National Party; NCP, Trinamool Lose Tag

Let us try to understand why the AAP was given the status of a national party by the Election Commission and how is a 'national party' in India defined.

The Election Commission Monday recognised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a national party, while revoking that status of the All India Trinamool Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The Commission also revoked the state party status granted to RLD in Uttar Pradesh, BRS in Andhra Pradesh, PDA in Manipur, PMK in Puducherry, RSP in West Bengal and MPC in Mizoram.

The Commission said that NCP and Trinamool Congress will be recognised as state parties in Nagaland and Meghalaya respectively based on their performance in the recently concluded Assembly elections.

It also granted "recognised state political party" status to the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) in Nagaland, Voice of the People Party in Meghalaya, and the Tipra Motha in Tripura.

The BJP, Congress, CPI(M), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), National People's Party (NPP) and the AAP are the remaining national parties now.

#### **WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARTY?**

The name suggests that a national party would be one that has a presence 'nationally', as opposed to a regional party whose presence is restricted to only a particular state or region.

National parties are usually India's bigger parties, such as the Congress and BJP. However, some smaller parties are also recognised as national parties. A certain stature is sometimes associated with being a national party, but this does not necessarily translate into having a lot of national political clout.

Some parties, despite being dominant in a major state — such as the DMK in Tamil Nadu, BJD in Odisha, YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh, RJD in Bihar, or TRS in Telangana — and having a major say in national affairs, remain regional parties.

#### **SO HOW IS A NATIONAL PARTY DEFINED?**

The ECI has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognised as a national party. A party may gain or lose national party status from time to time, depending on the fulfilment of these laid-down conditions.

As per the ECI's Political Parties and Election Symbols, 2019 handbook, a political party would be considered a national party if:

1. it is 'recognised' in four or more states; or
2. if its candidates polled at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and has at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls; or
3. if it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states.

**To be recognised as a state party, a party needs:**

1. at least 6% vote-share in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 MLAs; or
2. have 6% vote-share in the last Lok Sabha elections from that state and at least one MP from that state; or
3. at least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats, whichever is more, in the last Assembly elections; or
4. at least one MP for every 25 members or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha; or
5. have at least 8% of the total valid votes in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.

### **WHERE DOES THE AAP FIT INTO THIS SCHEME?**

The AAP is in power with big majorities — and very large vote shares — in Delhi and Punjab. In the Goa Assembly elections in March last year, it received 6.77% of the vote.

This meant that going into the Gujarat-Himachal elections towards the end of 2022, the party already fulfilled the criteria for recognition as a state party in three states. It then required 6% of the vote in the Assembly elections in either Himachal or Gujarat to be recognised in a fourth state — which would qualify it for recognition as a national party.

While the AAP got only 1% of the vote in Himachal, the almost 13% vote it got in Gujarat was more than double required to be recognised as a state party there. That made it four states.

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# Hakki Pikkis Caught in Sudan Conflict

## Relevance

**Context:** The Hakki Pikki is a tribe that lives in several states in west and south India, especially near forest areas. More than 181 members of the community from Karnataka are stuck in violence-hit Sudan.

More than 181 members of the Hakki Pikki tribal community from Karnataka are stuck in violence-hit Sudan, even as the government is making efforts to bring them back. Who are the Hakki Pikki, and why did so many travel to far-away Sudan?

### **WHO ARE THE HAKKI PIKKI?**

The Hakki Pikki is a tribe that lives in several states in west and south India, especially near forest areas. Hakki Pikkis (Hakki in Kannada means 'bird' and Pikki means 'catchers') are a semi-nomadic tribe, traditionally of bird catchers and hunters.

According to the 2011 census, the Hakki Pikki population in Karnataka is 11,892, and they live majorly in Davangere, Mysuru, Kolar, Hassan and Shivmogga districts. In different regions, they are known by different names, such as Mel-Shikari in northern Karnataka and Maharashtra.

MR Gangadhar, Vice Chancellor of Chamarajanagar University and an anthropologist who has conducted a study on the tribe, said, "The Hakki Pikki move in groups from place to place in search of livelihood. They are divided into four clans, called Gujaratia, Panwar, Kaliwala and Mewaras. These clans can be equated with castes in the traditional Hindu society. In the olden days, there was a hierarchy among the clans, with the Gujaratia at the top and the Mewaras at the bottom. The forest is the main natural resource of the Hakki Pikki."

### **WHERE DO THEY LIVE?**

Hakki Pikki people are believed to hail originally from the bordering districts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. According to Gangadhar, they came to the south in search of game. "To Karnataka, they seem to have arrived via Andhra Pradesh, as they still remember a place called Jalapally near Hyderabad as their ancestral home, where their forefathers lived for a considerable period. They are now spread across south India," he said. Till a few years ago, women used to wear the ghagra (skirt) common in Rajasthan, although now they wear saris and other garments.

### **WHAT WERE THEIR TRADITIONAL JOBS, AND WHAT DO THEY DO NOW?**

Traditionally, Hakki Pikkis lived in forest areas, leading a nomadic life for nine months a year and coming back to their permanent camps for three. Locals in Pakshirajapura, a Hakki Pikki village in Mysuru district The Indian Express visited, said earlier, men of the tribe would hunt while women begged in villages. But as the wildlife protection laws became stricter, the Hakki Pikkis in Karnataka started selling spices, herbal oils, and plastic flowers in local temple fairs.

P S Nanjunda Swamy, state president of the Karnataka Adivasi Budakattu Hakki Pikki Jananga, an organisation that works for members of the tribe, said that the community moved to villages from the forests in the 1950s. "Earlier, we killed animals to make a living. But then some of our community members were booked and jailed under wildlife laws. So we shifted to selling herbal oils and other materials in villages and towns."

The herbal oil business took off, and now the tribe members go to many places across the globe to sell their products.

According to Nanjunda Swamy, the Hakki Pikkis in Tamil Nadu travelled to Singapore, Thailand and other places about 20-25 years ago to sell some marbles, in the process discovering there was a huge demand for Ayurvedic products in the African continent. They started selling their products in Africa, and Karnataka Hakki Pikkis followed them. People from the state have been traveling to African countries for the past 20 years now.

Education levels among the Hakki Pikkis are still low. For example, in the 2,000-strong population of Pakshirajapura, only eight people have completed graduation-level courses and one person works as a police constable.



### **WHAT ARE THEIR RITUALS AND CUSTOMS?**

Hakki Pikkis in Karnataka follow Hindu traditions and celebrate all Hindu festivals. They are non-vegetarians. The eldest son in a family is not supposed to cut his hair so that he can be identified easily.

The tribe prefers cross-cousin marriages. According to locals, the usual age of marriage is 18 for women and 22 for men. The society is matriarchal, where the groom gives dowry to the bride's family. D evaraj, 28, a Pakshirajapura resident, said he paid Rs 50,000 to his in-laws as dowry to get married to his wife. Monogamy is the norm.

### **HOW WELL DO THEY EARN IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES?**

The residents of Pakshirajapura said African countries offer them an opportunity to escape poverty faster. "There is demand for our products in the African continent. If a person invests say Rs 5 lakh on raw materials (hibiscus powder, oil extraction, gooseberry, Ayurvedic plants, etc.), they have a chance to double or triple it in a matter of 3-6 months in African countries. But in India, you don't have such a market and business. We do sell online and promote products on social media, including Facebook and YouTube," said Anil Kumar, a community member.



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### Thomas Hobbes

He was an English political philosopher who lived in the 17th century. He is best known for his work "Leviathan," which laid the groundwork for modern political theory. Hobbes believed that humans are naturally selfish and violent, and that a strong, centralized government was necessary to keep society from descending into chaos.

#### State of nature

Hobbes believed that the natural state of humans is one of war and chaos. In the absence of government, individuals are in a constant state of competition and conflict, where life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." This state of nature is characterised by a "war of all against all," where individuals are constantly at risk of being harmed or killed by others. According to Hobbes, this makes life in the state of nature "nasty, brutish, and short."

#### Social contract

To escape the state of nature, Hobbes argued that individuals must enter into a social contract with each other. In this contract, individuals agree to give up some of their natural rights in exchange for protection from the government. The government, in turn, is responsible for maintaining law and order, and ensuring the safety and security of its citizens. Hobbes believed that the social contract was necessary to prevent society from descending into chaos and violence.

#### Absolute sovereignty

Hobbes believed that the best form of government was an absolute monarchy, where the ruler has unlimited power and authority. According to Hobbes, the sovereign should have complete control over all aspects of society, including religion and the economy. He believed that this was necessary to maintain order and prevent dissent. In Hobbes' view, the ruler's power was absolute and could not be challenged by the people.

#### Relevance to modern politics

Hobbes' political philosophy has been influential in modern political theory, particularly in the areas of political sovereignty and social contract theory. His ideas about the need for a strong government to maintain order and prevent chaos have been echoed by many modern political thinkers. However, his view of absolute monarchy has been criticized as undemocratic and authoritarian.

#### Conclusion

Thomas Hobbes was a pioneering political philosopher whose work laid the foundation for modern political theory. His belief in the need for a strong, centralized government to prevent society from descending into chaos and violence remains relevant today. However, his view of absolute monarchy has been met with criticism and has been replaced by more democratic forms of government. Nonetheless, his contributions to the field of political philosophy have been significant and continue to be studied and debated by scholars today.

## Karl Marx (1818-1883)

German philosopher, economist and political thinker, usually portrayed as the father of twentieth-century communism. After a brief career as a university teacher, Marx took up journalism and became increasingly involved with the socialist movement. He moved to Paris in 1843, later spent three years in Brussels and finally, in 1849, settled in London. He worked for the rest of his life as an active revolutionary and writer, supported by his friend and life-long collaborator Friedrich Engels.

Marx's work provides the basis for the Marxist political tradition. It was derived from a synthesis of Hegelian philosophy, British political economy and French socialism. His early writings, known as the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts ([1844] 1967), outlined a humanist conception of communism based upon the prospect of unalienated labour in conditions of free and cooperative production. The ideas of historical materialism started to take shape in The German Ideology ([1846] 1970) and are given their most succinct expression in A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859). Marx's best known and most accessible work is The Communist Manifesto (with Engels) ([1848] 1976), which summarizes his critique of capitalism and highlights its transitional nature by drawing attention to systematic inequality and instability. Marx's classic work is the three-volume Capital (1867, 1885 and 1894), which painstakingly analyses the capitalist process of production and is based, some argue, upon economic determinism.

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# John Stuart Mill: A Political Science Perspective

John Stuart Mill, one of the most prominent thinkers of the 19th century, made a significant contribution to political philosophy through his works on liberalism, democracy, and utilitarianism. As a political scientist, Mill believed in the importance of individual freedom, democratic participation, and the ethical foundations of society. In this article, we will explore Mill's political philosophy, its significance in the history of political thought, and its relevance to contemporary political issues.

## Mill's Political Philosophy

Mill's political philosophy is grounded in the principle of individual freedom. In his seminal work, *On Liberty*, Mill argued that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests and beliefs, as long as they do not harm others. He believed that this freedom is essential for human development, creativity, and innovation, and that it should be protected by the state.

At the same time, Mill recognized that individual freedom should be balanced with social responsibility. He argued that the state has a duty to prevent harm to others, to promote the general welfare, and to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities to pursue their goals. Mill believed that these social goals should be pursued through democratic participation, in which all individuals have an equal voice in the political process.

In addition to his work on liberalism and democracy, Mill also made significant contributions to utilitarianism, a moral theory that emphasizes the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Mill's utilitarianism sought to balance the interests of the individual with the interests of society as a whole, by promoting policies that maximize overall well-being.

## Significance in the History of Political Thought

Mill's political philosophy had a profound impact on the history of political thought, influencing the development of liberalism, democracy, and utilitarianism. Mill's defense of individual freedom and democratic participation provided a theoretical basis for the expansion of civil liberties, political rights, and social welfare policies in the 20th century.

Mill's utilitarianism also had a significant influence on contemporary political debates, particularly in the areas of social policy and environmental ethics. Mill's emphasis on the importance of maximizing overall well-being has informed debates about the distribution of resources, the provision of social services, and the protection of the environment.

## Relevance to Contemporary Political Issues

Mill's political philosophy remains relevant to contemporary political issues, particularly in the areas of individual rights, democratic participation, and social welfare policies. Mill's defense of individual freedom provides a theoretical basis for the protection of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, religion, and association. His emphasis on democratic participation highlights the importance of ensuring that all individuals have an equal voice in the political process, and that decisions are made through fair and transparent procedures.

Mill's utilitarianism also has implications for contemporary debates about social welfare policies, healthcare, and environmental ethics. Mill's emphasis on the importance of maximizing overall well-being provides a basis for policies that promote the health and well-being of all members of society, and that protect the environment for future generations.

## Conclusion

John Stuart Mill's political philosophy, grounded in the principles of individual freedom, democratic participation, and utilitarianism, has had a profound impact on the history of political thought and remains relevant to contemporary political issues. Mill's defense of individual freedom and democratic participation provides a theoretical basis for the protection of civil liberties and the expansion of political rights, while his utilitarianism provides a framework for policies that promote overall well-being and the protection of the environment. As such, Mill's political philosophy continues to be an important source of inspiration for political scientists, policymakers, and activists around the world.

## John Locke (1632-1704)

English philosopher and politician. Born in Somerset, Locke studied medicine at Oxford before becoming secretary to Anthony Ashley Cooper,

first Earl of Shaftesbury. His political views were developed against the background of, and were shaped by, the English Revolution.

Locke was a consistent opponent of absolutism and is often portrayed as the philosopher of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, which established a constitutional monarchy in England. He is usually seen as a key thinker of early liberalism. His Two Treatises of Civil Government ([1690] 1965) used social contract theory to emphasise the importance of natural rights, identified as the right to 'life, liberty and estate (property)'. As the purpose of government is to protect such rights, government should be limited and representative; however, the priority he accorded property rights prevented him from endorsing political equality or democracy in the modern sense. His A Letter Concerning Toleration ([1689] 1963) defends freedom of religious conscience on the grounds that rulers are always uncertain about the meaning of true religion; but he allowed that religion could be constrained if it threatened order, which meant, Locke argued, not extending toleration to atheists or Roman Catholics.

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## PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Under which Article of the Indian Constitution can the President make a reference to the Supreme Court to seek the Court's opinion on the Constitutional validity of the Election Commission's decision on deferring the Assembly Elections (in the year 2002)?
  - Article 142
  - Article 143
  - Article 144
  - Article 145
- Which one of the following Articles of the Indian Constitution provides that 'It shall be the duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance'?
  - Article 215
  - Article 275
  - Article 325
  - Article 355
- Which of the following Constitutional Amendments are related to raising the number of Members of Lok Sabha to be elected from the States?
  - 6th and 22nd
  - 13th and 38th
  - 7th and 31st
  - 11th and 42nd
- Which one of the following schedules of the Indian Constitution lists the names of states and specifies their territories?
  - First
  - Second
  - Third
  - Fourth
- Which of the following countries is not a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)?
  - Russia
  - India
  - Pakistan
  - Myanmar
- The headquarters of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is located in which city?
  - Shanghai
  - Beijing
  - Moscow
  - Tashkent
- When was the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) established?
  - 1996
  - 2001
  - 2005
  - 2010
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) aims to promote cooperation in which of the following areas?
  - Economic, political, and security
  - Social, cultural, and environmental
  - Educational, scientific, and technological
  - Religious, linguistic, and artistic
- Which Article of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination?
  - Article 14
  - Article 15
  - Article 16
  - Article 17
- Which country did India evacuate its citizens from during Operation Raahat in 2015?
  - Iraq
  - Yemen
  - Syria
  - Libya
- Which of the following statements is true about India's evacuation diplomacy?
  - India has never undertaken any evacuation operations in its history.
  - India has only evacuated its own citizens during such operations.
  - India has also evacuated citizens of other countries during such operations.
  - India has only evacuated its citizens from countries facing natural disasters.

12. In 2011, India conducted a massive evacuation operation in which country following a civil war and uprising?
- (a) Libya (b) Egypt  
(c) Tunisia (d) Syria
13. Fraternity is one of the fundamental values enshrined in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. Which other values are also mentioned in the Preamble?
- (a) Justice, Liberty, and Equality (b) Sovereignty, Unity, and Integrity  
(c) Secularism, Socialism, and Democracy (d) All of the above
14. Which Directive Principle of State Policy in the Indian Constitution seeks to promote a sense of fraternity among all citizens?
- (a) Article 51 (b) Article 44  
(c) Article 48 (d) Article 51A
15. The concept of fraternity in the Indian Constitution implies:
- (a) A sense of brotherhood and unity among all citizens  
(b) Protection of the rights and dignity of minorities  
(c) Promotion of social harmony and national integration  
(d) All of the above
16. Which year saw the first caste-based census conducted in India?
- (a) 1868 (b) 1891  
(c) 1931 (d) 1951
17. Who among the following is responsible for conducting the census in India?
- (a) Ministry of Home Affairs  
(b) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation  
(c) Ministry of Rural Development  
(d) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
18. Which of the following statements is true about the caste census in India?
- (a) Caste census was conducted in every census year since Independence.  
(b) Caste census was conducted only once in India in 2011.  
(c) Caste census was conducted for the first time in India in 1931.  
(d) None of the above
19. Which of the following statements is true about the caste census in India in 2011?
- (a) Caste was not included in the census.  
(b) Caste was included in the census, but the data was not released to the public.  
(c) Caste was included in the census, and the data was released to the public.  
(d) Caste census was not conducted in 2011.
20. Which of the following articles of the Constitution of India empowers the government to conduct a caste census?
- (a) Article 330 (b) Article 332  
(c) Article 338 (d) Article 340
21. Which article of the Indian Constitution protects the freedom of the press?
- (a) Article 19(1)(a) (b) Article 19(1)(b)  
(c) Article 19(2) (d) Article 21

22. The freedom of the press in India is subject to reasonable restrictions under which article of the Indian Constitution?  
 (a) Article 19(1)(a) (b) Article 19(1)(b)  
 (c) Article 19(2) (d) Article 21
23. In which case did the Supreme Court of India uphold the ban on a book critical of Islam in 2010?  
 (a) The Romesh Thapar case (b) The Maneka Gandhi case  
 (c) The S. Rangarajan case (d) The Masood Ahmad case
24. In which year did the Supreme Court of India refuse to ban a book which allegedly defamed the entire vysya community?  
 (a) 2010 (b) 2015  
 (c) 2017 (d) 2020
25. The purpose of the inclusion of Directive Principles of the State Policy in the Indian Constitution is to establish:  
 (a) political democracy (b) social democracy  
 (c) Gandhian democracy (d) social and economic democracy
26. Which one of the following Articles of the Directive Principles of the State Policy deals with the promotion of international peace and security?  
 (a) 51 (b) 48 A  
 (c) 43 A (d) 41
27. The Ninth Schedule to the Indian Constitution was added by:  
 (a) First Amendment (b) Eighth Amendment  
 (c) Ninth Amendment (d) Forty Second Amendment
28. Under which Article of the Indian Constitution did the President give his asset to the ordinance on electoral reforms when it was sent back to him by the Union Cabinet without making any changes (in the year 2002)?  
 (a) Article 121 (b) Article 122  
 (c) Article 123 (d) Article 124

### ANSWERS

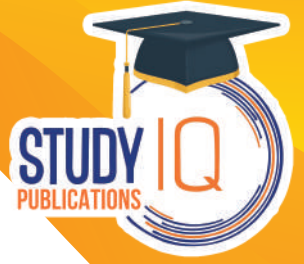
1. (b) Article 143 provides power to the President to consult the Supreme Court.
2. (d) According Article 355, it shall be the duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance and to ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.
3. (c) 7th Amendment Act 1956 provides for composition of the House of the People and re-adjustment after every census. 31st amendment act 1973 provides for raising the upper limit for the representation of states in the Lok Sabha from 500 to 525 and reducing the upper limit for the representation of UTs from 25 to 20.
4. (a) The 'First Schedule' of the constitution deals with a list of States and Union Territories.
5. (d) Myanmar
6. (b) Beijing
7. (b) 2001
8. (a) Economic, political, and security
9. (a) Article 14
10. (b) Yemen
11. (c) India has also evacuated citizens of other countries during such operations.
12. (a) Libya
13. (d) All of the above
14. (d) Article 51A



15. (d) All of the above
16. (b) 1891
17. (b) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
18. (c) Caste census was conducted for the first time in India in 1931.
19. (b) Caste was included in the census, but the data was not released to the public.
20. (d) Article 340
21. (a) Article 19(1)(a)
22. (c) Article 19(2)
23. (d) The Masood Ahmad case
24. (c) 2017
25. (d) The purpose of Directive Principles of State Policy is to establish the social and economic democracy. Political democracy is established by the Fundamental Rights.
26. (a) This comes under Directive Principles of State Policy under part IV of the Constitution. Article 51 states that the state shall endeavour to promote international peace and security.
27. (a) Ninth Schedule was added by First Amendment Act of 1951, which relates to Land Reforms.
28. (c) The President can issue Ordinance under Article 123.



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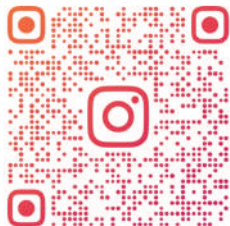
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