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GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE

INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS AMID MYANMAR CIVIL WAR: KEY POINTS

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global Centres of Power
- **GS2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests



INTRODUCTION

The India-Myanmar relationship has encountered challenges following the announcement by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to fence the entire length of the India-Myanmar border. This decision stems from ongoing ethnic clashes in Manipur, with the Manipur government attributing the conflict to “infiltrators” from Myanmar. The situation has been exacerbated by increased infiltration into India following the military coup in Myanmar in 2021.

BRIEF HISTORY OF POLITICAL UNREST IN MYANMAR

Parliamentary Democracy Phase (1948-1962):

- Myanmar (formerly Burma) gained independence from British rule in 1948.

- The country established a democracy based on the parliamentary system of government.

First Phase of Military Rule (1962-1988):

- In 1962, General Ne Win staged a coup d'état, establishing a military dictatorship.
- The Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) became the country's sole political party.

Phase of Political Conflict within the Military (1988-2010):

- In 1988, General Saw Maung seized control of the government, overthrowing the BSPP due to widespread economic decline and corruption.
- The military continued to rule under the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Phase of Democratic Transition (2010-2020):

- ❑ In 2010, the SPDC held elections, paving the way for a quasi-civilian government.
- ❑ Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won the 2015 elections.

Current Military Coup and Civilian Armed Struggle:

- ❑ **Military Coup in 2021:** Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD landslide victory in the 2020 elections sparked concern among the military. Alleging electoral fraud, the military (Tatmadaw) staged a coup in February 2021. Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders were detained, leading to widespread protests and a violent military crackdown.
- ❑ **Anti-Junta Armed Struggle:** Various Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs) intensified their resistance against the military regime, resulting in escalating conflicts across the country.
- ❑ **Massive Influx of Refugees in India:** The ongoing armed struggle between the military Junta and the People's Defence forces in the Chin region, Sagaing region has led to a massive influx of refugees in India, particularly

in Mizoram and Manipur. This influx of refugees in India has emerged as a major bone of contention between India and Myanmar, as it has been linked to violent ethnic clashes, drug trafficking, and smuggling.

- ❑ **India's Stand on the Conflict:** As Myanmar marked three years of military coup, India has called for a complete cessation of violence in the country and its transition towards inclusive federal democracy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS

- ❑ **British Era:** Both India and Myanmar were part of British India during colonial rule until 1935.
- ❑ **Post-Independence:** After independence, India and Myanmar established diplomatic relations and maintained close ties. They signed a Treaty of Friendship in 1951.
- ❑ **2002:** The Indian Consulate in Mandalay was reopened, and the Consulate of Myanmar was set up in Kolkata.
- ❑ **2014:** Myanmar became part of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy and its "Act East" policy, strengthening bilateral relations.

India Myanmar

Relations

#UPSC #IAS

by Shashank Tyagi

SIGNIFICANCE OF MYANMAR FOR INDIA

- ❑ **Geo-strategic Importance:** Myanmar serves as India's gateway to South-East Asia and is crucial for the development of North-Eastern India. It is a key component of India's "Neighborhood First" policy and "Act East" Policy. Projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) trilateral highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT) corridor rely on Myanmar's cooperation.
- ❑ **Tackling Insurgency in Northeast:** Insurgent groups like ISCN-K and ISCN-IM have operational bases inside Myanmar. Cooperation with the Myanmar government is essential in controlling insurgency, such as the Naga insurgency.
- ❑ **Countering China's Influence:** Myanmar plays a vital role for India in countering China's growing influence in the South-East Asian region. Initiatives like the development of the Sittwe port in Myanmar's Rakhine state are aimed at balancing China's presence, particularly the Chinese-fronted Kyaukpyu port.
- ❑ **Reduction of Illegal Migration:** A stable Myanmar is necessary to curb illegal Rohingya and Chin migration into India, contributing to border security and management.
- ❑ **Cultural Ties:** Buddhism, the major religion in Myanmar, has roots in India, fostering strong cultural ties between the two countries. These cultural affinities enhance diplomatic and people-to-people relations between India and Myanmar.

MAJOR AREAS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND MYANMAR

- ❑ **Trade and Economy:** Bilateral trade has significantly increased, with India's duty-free tariff preference scheme benefiting Myanmar. Indian companies, including Essar, GAIL, and ONGC Videsh Ltd., have invested in Myanmar's energy sector, fostering economic ties.

- ❑ **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** India has heavily invested in infrastructure projects in Myanmar, enhancing connectivity between the two countries. Projects like the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemmyo highway, the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport, and the Asian Trilateral Highway are key examples of this cooperation.
- ❑ **Defence Cooperation:** Joint military exercises, such as the India-Myanmar Bilateral Military Exercise (IMBEX) and Operation Sunrise, demonstrate the defense cooperation between the two countries in targeting militant groups along the border.
- ❑ **Multilateral Partnerships:** Myanmar plays a crucial role in India's engagement with ASEAN, BIMSTEC, and the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), contributing to regional stability and cooperation.
- ❑ **Education and Research:** India has supported educational and research initiatives in Myanmar, including the Myanmar Institute of Information and Technology and the Advanced Center for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE), focusing on pulses and oilseeds research.
- ❑ **Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief:** India has provided humanitarian aid and disaster relief in response to natural calamities in Myanmar, such as Cyclone Mora (2017), Cyclone Komen (2015), the earthquake in Shan State (2010), and the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening bilateral ties through cooperation in times of crisis.

CHALLENGES IN INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS

- ❑ **Policy Paradox:** India faces a dilemma between supporting democracy and addressing internal security concerns in Myanmar. Balancing engagement with the military junta to control insurgent groups while advocating for federal democracy poses a challenge.

- ❑ **Misuse of Free Movement Regime:** The Free Movement Regime between India and Myanmar is exploited by militants and criminals for illegal activities such as weapon smuggling, contraband trade, and circulation of counterfeit currency.
- ❑ **Refugee Influx:** Violence and instability in Myanmar have led to a significant increase in refugees fleeing to India, particularly in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland. Illegal migration of Rohingyas and Chins poses security risks for India.
- ❑ **Northeast Insurgency and Drug Menace:** The Myanmar-China border serves as a base for armed separatist groups operating in Myanmar and Indian insurgent groups like ULFA and NSCN (IM). The Golden Triangle region is notorious for drug trafficking, further complicating security challenges.
- ❑ **China's Influence:** China's growing influence in Myanmar through infrastructure investments and economic projects, such as the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, poses a challenge to India's interests in the region.
- ❑ **Delays in Connectivity Projects:** Inordinate delays in implementing connectivity projects like the Kaladan Multimodal Connectivity project have strained relations between India and Myanmar, exacerbating the trust deficit between the two countries

WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS

- ❑ **Support for Democracy and Human Rights:** India should uphold its commitment to

democracy and human rights by advocating for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. This includes ceasing arms supply to the military junta and urging for the release of political prisoners.

- ❑ **Engagement with Stakeholders:** India should leverage its influence to facilitate dialogue between the military junta, opposition, and armed ethnic groups, fostering a conducive environment for conflict resolution and national reconciliation.
- ❑ **Regional Cooperation:** India should collaborate closely with ASEAN nations to develop a regional peace plan for Myanmar, leveraging regional organizations to promote stability and inclusive governance.
- ❑ **Economic Engagement:** India should continue economic engagement with Myanmar to foster sustainable development. Expedited implementation of connectivity projects like the Kaladan and Asian Trilateral Highways will enhance economic integration and mutual prosperity.
- ❑ **Security Cooperation:** Strengthened security cooperation between India and Myanmar, including intelligence sharing and joint efforts to combat insurgencies and drug trafficking, will bolster regional security and stability.
- ❑ **Solidarity with the People:** India should demonstrate solidarity with the people of Myanmar by providing humanitarian aid and assistance to those affected by the crisis, alleviating suffering and reaffirming support for Myanmar's democratic aspirations.

INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONS: ENDURING TIES AMID CHALLENGES

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global Centres of Power
- **GS2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests



INTRODUCTION

India-France relations stand as a testament to enduring friendship, attracting global attention. The recent visit of French President Emmanuel Macron as the Republic Day chief guest signifies the strength of this relationship. While pivotal agreements were inked during the visit, challenges persist amid evolving geopolitical uncertainties.

KEY AGREEMENTS FROM THE RECENT VISIT

□ **Defence Industrial Roadmap:** Facilitating joint development and production of vital military hardware.

□ **Helicopters Collaboration:** Tata and Airbus partnering to manufacture H125 helicopters in India.

□ **Fighter Jets Technology Transfer:** Safran, the French engine maker, transferring 100% technology for building fighter jet engines in India.

□ **Satellite Cooperation:** Collaboration between India's New Space India Limited and French company Arianespace for satellite launches.

□ **Extended Schengen Visa for Indian Students:** Agreement activating five-year Schengen visas for Indian students pursuing master's degrees in France.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONS

Geo-Political Collaboration:

- ❑ France's early support for India's UNSC membership and reforms.
- ❑ Crucial support for India's entry into MTCR, Wassenaar Arrangement, and Australia Group.
- ❑ Frequent invitations as the Republic Day chief guest highlight deep ties.

Geo-Strategic Partnership:

- ❑ France contributed strategic assets in the Indo-Pacific, exemplified by deploying Indian Air Force planes to Reunion Island.
- ❑ Active participation in the India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue supporting a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- ❑ Support on Jammu and Kashmir and counterterrorism efforts enhances India's capabilities.

Defence and Security Ties:

- ❑ France emerges as a key defence partner, supplying Rafale and Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft and Scorpene submarines.
- ❑ Joint exercises like Varuna (Naval), Garuda (Air Force), and Shakti (Army) showcase strong collaboration.
- ❑ Joint patrolling in the Indian Ocean and efforts towards maritime domain awareness enhance security.

Economic Cooperation:

- ❑ Bilateral trade reaching USD 13.4 billion in 2022-23, with France as the 11th largest foreign investor in India.
- ❑ Over 1,000 French establishments operating in India contribute significantly to economic ties.

Energy and Climate Partnership:

- ❑ France's support played a key role in India's exemption from the NSG, allowing cooperation in civil nuclear energy.

- ❑ Active collaboration in renewable energy and joint roles in establishing the International Solar Alliance.

Science and Technology Collaboration:

- ❑ Strong partnership in space cooperation, with joint missions, including TRISHNA and Mars.
- ❑ Collaboration on building the world's largest nuclear park in Jaitapur, Maharashtra.
- ❑ France's acceptance of India's UPI payments system showcases technological cooperation.

Diaspora Connection

Around 109,000 Indians reside in France, with significant Indian-origin populations in French overseas territories.

CHALLENGES IN INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONSHIP

Absence of Free Trade Agreement:

- ❑ The lack of a Free Trade Agreement hampers economic relations, with bilateral trade less than that with Germany.
- ❑ Stalled progress on the India-EU BTIA limits the depth of India-France relations.

Trade Imbalances and IPR Issues: Trade imbalances and concerns about the protection of intellectual property rights impact economic ties.

Stalled Projects: Non-operationalisation of negotiated projects, such as the Jaitapur nuclear project, poses a challenge.

Divergent Geopolitical Approaches: Differences in responses to events like the Russian invasion of Ukraine and views on China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Emerging Geopolitical Scenario: Middle East disturbances and Chinese assertiveness in the Indian Ocean create geopolitical tensions.

WAY FORWARD

Early Conclusion of FTA: Leverage strong relations to realize the India-EU BTIA and enhance economic cooperation.

Implementation of Migration and Mobility Agreement: Collaborate on increasing mobility for students, graduates, professionals, and skilled workers while addressing migration concerns.

Boosting Trade and Investment: Work towards increasing bilateral trade and investment through joint ventures and expanded trade agreements.

Expedition on Stalled Projects: Establish a joint working group to expedite the completion of stalled projects, including the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant.

NURTURING BILATERAL TIES: EXAMINING INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and South Asia
- **GS2:** India and its Neighborhood- Relations



INTRODUCTION

The robust relationship between India and Bangladesh recently took center stage when Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended congratulations to Ms. Hasina on securing a historic fourth consecutive term. The victory, where the Awami

League secured a substantial majority, underscores the strong friendship between the two nations. Ms. Hasina's leadership has been instrumental in fostering a positive and mutually beneficial alliance, though concerns lingered over the lack of

participation by the principal opposition coalition, Bangladesh Nationalist Party-Jamaat-e-Islami.

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

During Bangladesh Independence:

- ❑ The foundation of India-Bangladesh relations was laid during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, where India played a pivotal role in supporting Bangladesh's fight for independence.
- ❑ The first independent government of Bangladesh, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, operated from Kolkata.

During Military Rule in Bangladesh:

- ❑ Relations soured in the years following the 1975 assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with anti-India sentiment rising during military regimes.
- ❑ Issues such as boundary disputes, insurgency, and water-sharing contributed to tensions.

After the Return of Parliamentary Democracy:

- ❑ The restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991 marked a turning point, with Sheikh Hasina's leadership bringing a new era of cooperation.
- ❑ Bilateral ties flourished, encompassing trade, energy, infrastructure, connectivity, and defense.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

- ❑ **Geo-strategic Importance:** Bangladesh's proximity provides India with crucial access to the Bay of Bengal, a vital route for trade and connectivity with Southeast Asia.
- ❑ **Geo-political Cooperation:** A stable and friendly Bangladesh is essential for India's security, fostering geopolitical collaboration on issues like counter-terrorism and border security.

- ❑ **Economic Collaboration:** Bangladesh is a significant trade partner for India, contributing to economic growth and trade in the South Asian region.
- ❑ **Cultural and Civilisational Ties:** Shared cultural and civilisational bonds, along with religious-cultural sites, strengthen the people-to-people connection.
- ❑ **International Cooperation:** Collaborative efforts between India and Bangladesh contribute to regional forums like BIMSTEC and SAARC, supporting global stability.

AREAS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

- ❑ **Political Cooperation:** Frequent bilateral visits and mutual recognition at the political level strengthen diplomatic ties.
- ❑ **Land Boundary Agreement (2015):** Resolving longstanding disputes, the agreement allowed for the swap of disputed islands and facilitated a peaceful resolution.
- ❑ **Economic Cooperation:** Extensive economic ties, including trade agreements and infrastructure projects, contribute to bilateral economic growth.
- ❑ **Infrastructure Cooperation:** India's role as a major development partner is evident through financial contributions to infrastructure and connectivity projects.
- ❑ **Energy Cooperation:** Bangladesh imports a significant amount of electricity from India, and projects like the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline enhance energy collaboration.
- ❑ **Defence Cooperation:** Joint exercises, like Exercise Sampriti and Exercise Bongosagar, contribute to securing the India-Bangladesh border.
- ❑ **Tourism Sector:** A substantial number of tourists travel between the two nations, promoting cultural exchange and boosting the tourism industry.

- ❑ **Medical Cooperation:** Bangladesh contributes significantly to India's medical tourism industry, with a notable share of international medical patients.

AREAS OF TENSION IN INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

- ❑ **Transboundary River Waters:** The sharing of common rivers, particularly the Teesta river water dispute, remains a significant point of contention.
- ❑ **Deportation of Rohingyas:** Divergent interests in the deportation of Rohingyas pose challenges to mutual cooperation.
- ❑ **Cross-Border Terrorism and Infiltration:** Security concerns arise from cross-border terrorism, infiltration, and criminal activities along the India-Bangladesh border.
- ❑ **Drug Smuggling & Trafficking:** The region serves as a transit point for drug trafficking, raising concerns about its impact on both nations.
- ❑ **Growing Chinese Influence:** China's increasing investments and influence in Bangladesh present geopolitical challenges for India.
- ❑ **Attacks on Minorities:** Ethnic attacks on minorities, both in Bangladesh and India, strain cultural and people-to-people relations.

WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP

- ❑ **Resolution of Transboundary River Water Disputes:** Early resolution, such as forming

a tripartite committee, is crucial for building trust and enhancing cooperation.

- ❑ **Conclusion of Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** Finalizing an FTA, especially before Bangladesh loses its LDC status, is essential for sustained economic collaboration.
- ❑ **Joint Task Forces and Smart Border Management:** Establishing joint task forces can effectively address cross-border challenges like drug smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal immigration.
- ❑ **Digital Connectivity Corridor:** Creating a digital connectivity corridor can open new avenues for trade, collaboration, and technological exchange.
- ❑ **Restoration of Bangladesh's Global Image:** Collaborative efforts to improve Bangladesh's global image can include working together on issues like democratic values

CONCLUSION

As India aims to develop the Northeast region, enhance connectivity with Southeast Asian countries, and explore the Indo-Pacific region, deepening relations with Bangladesh becomes a pivotal step in achieving these strategic goals. A holistic approach, addressing historical concerns and fostering new areas of collaboration, is crucial for the enduring success of India-Bangladesh relations.

INDIA'S BALANCING ACT: MANAGING RELATIONS WITH THE US AND RUSSIA AMIDST SHIFTING GLOBAL DYNAMICS

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global Centres of Power
- **GS2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests



INTRODUCTION

India's foreign policy has long been characterized by a delicate balancing act between the United States and Russia. This tightrope walk has become even more intricate in recent years, shaped by shifting global dynamics like the rise of China, the war in Ukraine, and the emergence of a multipolar world.

HISTORICAL RELATIONS

- **Cold War Alliances:** During the Cold War, India leaned towards the Soviet Union, forging close political and military ties. The US, meanwhile, viewed India with suspicion due to its non-aligned stance and socialist leanings.

- **Post-Cold War Engagement:** With the USSR's collapse, India's strategic calculus shifted. It began to engage more actively with the US, deepening trade, military cooperation, and diplomatic ties. However, Russia remained a key partner, especially in defense and energy sectors.
- **Recent Strategic Partnerships:** In recent years, India has signed major strategic partnerships with both the US and Russia. With the US, it participates in the Quad, a forum focused on maritime security and countering Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific. Meanwhile, India remains a key member of the Russia-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),

focusing on regional security and economic cooperation.

THE INDO-PACIFIC AND THE UKRAINE WAR

- ❑ **China's Rise:** China's rapid economic and military rise has become a major concern for India, pushing it closer to the US in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad is seen as a way to counter China's growing assertiveness in the region.
- ❑ **Ukraine War:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine has further complicated India's balancing act. While India abstained from condemning Russia at the UN, it also expressed concern about the humanitarian crisis and called for a peaceful resolution. This stance drew criticism from the US, highlighting the difficulty of aligning with Russia while maintaining close ties with the West.

THE QUAD VS. SCO

- ❑ **Quad's Focus:** The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) focuses on maritime security, cyber security, and disaster relief in the Indo-Pacific. It is seen as a way to counter China's growing influence in the region and promote a rules-based order.
- ❑ **SCO's Broad Agenda:** The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has a broader agenda, encompassing regional security, counter-terrorism, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges. India's participation in the SCO reflects its long-standing ties with Russia and Central Asian countries.

DATA AND FACTS

- ❑ **Trade:** India's bilateral trade with the US was \$128 billion in 2022-23, while with Russia it was \$44 billion.
- ❑ **Military Cooperation:** India conducts major joint military exercises with both the US and

Russia, highlighting its multifaceted defense partnerships.

- ❑ **Diplomatic Visits:** Prime Minister Modi visits both the US and Russia regularly, signifying the importance of both these relationships.
- ❑ **Public Opinion Polls:** A 2022 Pew Research Center poll found that 74% of Indians view the US favorably, while 62% view Russia favorably.

KEY FACTORS WHILE BALANCING THE RELATIONS

Navigating this complex geopolitical landscape requires India to tread a careful line. Its balancing act is driven by several considerations

- ❑ **Security Concerns:** China's rise and the Ukraine war have highlighted the need for strong security partnerships, pushing India closer to the US on some issues.
- ❑ **Economic Interests:** India seeks to diversify its trade and attract foreign investment, requiring good relations with major economies like the US and Russia.
- ❑ **Strategic Autonomy:** India desires to maintain its strategic autonomy and avoid being seen as exclusively part of any bloc. This is reflected in its continued engagement with the SCO and its emphasis on non-alignment.
- ❑ **Historical Ties:** India has long-standing historical and cultural ties with Russia, creating a certain level of strategic comfort and trust.

CONCLUSION

The success of India's balancing act will depend on its ability to manage these competing priorities. It must avoid being seen as taking sides while ensuring its own security and economic interests are protected. The complex world order presents both challenges and opportunities, and India's agility and diplomatic skills will be crucial in navigating this volatile landscape.

THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS: UNCERTAINTIES IN A GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Recent developments in Indian Foreign Policy
- **GS2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests



INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan, a land etched by conflict and resilience, remains an international enigma. The Taliban's swift return to power in 2021 following the chaotic US withdrawal cast a long shadow of uncertainty, political turmoil, humanitarian crisis, and regional security concerns.

THE TALIBAN'S RULE

The Taliban's promises of peace and security after their lightning-fast takeover seem increasingly hollow in the face of stark realities.

Human Rights Watch paints a grim picture, documenting arbitrary arrests, repression of women's rights, and curbs on free speech. The

recent closure of girls' secondary schools by the Taliban triggered global outrage and renewed anxieties about their commitment to basic freedoms.

Example: In Panjshir Valley, simmering dissent against the Taliban's harsh rule threatens to reignite conflict.

HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE

Millions of Afghans grapple with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, teetering on the brink of famine. Economic collapse, exacerbated by frozen financial assets and international sanctions, has crippled the nation:

The World Food Programme estimates that 23 million Afghans face food insecurity, with 9 million on the brink of starvation. UNICEF reports alarming levels of malnutrition among children.

Real-Life Story: Fatima, a 30-year-old mother in Kabul, struggles to feed her four children. Forced to beg, she embodies the desperation gripping millions caught in the crossfire of economic mismanagement and political turmoil.

REGIONAL DISTURBANCES

Afghanistan's precarious situation threatens to destabilize the entire region:

- 1. Security Spillover:** The presence of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS-K raises the specter of regional violence. Drugs trafficking across porous borders fuels insecurity and fuels criminal economies.
- 2. Domino Effect:** Neighboring countries like Pakistan and Iran grapple with refugee influxes and potential spillover violence. The recent bombing in Kabul, suspected to be linked to regional players, underscores the interconnectedness of Afghanistan's fate with the wider region.

FINDING A PATH FORWARD

Navigating this intricate web of challenges demands a multi-pronged approach:

- 1. Humanitarian Lifeline:** Unhindered access for aid agencies is crucial to alleviate suffering

and avert famine. Sustained international support, coupled with economic rehabilitation measures, is vital for long-term recovery.

- 2. Conditioned Engagement:** The international community must engage with the Taliban, but with preconditions: adherence to human rights principles, inclusivity in governance, and demonstrably combating terrorism.
- 3. Regional Cooperation:** A collaborative effort amongst Afghanistan's neighbors, the international community, and the Taliban is essential to address security concerns and foster regional stability.
- 4. Empowering Afghans:** Ultimately, the long-term solution lies in supporting Afghan civil society and empowering them to shape their own future through inclusive, democratic processes.

CONCLUSION

The recent uprising of Afghan women against the Taliban's school closures demonstrates the resilience of the Afghan spirit. International pressure on the Taliban to respect human rights and prioritize economic development could lead to incremental progress. Only by understanding the diverse perspectives at play and acting with collective resolve can we illuminate a path toward a brighter future for Afghanistan.

INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.
- **PSIR:** Growing relations with US and Israel

India Israel Relations

In-depth Analysis



by Mohit Jindal

EVOLUTION OF INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

In 2022, India and Israel celebrated 30 years of full diplomatic relations. However, India's relationship with Israel has been a roller coaster over the past seven decades. From 1947 to 1992, India firmly supported the Palestinian cause, rejecting the idea of two nations based on religion. During this period, India's relations with Israel were limited to bilateral recognition. Major milestones included India voting against the partition of Palestine in 1947, recognizing Israel in 1950, and supporting Palestinian causes such as the intifada in 1987.

From 1992 to 2017, India's policy underwent significant changes. Factors like Arab countries' neutrality during India-China wars and Israel's assistance in the 1962 and 1965 wars led to a shift. India adopted the Link West Policy, treating Israel and Palestine as mutually independent. India established full diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992, received precision target bombs from Israel during the Kargil War in 1999, and saw high-level political visits, including Ariel Sharon's visit in 2003. Despite deepening engagement with Israel, India continued

to support Palestinian self-determination and took steps like opening a Representative Office in Gaza in 1993.

After 2017, India showed a preference for Israel as a major partner. The support for East Jerusalem dropped, and Indian PM's visit to Israel did not include Ramallah in 2017. Despite attempts to balance relations with Palestine, in the recent conflict, India sided with Israel for the first time and condoned Hamas' actions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Economic and Commerce: India maintains a positive trade balance with Israel and stands as its third-largest trade partner in Asia. Bilateral merchandise trade has grown substantially over the years, reaching USD 6.35 billion (excluding defence). Sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, IT, telecom, and homeland security have witnessed diversification. Israeli companies have established R&D centers in India, leading to technology transfers.

Defence: India relies on Israel for crucial defence technologies, with nearly 41% of Israel's defence exports directed towards India. Indian armed forces utilize various Israeli defence systems, including Phalcon AWACS, Heron drones, and Barak anti-missile defence systems. The two countries have collaborated closely on counter-terrorism efforts, and Israel has supported India during conflicts, offering intelligence inputs and weaponry.

Energy: India has acquired exploration licenses for natural gas extraction from Israel's Tamar and Leviathan gas fields, marking a shift towards energy cooperation between the nations.

Science & Technology: India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) facilitates joint industrial R&D projects. A Joint Committee on Science & Technology cooperation was established under the 1993 S&T Cooperation Agreement.

Space: Collaborative agreements in 2002 led to space cooperation, including successful satellite launches such as TecSAR and RISAT-2 radar imaging satellites of Israel by ISRO's PSLV.

Agriculture: India benefits from Israeli expertise in horticulture mechanization, orchard and canopy management, micro-irrigation (drip irrigation technology), and post-harvest management. The countries launched a joint three-year working program in 2021 to enhance agricultural cooperation.

Diaspora: Israel is home to approximately 85,000 Jews of Indian origin, fostering a strong emotional connection between India and Israel. This diaspora population holds Israeli passports, further strengthening the bond between the two nations.

CHALLENGES OF INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Balancing Relations: India faces the challenge of balancing its relations with Israel and the Arab world, especially considering Israel's strained ties with countries like Iran. Arab countries are home

to a large Indian expatriate population and play a vital role in India's energy security.

Israel-Palestine Skirmishes: The recurring conflicts between Israel and Palestine pose challenges for India, as it's challenging to delink Israel and Palestine in its foreign policy. These conflicts impact India's socio-political and economic dynamics.

Human Rights Concerns: Israel has faced accusations of human rights violations against Palestinians, leading to diplomatic challenges for India in international forums like the UN, UNHRC, and UNSC, where resolutions against Israel are frequently discussed.

Chinese Influence: China's growing influence in Israel, marked by significant trade partnerships and technology collaborations, has reduced India's diplomatic space in the region. China's investments and projects in Israel have posed challenges for India.

Trade and Investment: Despite progress, bilateral trade between India and Israel remains around \$6 billion (excluding defence), primarily focused on diamonds and defence. Progress on the Free Trade Agreement has been slow, hindering the realization of the full economic potential between the two countries.

WAY FORWARD

- Diffuse Tensions:** Mediate between Israel and Palestine to maintain global financial stability by resolving conflicts peacefully.
- Uphold Abraham Accords:** Engage diplomatically with Arab nations and encourage Saudi Arabia to sign a rapprochement deal with Israel, ensuring adherence to the principles of the Abraham Accords.
- Counter Chinese Influence:** Implement proactive diplomacy to counter the increasing influence of China in Israel and safeguard India's interests in the region.

- ❑ **Accelerate FTA:** Expedite the negotiation and signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and Israel to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation.
- ❑ **Implement Dehypenation Policy:** Balance India's partnership with Israel by addressing human rights concerns in Palestine, aligning geostrategic interests with international moral obligations.

CONCLUSION

India needs to navigate through the choppy waters of middle east in these challenging times, with Israel as its fulcrum. The diplomatic tightrope must be managed through strategic thinking, tactical positioning and must be in line with India's vision of new world order.

KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND ISSUE

RELEVANCE

- ❑ **Syllabus:**
 - **PSIR:** India and South Asia
 - **GS2:** India and Neighbourhood relations.



INTRODUCTION

Presently, a contentious political matter in Tamil Nadu revolves around a portion of Sri Lanka known as Katchatheevu. This issue remains significant for politicians of various affiliations.

In a recent development, just before Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's scheduled trip to New Delhi, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin

penned a letter to Prime Minister Modi, urging him to reclaim control over the island.

Stalin's letter pointed out that the transfer of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka, executed by the Indian central government without the agreement of the state government, has led to the deprivation of Tamil Nadu fishermen's rights and has had an adverse impact on their means of livelihood.

WHERE IS KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND?

Katchatheevu, a small landmass spanning 285 acres, is situated in the Palk Strait, positioned between India and Sri Lanka. Its dimensions are compact, measuring no more than 1.6 kilometers in length and a little over 300 meters in width at its widest point.

Located northeast of Rameswaram, it stands approximately 33 kilometers away from the Indian coastline. Moreover, it lies about 62 kilometers southwest of Jaffna, which is positioned at the northernmost tip of Sri Lanka. Notably, it is positioned 24 kilometers away from Delft Island, which is inhabited and falls under Sri Lankan jurisdiction.

The island hosts just one structure - a Catholic shrine known as St. Anthony's Church, constructed in the early 20th century. Annually, a significant festival takes place where Christian priests from both India and Sri Lanka jointly conduct the religious service. Devotees from both nations participate in this pilgrimage. In the most recent festival, 2,500 individuals from India embarked on the journey to Katchatheevu from Rameswaram.

Katchatheevu's geographical characteristics make it unsuitable for permanent habitation due to the absence of a reliable drinking water source on the island.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THIS ISLAND?

The island's formation is relatively recent in geological history, originating from a volcanic eruption in the 14th century.

During the early medieval period, it was under the dominion of the Jaffna kingdom of Sri Lanka. By the 17th century, control shifted to the Ramnad zamindari located in Ramanathapuram, approximately 55 km northwest of Rameswaram.

It became a part of the Madras Presidency during the era of the British Raj. However, in 1921, both India and Sri Lanka, both under British colonial rule, laid competing claims to Katchatheevu in order to establish fishing boundaries. A survey initially designated Katchatheevu as part of Sri Lanka, but a delegation from British India disputed this, asserting historical ownership by the Ramnad kingdom.

This contentious issue remained unresolved until 1974.



WHAT IS THE PRESENT AGREEMENT?

In 1974, Indira Gandhi took steps to resolve the longstanding maritime border issue between India and Sri Lanka in what came to be known as the 'Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Agreement'.

As part of this arrangement, Indira Gandhi relinquished control of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka with the belief that the island held limited strategic significance. The intention behind this move was to strengthen diplomatic relations between the two neighboring countries.

Under this agreement, Indian fishermen were still permitted to access Katchatheevu under existing arrangements. However, the specific details regarding fishing rights were not clearly defined in the agreement. Sri Lanka's interpretation of Indian fishermen's access was limited to activities such as resting, drying nets, and visiting the Catholic shrine, without requiring a visa.

Another agreement was reached in 1976, during India's Emergency period, which prohibited both nations from fishing within each other's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Given Katchatheevu's location on the fringes of the EEZs of both countries, uncertainties persisted concerning fishing rights in the region.

HOW SRI LANKAN CIVIL WAR IMPACTED KATCHATHEEVU?

Between 1983 and 2009, the border dispute took a backseat as a brutal civil war raged in Sri Lanka. During this period, Sri Lankan naval forces were engaged in cutting off supply lines of the LTTE, who were based in Jaffna. This led to frequent incursions by Indian fishermen deep into Sri Lankan waters. The presence of larger Indian trawlers was particularly contentious, as they not only contributed to overfishing but also caused damage to Sri Lankan fishing equipment and boats.

In 2009, with the conclusion of the LTTE conflict, the situation underwent a significant shift. Colombo

strengthened its maritime defenses and shifted its attention towards addressing the issue of Indian fishermen. Due to declining marine resources on the Indian side, these fishermen continued to venture into Sri Lankan waters, a practice that had been ongoing for years, but now faced more serious repercussions.

To this day, the Sri Lankan navy regularly arrests Indian fishermen, leading to numerous allegations of mistreatment and even deaths while in custody. Each such incident renews the call for the return of Katchatheevu, a disputed island, as tensions escalate between the two nations.

TAMIL NADU'S POSITION ON KATCHATHEEVU?

Katchatheevu, an island with historical significance and fishing rights for Indian Tamil fishermen, has been a contentious issue in Tamil Nadu's political landscape. The island was handed over to Sri Lanka without consulting the Tamil Nadu state assembly, sparking protests against the decision. The 1991 aftermath of India's intervention in the Sri Lankan Civil War prompted the Tamil Nadu Assembly to demand the island's retrieval and the restoration of fishing rights.

In 2008, J Jayalalitha of AIADMK filed a court petition, asserting that Katchatheevu's transfer required a constitutional amendment and had negatively impacted Indian fishermen's livelihoods. She later, as chief minister, brought the matter to the State Assembly and urged the Supreme Court to expedite her petition due to escalating arrests of Indian fishermen by Sri Lanka.

Despite these efforts, the Indian government's stance on Katchatheevu has remained largely unaltered. It maintains that the island's status has always been disputed, and thus no Indian territory was formally ceded. The BJP, including its Tamil Nadu faction, has voiced support for reclaiming Katchatheevu, yet practical action has been limited due to the complexities involved.

Former Attorney General Mukul Rohtagi stated in 2014 that since Katchatheevu's transfer was executed through a 1974 agreement, reversing

it would necessitate military intervention. This highlights the challenging nature of any efforts to regain the island.



INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (IGP)

THE RISE OF REGIONAL PARTIES: A RESHAPING OF INDIA'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Party System: National and regional political parties
- **PSIR:** Federal Structure

INTRODUCTION

India's political landscape has long been dominated by national parties, particularly the Indian National Congress (INC) since independence. However, in recent decades, a significant shift has emerged: the rise of regional parties challenging national bipartisanship. This phenomenon carries complex implications for national politics, federalism, and regional aspirations.

DOMINANT BJP AND RISING REGIONAL STARS

- The Bharatiya Janata Party (**BJP**) currently holds power at the national level, but its dominance is increasingly contested by regional players like
- **Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK):** Strong in Tamil Nadu, the DMK advocates for social justice and Dravidian identity.
- **Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS):** Dominant in Telangana, the TRS focuses on regional development and economic progress.
- **Aam Aadmi Party (AAP):** With a base in Delhi, the AAP champions anti-corruption policies and grassroots-level governance.

FACTORS PROPELLING REGIONAL RISE

- **Focus on Local Issues:** Regional parties cater to specific state-level concerns like water rights, language, and agricultural challenges,

resonating with voters who feel national parties neglect their needs.

- **Identity Politics:** Regional parties leverage regional identities, linguistic pride, and cultural sentiments to mobilize support, particularly among marginalized communities.
- **Charismatic Leadership:** Often led by strong regional figures, these parties project a distinct vision and connect with voters on a personal level, challenging the dominance of national party hierarchies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLITICS:

- **Coalition Governments:** The rise of regional parties makes stable single-party majorities at the national level less likely, leading to the formation of complex coalition governments with shifting alliances. This can lead to political instability and policy incoherence.
- **Federalism and Regional Aspirations:** Regional parties push for greater autonomy and decentralization, strengthening **India's** federal structure. This can be positive for local development and addressing diverse regional needs, but also raises concerns about national unity and coordinated policymaking.
- **Challenges to National Unity:** While regional parties cater to local aspirations, their emphasis on regional identities can exacerbate divisions

and pose challenges to forging a unified national narrative.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE INC:

The rise of regional parties also impacts the traditional dominance of the INC. Once the undisputed “grand old party” of India, the INC has struggled to adapt to the changing political landscape, losing ground to both the BJP and regional players. Its future hinges on reconnecting with grassroots issues, revitalizing its organizational structure, and finding a compelling national vision that resonates with voters across regions.

HOW TO NAVIGATE A NEW POLITICAL ERA

India’s evolving political landscape, with the rise of regional parties, presents both challenges and opportunities. To navigate this era effectively, stakeholders must:

- ❑ **Strengthen Federal Institutions:** Robust federal institutions can ensure a balance between national unity and regional aspirations, allowing

for the effective implementation of policies at both levels.

- ❑ **Promote Inclusive Politics:** National parties and regional players alike must focus on addressing issues of common concern while respecting regional identities and fostering a sense of national unity.
- ❑ **Emphasize Decentralized Governance:** Empowering local bodies and granting greater autonomy to states can allow for more effective and responsive governance, addressing the needs of diverse regions.

CONCLUSION

The rise of regional parties is a significant development in India’s political history, reshaping the dynamics of national power and forcing a reimagining of federalism. While it presents challenges, it also offers the potential for a more responsive and diverse political system that caters to the unique needs of various regions while maintaining a sense of national unity.

SMART CITIES MISSION AND ITS JOURNEY SO FAR

RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.
- **PSIR:** Planning and Economic Development



INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2015, the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) is an ambitious initiative by the Indian government to develop 100 cities across the country.

AIMS OF SMART CITY MISSION

- ❑ **Improve the quality of life:** By focusing on core infrastructure, efficient service delivery, and sustainable development.
- ❑ **Drive economic growth:** Through enhanced innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation.
- ❑ **Make cities citizen-friendly:** By promoting citizen participation, inclusivity, and good governance.

The program operates through a competitive selection process where cities submit proposals based on their specific challenges and opportunities. They receive financial support from the central and state governments for implementing proposed “smart” solutions in areas like:

- ❑ **Smart infrastructure:** Intelligent transportation systems, energy-efficient buildings, waste management, etc.
- ❑ **Citizen engagement:** E-governance platforms, mobile apps, civic feedback mechanisms, etc.
- ❑ **Technology adoption:** IoT sensors, data analytics, AI-driven solutions, etc.

ANALYSIS OF ITS SUCCESS

Evaluating the success of SCM is complex, with varied perspectives and ongoing progress.

- ❑ **Significant progress:** As of July 2023, over 74% of projects across 100 cities have been completed, showcasing momentum and tangible results.
- ❑ **Improved infrastructure:** Many cities have witnessed upgrades in water supply, sanitation, waste management, and public transportation.
- ❑ **Innovation and experimentation:** Cities are testing various smart solutions, generating valuable data and best practices for replication.

- ❑ **Economic growth:** SCM is attracting investments and creating jobs in smart infrastructure and technology sectors.

EXAMPLES AND REPORTS

- ❑ **Surat city:** Smart waste management and water resource management have led to significant improvements in cleanliness and efficiency. (Source: Smart Cities Mission website)
- ❑ **Pune city:** Intelligent traffic management systems have reduced congestion and improved air quality. (Source: World Resources Institute report)
- ❑ **Jaipur city:** E-governance initiatives have enhanced transparency and accessibility of government services. (Source: India Today report)

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

- ❑ **Uneven progress:** The pace of development varies considerably across cities, with some lagging behind due to capacity constraints or funding issues.
- ❑ **Inclusivity and affordability:** Ensuring smart solutions benefit all citizens, including marginalized communities, requires careful planning and resource allocation.
- ❑ **Data privacy and security:** Concerns exist regarding the collection, storage, and use of citizen data generated through smart technologies.
- ❑ **Financial sustainability:** Long-term funding mechanisms beyond government support are crucial for maintaining smart city infrastructure and services.
- ❑ **CAG report (2021):** Highlights uneven progress, lack of citizen engagement in some cities, and the need for robust data governance frameworks.

THE ROAD AHEAD

- ❑ **Data-driven decision making:** Utilize data to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and optimize resource allocation.
- ❑ **Focus on inclusivity:** Design solutions for all citizens, with targeted interventions to bridge the digital divide.
- ❑ **Strengthen data governance:** Implement robust frameworks to protect citizen privacy and ensure data security.
- ❑ **Explore alternative financing:** Utilize PPPs, green bonds, and other innovative models for long-term sustainability.
- ❑ **Promote citizen engagement:** Actively involve citizens in planning, implementation, and monitoring.

- ❑ **Invest in skill development:** Bridge the skill gap through training programs for various stakeholders.
- ❑ **Learn from best practices:** Share knowledge and adapt successful strategies across cities, both domestic and international.
- ❑ **Focus on measurable outcomes:** Regularly monitor the impact of smart city initiatives on key performance indicators.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Smart Cities Mission demonstrates significant progress in transforming Indian cities. By addressing these challenges and proactively pursuing this path, the Smart Cities Mission can overcome its limitations and create thriving, inclusive, and resilient cities for all of India.

REVAMPING INDIA'S POSTAL LANDSCAPE: INDIAN POST OFFICE ACT 2023

RELEVANCE

- ❑ **Syllabus:**
 - **GS2:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.
 - **PSIR:** Planning and Economic Development



POST OFFICE BILL, 2023



INTRODUCTION

In a significant legislative move, the Indian Post Office Act 2023, recently enacted by the Parliament, replaces the archaic Indian Post Office Act of 1898. Aimed at modernizing and streamlining postal services, the new Act has stirred debates, particularly around privacy concerns and potential state surveillance.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE INDIAN POST OFFICE ACT 2023 AND COMPARISONS WITH THE 1898 ACT

Aim of the Act:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Aims to consolidate and amend laws related to the Indian Post Office, recognizing its expanded role beyond mail delivery.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Section 4 granted exclusive privilege to the Central government for conveying letters by post.

Exclusive Privileges of the Central Government:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Removes the exclusive privilege, allowing private courier services.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Conveyance of letters by post was the exclusive privilege of the Central government.

Services Provided by India Post:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: India Post provides services as prescribed by the central government.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Specified services, including delivery of postal articles, money orders, etc.

Director General of Postal Services:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Appoints a Director General to regulate postal activities and fix service charges.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Required parliamentary approval for revising service charges.

Interception of Postal Articles:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Expands grounds for interception, empowering the central government to authorize officers.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Central government, state governments, or authorized officers could intercept articles.

Examination of Postal Articles:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Removes power of examination by Indian Post officials; parcels delivered to custom authorities for examination.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Officials could examine articles suspected of containing prohibited goods.

Exemption from Liability:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Post office officials exempted from liability for loss, misdelivery, delay, or damage of postal articles.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: Liability for loss, misdelivery, delay, and damage existed.

Recovery of Unpaid Postal Charges:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Unpaid postal charges recoverable as land revenue.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: No provision for recovering unpaid charges.

Regulation of Private Courier Services:

- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 2023: Includes provisions for regulating private courier services.
- ❑ Indian Post Office Act 1898: No regulation of private courier services.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIAN POST OFFICE ACT 2023

- ❑ **Shedding Colonial Legacy:** Marks a departure from the colonial-era Act of 1898, aligning with the ongoing process of decolonizing laws.
- ❑ **Adapting to Evolving Roles:** Recognizes the evolving role of post offices in India,

encompassing services beyond traditional mail delivery, such as banking functions.

- ❑ **Enhanced Autonomy:** Grants greater autonomy to India Post to determine its service rates without requiring parliamentary approval, fostering efficiency.
- ❑ **Regulation of Private Courier Services:** Addresses the need for effective regulation of the burgeoning private courier service industry to curb illicit practices.
- ❑ **Alignment with Digital Era:** Tailors the role and functions of Indian post offices to meet the demands of the digital age.

CONCERNS WITH THE INDIAN POST OFFICE ACT 2023

- ❑ **Lack of Procedural Safeguards:** Absence of clear procedural safeguards for intercepting postal articles, raising concerns about privacy violations.
- ❑ **Vague Definition of 'Emergency':** The Act allows interception in emergencies without defining the term, potentially leading to arbitrary use of power.
- ❑ **Exemption from Liability:** Removal of liabilities for postal officials contrasts with the accountability rules for other government commercial service providers.
- ❑ **Removal of Offenses and Penalties:** The Act eliminates offenses and penalties for postal officials, impacting individual privacy rights.
- ❑ **International Obligations:** Contradicts Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, challenging India's international commitments.

- ❑ **Contrary to Legal Directives:** Runs counter to the Supreme Court's directive on the right to communication as part of the right to privacy and the Law Commission's recommendations.
- ❑ **Regulatory Disparities:** Retains disparities in the regulation of private courier services and postal departments.

WAY FORWARD

- ❑ **Incorporate Robust Procedural Safeguards:** Introduce clear oversight mechanisms and judicial warrants to safeguard against arbitrary interception.
- ❑ **Define Grounds for Interception:** Clearly define the grounds for interception, especially during emergencies, as recommended by legal commissions.
- ❑ **Balanced Liability Framework:** Ensure a balanced framework that holds the postal department accountable without compromising its independence.
- ❑ **Incorporate Penalties:** Establish a legal framework for penalties, holding individuals accountable for misconduct, fraud, and theft to protect privacy.

CONCLUSION

The Indian Post Office Act 2023 marks a crucial legislative shift, balancing the need for modernization with safeguarding individual rights and privacy. A comprehensive and rights-centric approach is vital to address concerns and ensure the Act's effective implementation.

INTERNET SHUTDOWNS IN INDIA: A VIOLATION OF RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **GS2:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.
- **PSIR:** Civil liberties



INTRODUCTION

This section discusses how the Indian government frequently shuts down the internet, which violates a Supreme Court ruling and negatively impacts the economy and public trust.

ANURADHA BHASIN JUDGMENT

The Anuradha Bhasin judgment, issued by the Supreme Court of India in January 2020, recognized internet access as a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution. Stemming from the Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India case, which addressed internet restrictions in Jammu and Kashmir, the judgment outlined conditions for internet restrictions. It emphasized that such restrictions must be temporary, lawful, necessary, and proportionate. The ruling also mandated judicial review of government orders imposing internet access limitations.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIONS

In response to the Anuradha Bhasin judgment, the Indian Parliament amended the Telecom Suspension Rules in 2020. This amendment capped internet suspension orders at a maximum of 15 days. However, it did not incorporate the Supreme Court's directive for the periodic review of these orders, and there was no obligation to publish suspension orders.

ISSUES SURROUNDING INTERNET SUSPENSIONS

Despite the Supreme Court's ruling, India continues to implement internet shutdowns, raising concerns and violating fundamental rights. The lack of transparency in publishing reasons for shutdowns creates challenges for legal redressal. Compliance with the Anuradha Bhasin judgment

is low nationwide, extending beyond Jammu and Kashmir.

IMPACTS OF INTERNET SUSPENSIONS

- ❑ **Economic Losses:** In 2020, India faced a substantial economic loss of \$2.8 billion due to 129 internet suspensions.
- ❑ **Individual Effects:** Approximately 10.3 million people were directly affected by these shutdowns.
- ❑ **Disruption in Daily Life:** Internet suspensions hinder access to critical services such as information, healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities.
- ❑ **Psychological and Social Impact:** These shutdowns induce psychological stress and impede social and journalistic activities.
- ❑ **Exacerbation of Inequality:** As the majority relies on mobile data, suspensions

disproportionately affect those without broadband access.

- ❑ **Undermining Democracy:** Internet shutdowns are frequently employed to suppress democratic exercises like protests, restricting freedom of expression and access to information.

THE WAY FORWARD

The path ahead involves stricter compliance with the Supreme Court's guidelines by the executive government. Adherence is crucial for transparency in issuing and publishing suspension orders, preserving fundamental rights. Such measures will contribute to reducing economic losses and shedding India's global reputation as the "internet shutdown capital," aligning with the vision of Digital India. Prioritizing a balance between security concerns and the protection of individual rights will be essential for fostering a robust and inclusive digital landscape.

REVITALIZING URBAN LOCAL BODIES: ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND CHARTING A PATH FORWARD

RELEVANCE

- ❑ **Syllabus:**
 - **GS2:** Important Aspects of Governance
 - **PSIR:** Planning and Economic Development



INTRODUCTION

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are the bedrock of urban governance in India, entrusted with the task of delivering essential services and facilitating sustainable urban development. However, these bodies grapple with a myriad of challenges that impede their effective functioning and hinder the realization of their constitutional mandate.

CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE AND STRUCTURE

Structure of Urban Local Bodies: The urban governance landscape in India comprises eight distinct types of ULBs, each tailored to cater to specific urban settings and populations:

Municipal Corporation: Also known as Mahanagar Palikas/Municipal Corporations, these bodies govern areas with a population exceeding one million. Municipal Corporations are typically found in major cities such as Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, among others.

Municipality: Referred to as Nagar Palikas/Municipal Council/Municipal Committee/Municipal Board, these bodies oversee areas with populations below one million. They are prevalent in smaller cities and towns across the country.

Notified Area Committee: Established for rapidly developing towns and areas lacking basic amenities, Notified Area Committees have members nominated by the state government, aiming to address infrastructural deficiencies and promote growth.

Town Area Committee: Found in small towns, Town Area Committees possess limited authority, focusing primarily on functions like street lighting, drainage, roads, and conservancy.

Cantonment Board: These boards are set up to govern civilian populations residing within cantonment areas. Administered by the central government, they ensure the provision of essential civic amenities to residents.

Township: Township governance serves to provide fundamental facilities to employees and workers residing in colonies established near industrial plants. Township administrations typically operate as extensions of bureaucratic structures, lacking elected representatives.

Port Trust: Port Trusts operate in port areas such as Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, managing port facilities and offering basic civic amenities to local residents.

Special Purpose Agency: These agencies undertake specific activities or functions designated to municipal corporations or municipalities, contributing to specialized urban governance initiatives and projects.

SIGNIFICANCE OF URBAN LOCAL BODIES

Urban Planning and Development: Urban local bodies play a pivotal role in formulating and implementing urban development plans, guiding land-use patterns, and facilitating infrastructure development. Municipal Corporations, for instance, prepare master plans to steer the growth and development of cities in a sustainable manner.

Service Delivery: ULBs are entrusted with the task of delivering essential services to urban residents, including provisions for water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, street lighting, and public health services. They ensure that urban areas function smoothly and meet the basic needs of their inhabitants.

Disaster and Pandemic Management: Urban local bodies are at the forefront of disaster and pandemic management efforts, devising plans and strategies to mitigate the impact of natural calamities and health crises at the local level. During events like the COVID-19 pandemic and Mumbai floods, entities like the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) play a crucial role in coordinating relief and response measures.

Empowerment of Women and Marginalized Groups: The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts have paved the way for greater representation and participation of women and marginalized groups in local governance structures. Reservation policies ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes, fostering empowerment and social equity.

Community Participation: Urban local bodies embody the principles of democratic decentralization and community empowerment, enabling residents to actively engage in local governance. Mechanisms such as ward committees and public consultations facilitate dialogue and collaboration between citizens and local authorities, reflecting Mahatma Gandhi's vision of "Poorna Swaraj" and democratic decentralization.

ULBS GRAPPLE WITH THE 4F CHALLENGE – FUNDS, FUNCTIONS, FUNCTIONARIES, AND FUNCTIONALITY:

Funds:

- ❑ **Dependency on Central and State Transfers:** ULBs rely heavily on transfers from the central and state governments for their revenue, which can be unpredictable and insufficient to meet their needs.
- ❑ **Reduced Revenue Sources Post-GST:** The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has led to a loss of revenue for ULBs, particularly from sources like octroi and local taxes, affecting their financial stability.
- ❑ **Narrow Taxation Powers:** ULBs in India have limited taxation powers compared to their counterparts in other countries, which constrains their ability to raise revenue independently.

Functions:

- ❑ **Parastatal Agencies:** Various parastatal agencies created by state governments often overlap with the functions of ULBs, leading to confusion and inefficiencies in governance.

- ❑ **Inadequate Devolution of Functions:** Many states have not devolved adequate functions to ULBs, limiting their authority and scope of action in local governance.

Functionaries:

- ❑ **Delays in Elections:** Delays in conducting elections to ULBs by state governments can leave these bodies without elected representatives, impacting their legitimacy and accountability.
- ❑ **Criminalization of ULBs:** There is a growing trend of criminal elements entering ULBs, which undermines their integrity and effectiveness.
- ❑ **Bureaucratic Control:** ULBs often face bureaucratic control from municipal commissioners appointed by state governments, limiting the autonomy of locally elected representatives.

Functionality:

- ❑ **Unplanned Urbanization:** Rapid and unplanned urbanization leads to challenges in infrastructure development, service delivery, and environmental sustainability.
- ❑ **Corruption:** Corruption scandals within ULBs undermine public trust and confidence in local governance, affecting their ability to serve the needs of urban residents.
- ❑ **Lack of Coordination:** Poor coordination among different levels of government and departments leads to inefficiencies and gaps in service delivery and infrastructure development.

WAY FORWARD

Recommendations from the 6th ARC on Urban Governance:

- ❑ **Constitution of Metropolitan Planning Committee:** Establishing Metropolitan Planning Committees to develop and coordinate urban development plans across various local bodies.

- ❑ **Establishment of Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (UMTA):** Integrating and managing public transportation services to enhance efficiency and traffic management in urban areas.
- ❑ **Strengthening of ULBs:** Conducting regular elections, devolving maximum functions, and providing adequate resources to urban local bodies to enhance their effectiveness.
- ❑ **Creation of National Urban Development and Housing Fund (NUDHF):** Establishing a dedicated fund to provide financial assistance to ULBs for urban development and housing projects.
- ❑ **Implementation of PPP model and e-Governance:** Adopting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models and e-Governance mechanisms, such as citizen grievance redressal systems, to improve transparency and accountability in ULB functioning.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NITI AAYOG

- ❑ **Improving Financial Management of ULBs:** Enhancing revenue sources for ULBs, increasing central devolution of funds, and constituting

State Finance Commissions with clear Terms of Reference (ToR) to ensure financial stability.

- ❑ **Capacity Building:** Developing capacity building programs for local government officials, urban planners, and other stakeholders to strengthen their skills and knowledge in urban governance.
- ❑ **Strengthening Citizen Participation:** Promoting citizen participation in ULB functioning through mechanisms like ward committees, NGOs, and civil society organizations to enhance accountability and transparency.

CONCLUSION

As engines of urban development, ULBs hold the key to sustainable and inclusive growth. By addressing funding constraints, strengthening governance structures, and fostering citizen participation, India can unleash the potential of its urban local bodies and realize the vision of vibrant, livable cities for all. It's imperative to prioritize reforms and forge partnerships to navigate the complex urban landscape and build resilient, equitable urban communities.

UNDERSTANDING FARMER SUICIDES IN INDIA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND SOLUTIONS

RELEVANCE

- ❑ **Syllabus:**
 - **GS2:** Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger
 - **PSIR:** Planning and Economic Development



INTRODUCTION

India, primarily an agrarian economy, faces the grim reality of farmer suicides, reflecting deep-rooted issues plaguing the agricultural sector. Despite various government initiatives, the problem persists, necessitating a holistic approach to address the underlying causes and ramifications.

CAUSES OF FARMER SUICIDES

- ❑ **Debt Trap:** High indebtedness due to crop failure and lack of access to formal credit exacerbates financial distress among farmers.
- ❑ **Lack of Access to Formal Credit:** Limited access to institutional credit forces farmers to resort to high-interest informal loans, pushing them further into debt.
- ❑ **Change in Cropping Patterns:** Shifts in cropping patterns, often driven by market demands, lead to unproductive farming practices in arid regions.

Farm suicides as per NCRB report

Year	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Farmer suicides	5,207	5,318	5,579	5,957	5,763
Agri labourer suicides	6,083	5,563	5,098	4,324	4,586
Total	11,290	10,881	10,677	10,281	10,349

Source: Indian Express

- ❑ **Unproductivity of Agriculture:** Rising input costs coupled with stagnant prices of agricultural produce render farming economically unviable.
- ❑ **Climate Change:** Erratic monsoons, water scarcity, and pest infestations due to climate change adversely affect agricultural productivity.
- ❑ **Socio-cultural Issues:** Socio-cultural obligations such as weddings and societal pressures contribute to financial strain on farmers.

- ❑ **Lack of Access to Schemes:** Landless agricultural laborers often do not benefit from government income support schemes.
- ❑ **Mental Health:** Depression and social stigma surrounding mental health issues further exacerbate the plight of farmers.

RAMIFICATIONS OF INCREASING FARMER SUICIDES

- ❑ **Failure of Agriculture as an Enterprise:** Farmer suicides reflect the failure of agricultural policies aimed at doubling farmers' income.
- ❑ **Negative Impact on Rural Economy:** Farmer suicides have ripple effects on rural economies, leading to reduced economic growth and social instability.
- ❑ **Social Consequences:** Families of deceased farmers suffer emotional and financial distress, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.
- ❑ **Mental Health Challenges:** Farmer suicides contribute to mental health challenges in farming communities, aggravating substance abuse and depression.
- ❑ **Global Trade Dynamics:** Changes in Indian agriculture due to farmer suicides can impact global commodity markets and hinder economic growth.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- ❑ **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):** Crop insurance scheme to provide financial support in case of crop failure.
- ❑ **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN):** Direct income support scheme for eligible farmers.
- ❑ **Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008:** Scheme aimed at alleviating the debt burden on farmers.
- ❑ **Loan Waiver Schemes:** State-specific schemes to waive off agricultural loans and prevent farmers from falling into a debt trap.

- ❑ **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA):** Focuses on promoting sustainable agricultural practices and climate-resilient agriculture.

WAY FORWARD

- ❑ **Financial Support and Debt Relief:** Implement sustainable debt relief mechanisms and ensure effective implementation of crop insurance schemes.
- ❑ **Diversification of Agriculture:** Promote crop diversification to reduce dependency on specific crops and enhance resilience.
- ❑ **Market Reforms:** Strengthen market reforms to ensure fair prices for agricultural produce and reduce the influence of middlemen.

- ❑ **Mental Health Support:** Establish mental health support systems and destigmatize mental health issues in rural areas.
- ❑ **Research and Innovation:** Invest in agricultural research and innovation to develop resilient crop varieties and sustainable farming practices.

CONCLUSION

Addressing farmer suicides requires a multi-faceted approach encompassing financial support, market reforms, mental health awareness, and agricultural innovation. Only through concerted efforts can India mitigate the distressing trend of farmer suicides and ensure the well-being of its agrarian population.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

RELEVANCE

- ❑ **Syllabus:**
 - **GS2:** Important Aspects of Governance
 - **PSIR:** Principal Organs of the Union Government



RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT

INTRODUCTION

The significance of the Right to Information (RTI) cannot be overstated in the context of India's democratic framework. Embedded within the fundamental fabric of democracy, the RTI serves as a cornerstone of citizen empowerment and government accountability. By granting citizens unrestricted access to information concerning the functioning of various governmental branches, including the legislature, executive, and judiciary, the RTI transforms individuals from mere subjects into active participants in the democratic process.

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF RTI

At its core, the philosophical underpinnings of the RTI find resonance in the principles espoused by ancient philosophers such as Aristotle. According to Aristotle, the attainment of liberty and equality, fundamental tenets of democracy, hinges upon the unrestricted access of citizens to governmental information. Information, Aristotle contends, shapes individual identity, political consciousness, and economic agency, thereby serving as a catalyst for democratic engagement and societal progress.

INTERNATIONAL LAW ON RTI

Internationally, the recognition of the right to access information is firmly entrenched in legal frameworks such as the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted in 1946, the declaration unequivocally asserts freedom of information as a fundamental human right essential for the realization of all other liberties. Likewise, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enshrines the right to information as a binding obligation, thereby underscoring its centrality in international human rights law.

INDIAN CONTEXT

In the Indian context, while the constitution does not explicitly delineate the right to information as a fundamental right, judicial interpretations have established its implicit linkage to constitutional

provisions safeguarding freedom of speech and expression (Article 19) and the right to life and personal liberty (Article 21). Landmark judicial pronouncements, including the State of U.P. v. Raj Narain (1975) and S.P. Gupta v. President of India (1982), have underscored the intrinsic connection between the right to information and democratic governance.

A watershed moment in the evolution of the RTI landscape in India occurred with the enactment of the Right to Information Act in 2005. Spearheaded by grassroots movements such as the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), the legislation aimed to democratize access to information, promote transparency, and bolster governmental accountability. Through its provisions, the RTI Act sought to empower citizens to scrutinize public authorities and hold them answerable for their actions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RTI

The significance of the RTI transcends its role as a mere tool for transparency; it serves as a potent instrument for combating corruption, nepotism, and favoritism within the corridors of power. Notable instances such as the expose of the Commonwealth Games scam and coal allocation irregularities underscore the pivotal role of the RTI in unearthing malfeasance and promoting accountability.

Moreover, the RTI engenders a culture of openness and accountability within governmental institutions, catalyzing a paradigm shift from secrecy to transparency. By institutionalizing mechanisms for proactive disclosure and public scrutiny, the RTI fosters a culture of participatory governance wherein citizens actively engage with state apparatuses to demand transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, the RTI lends judicial teeth to challenge laws and policies that encroach upon fundamental rights and promote opacity. Recent

judicial interventions, such as the invalidation of the Electoral Bonds scheme, underscore the judiciary's role as a guardian of democratic principles and constitutional values.

CHALLENGES

Despite its transformative potential, the RTI grapples with several challenges that impede its efficacy. Chief among these challenges is the misuse of the right for personal vendettas or frivolous pursuits, undermining its original intent of promoting transparency and accountability. Instances of individuals filing RTI applications to harass public authorities or seek undue publicity highlight the need for robust safeguards to prevent abuse.

Additionally, tensions often arise between the right to information and imperatives such as national security and individual privacy. Balancing the imperative of transparency with the need for confidentiality poses a delicate challenge, necessitating nuanced legal frameworks to reconcile competing interests effectively.

Moreover, low awareness levels, particularly among marginalized communities and rural populations, pose a formidable obstacle to the widespread utilization of the RTI. Bridging this awareness gap through targeted educational initiatives and capacity-building programs is imperative to ensure equitable access to information.

Furthermore, executive apathy and legislative inertia have stymied efforts to fortify the institutional framework governing the RTI. The RTI Amendment Act of 2019, which diluted the powers of Information Commissions, stands as a stark example of executive indifference to safeguarding transparency and accountability.

Moreover, the pervasive culture of secrecy within political parties poses a critical challenge to the effective implementation of the RTI. While the RTI Act mandates transparency and accountability in governmental affairs, it remains silent on

the applicability of these principles to political entities. Political parties, often considered the lifeblood of democracy, wield significant influence over governance processes and public policy formulation. However, the opacity surrounding their internal functioning undermines democratic principles and erodes public trust in the political process. The absence of RTI provisions for political parties perpetuates this opacity, shielding them from public scrutiny and accountability.

WAY FORWARD

A multifaceted approach is essential to fortify the efficacy of the RTI and uphold its foundational principles in India's democratic landscape. Firstly, there is an urgent need to reaffirm the RTI as a cardinal virtue of democracy through sustained judicial activism and legislative reform. The judiciary, as the custodian of constitutional values, must continue to interpret and enforce the RTI in a manner that upholds democratic principles and safeguards individual liberties. Similarly, the legislature must enact comprehensive reforms to strengthen the institutional framework governing the RTI, including measures to enhance the autonomy and efficacy of Information Commissions.

Furthermore, efforts to promote awareness and education about the right to information must be intensified to empower citizens, particularly those from marginalized communities, to exercise their entitlements effectively. Integrating RTI education into school curricula and conducting grassroots awareness campaigns can foster a culture of transparency and accountability from an early age, nurturing vigilant citizenship and democratic engagement.

Additionally, addressing the burgeoning challenges of misinformation and disinformation is paramount to safeguarding the integrity of the RTI. The proliferation of false narratives and malicious propaganda undermines public trust

in the veracity of information obtained through the RTI. Counteracting these trends requires concerted efforts to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills, enabling citizens to discern fact from fiction and make informed decisions.

Moreover, bridging the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to information is essential to democratizing the benefits of the RTI. Leveraging technology to streamline RTI processes and enhance online accessibility can overcome barriers to information access, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Investing in digital infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives can empower citizens to exercise their right to information irrespective of geographical constraints.

Furthermore, legislative reforms to expand the ambit of the RTI to cover political parties are imperative to strengthen democratic governance

and foster transparency in the political arena. By subjecting political entities to the same standards of accountability as governmental institutions, such reforms can bolster public trust in the political process and enhance democratic legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

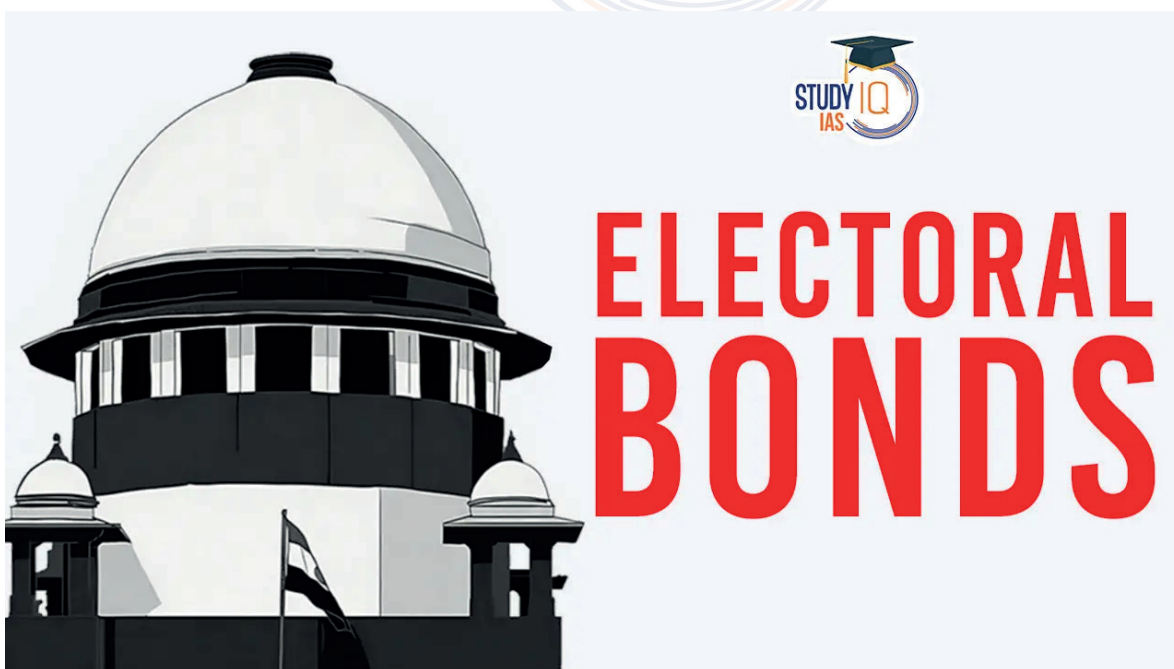
Right to Information stands as a beacon of transparency, accountability, and democratic empowerment in India's evolving democratic landscape. While challenges persist, concerted efforts by the judiciary, legislature, civil society, and citizens are essential to fortify the efficacy of the RTI and uphold its foundational principles. By reaffirming the RTI as a fundamental pillar of democracy and enacting comprehensive reforms to address emerging challenges, India can chart a course towards a more transparent, accountable, and participatory governance paradigm.

ELECTORAL BONDS AND THE SC VERDICT

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **GS2: Government Policies**
- **PSIR: Party System**



INTRODUCTION

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court (SC) declared the Electoral Bonds Scheme (EBS) as “unconstitutional” in a unanimous judgment delivered by a five-judge bench presided over by the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The court, while scrutinizing the legality of the electoral bonds scheme, unequivocally held that the anonymity of electoral bonds violates the fundamental right to information as enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

In addition to striking down the Electoral Bonds Scheme (EBS), the Supreme Court invalidated amendments made to several key legislations, including The Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA), The Income-tax Act, 1961, and The Companies Act, 2013. These amendments were introduced to facilitate corporate donations to political parties, aiming to enhance transparency and accountability in political funding. However, the court found these amendments to be in conflict with constitutional provisions safeguarding the right to information and the principles of democratic governance.

IMPLICATIONS

The Supreme Court’s verdict on the Electoral Bonds Scheme carries significant implications, shaping the contours of legislative actions and reaffirming fundamental principles of democracy:

Establishment of a New Standard for Legislative Restriction: The court’s decision to strike down the electoral bonds scheme underscores the importance of adopting measures that are the “least restrictive” of fundamental rights. This sets a new threshold for legislative action, emphasizing that the state must explore alternative methods that impose minimal constraints on constitutional freedoms. This standard adds a fresh dimension to the “basic structure doctrine,” delineating the boundaries within which legislative bodies must operate.

Reinforcement of Proportionality Test: The verdict reinforces the principle of a “definite” and “structured” proportionality test, as articulated in the landmark Puttuswamy judgment on the right to privacy. By applying this test to the electoral bonds scheme, the court ensures that legislative actions are not arbitrary and do not disproportionately infringe upon fundamental rights. This nuanced approach guards against the risk of undue encroachment on individual liberties under the pretext of pursuing a “legitimate state interest.”

Scrutiny of State’s Definition of Legitimate State Interest: The ruling signifies that the definition of “legitimate state interest” is not solely within the purview of the state. The Supreme Court reserves the authority to evaluate the state’s justification for its actions, particularly concerning legislative measures. In the case of the electoral bonds scheme, the court closely scrutinized the state’s assertion of “legitimate state interest,” highlighting the judiciary’s role in upholding constitutional values.

Reaffirmation of Right to Information: The verdict reaffirms the foundational importance of the right to information enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. By striking down the electoral bonds scheme, which impeded transparency in political funding, the court upholds the citizen’s right to access vital information crucial for the functioning of a vibrant democracy. This reaffirmation underscores the judiciary’s commitment to safeguarding democratic principles and ensuring accountability in governance.

WHAT ARE ELECTORAL BONDS?

Electoral bonds are interest-free “bearer instruments” introduced with the Finance Bill 2017 and notified on January 29, 2018. These bonds can be purchased by any citizen of India or entities incorporated or established in India, either singly or jointly with other individuals. However, only

political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and securing not less than 1% of votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, are eligible to receive electoral bonds.

The State Bank of India (SBI) issues electoral bonds in denominations ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1 crore, in the months of January, April, July, and October. Donors can purchase these bonds and transfer them into the accounts of political parties as donations. Importantly, the identity of the donor is kept confidential.

Political parties are required to create specific accounts verified by the Election Commission of India (ECI). They can encash the electoral bonds only in these verified accounts. The bonds remain valid for 15 days, within which political parties must encash them in the designated accounts. This system aims to streamline the process of political funding while maintaining the anonymity of donors.

GOVERNMENT'S RATIONALE BEHIND THE INTRODUCTION OF ELECTORAL BONDS SCHEME IN 2018

Transparency in political funding: Electoral bonds were introduced to provide a transparent route for parties to collect funds, as they are allowed to be sold only through SBI and to KYC validated individuals.

Reduced chances of misuse of bonds: With a limited window for sale and a short maturity period, the misuse of these bonds was expected to be difficult.

Protection of anonymity: Electoral bonds provide anonymity to donors, preventing post-poll intimidation or harassment by political opponents.

Political accountability: Political parties are required to submit details of contributions

received through electoral bonds to the Election Commission, ensuring accountability.

Reduction of black money: The scheme reduced the amount of money that parties can accept in cash from anonymous sources, thus reducing the use of black money in elections.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST ELECTORAL BONDS

Against the 'Right to Know': Electoral bonds hide the identity of donors and recipients, compromising citizens' right to information under Article 19(1) of the Constitution.

Information asymmetry: While donors remain anonymous, the government can access donor details, providing an advantage to the ruling party.

Transparency loopholes: Removal of clauses from the Companies Act 2013 raised concerns about transparency in corporate donations.

Compromised shareholder rights: Shareholders are denied oversight of company donations, impacting their ability to influence company political involvement.

Flawed argument of donor anonymity: Previous donations from corporations to rival parties have not resulted in targeting by ruling parties.

Crony Capitalism: Electoral bonds may facilitate the use of shell companies for favoritism in return for donations.

Large corporate donations: The majority of bonds issued were of the highest denomination, raising questions about access for common people.

Passage as Money Bill: Passing the scheme as a money bill bypassed Rajya Sabha scrutiny.

Issue of foreign funds: Retroactive amendments effectively shield foreign financing of Indian elections from scrutiny.

Against RBI authority: The scheme went against RBI's sole authority to issue bearer instruments.

Veil of Secrecy: Donations through electoral bonds were kept out of reporting requirements, reducing transparency.

Undermines basic structure: Supreme Court rulings declare free and fair elections as part of the basic structure, impossible without transparency in political funding.

WAY FORWARD

Review and reform Electoral Bonds Scheme: A comprehensive review of the Electoral Bonds Scheme is essential to address the concerns raised and ensure transparency in political funding. Reforms could include:

- Tightening KYC norms for bond purchasers to prevent misuse.
- Introducing mechanisms for real-time disclosure of donor details to the Election Commission.
- Establishing an independent oversight body to monitor the functioning of the scheme.
- Implementing measures to prevent shell companies from being used for donations.
- Ensuring equal access to electoral bonds for all eligible donors.
- Revisiting the decision to treat the scheme as a money bill to allow for thorough parliamentary scrutiny.

Strengthening of regulatory mechanisms: Enhancing the role and powers of regulatory bodies like the Election Commission and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) is crucial. This includes:

- Empowering the Election Commission to enforce transparency and accountability in political funding.
- Increasing the capacity and resources of regulatory agencies to conduct thorough audits and investigations.
- Enforcing strict penalties for non-compliance with transparency norms.

Public awareness and participation: Educating the public about the importance of transparent political funding and their role in demanding accountability from political parties is vital. This can be achieved through:

- Public awareness campaigns highlighting the significance of transparent political funding for democracy.
- Civil society initiatives to promote transparency and accountability in political processes.
- Encouraging citizens to actively engage with political parties and demand transparency in their funding sources.

Legal reforms: Addressing legal loopholes and inconsistencies in existing laws related to political funding is necessary. This may involve:

- Amending relevant legislation to strengthen disclosure requirements for political donations.
- Introducing safeguards to prevent the misuse of electoral bonds and other forms of political financing.
- Aligning laws governing political funding with constitutional principles of transparency and accountability.

International cooperation: Collaborating with international organizations and other countries to share best practices and experiences in regulating political funding can be beneficial. This includes:

- Participating in forums and conferences on political finance reform to learn from global experiences.
- Seeking assistance from international bodies in developing effective regulatory frameworks for political funding.
- Building partnerships with countries that have successfully addressed challenges related to political financing.

By implementing these measures, India can strengthen its electoral processes, uphold democratic principles, and ensure transparency and accountability in political funding.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Subhash Kashyap asserts that although many contributed to shaping the constitution's form and design, Nehru played a paramount role in imbuing it with its essence, ethos, guiding principles, and rational foundation. Discuss.

The Constitution of India, crafted by the Constituent Assembly, is not merely a product of that assembly alone. Its core principles were shaped during the prolonged struggle for independence. The nationalist movement extensively deliberated numerous pivotal questions that had relevance to the constitution-making process: the structure of government for India, the upheld values, and more. In essence, the Constituent Assembly translated the principles inherited from the nationalist movement into tangible form.

The "Objective Resolution," put forth by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946, succinctly captures the principles brought by the nationalist movement to the Constituent Assembly. This resolution encapsulated the aspirations and values underlying the constitution, setting out the foundational philosophy of the constitutional framework and profoundly influencing its subsequent evolution.

The Objective Resolution aimed to establish an "Independent Sovereign Republic of India" in which both the nation and its constituent states derived their powers and authority from the people. It aimed to concretely institutionalize fundamental commitments such as liberty, equality, justice, safeguards for minorities and vulnerable groups, democracy, sovereignty, and a cosmopolitan identity.

Hence, it can be argued that Nehru's introduction of the Objective Resolution represented liberal and welfare-oriented ideals, which find full reflection in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution—a statement that articulates the essential philosophy of the independent Indian state.

However, the conventional Marxist interpretation of the Indian national movement, which employed a narrow class-based approach, has faced criticism from later generations of Marxist scholars. S.N. Mukherjee contends that Indian nationalism was a multi-layered and intricate process that cannot be comprehended through reductionist class analysis.

Sumit Sarkar, in his work "Modern India," contends that R.C. Dutt's brand of Marxist interpretation falls short by simplistically attributing direct and straightforward economic motivations to political actions. Sarkar argues that the Indian National Congress did not have a deliberate or calculated strategy against the masses.

Bipan Chandra, a Marxist scholar, asserts that the freedom struggle led by the Congress was a remarkable mass movement. He argues that, in pursuit of resolving the primary contradictions between Indian and British rule, secondary contradictions rooted in caste, class, and so on were set aside, and all segments of society rallied under the nationalist ideology.

Q. What is the concept of "politicization of caste," and how does Rajni Kothari elucidate the dynamic interplay between caste and politics in the context of India?

The politicization of caste in India refers to the phenomenon where political leaders from various caste backgrounds seek to gain political advantages for themselves by harnessing caste sentiments, consciousness, and prejudices among the population. This manipulation of caste sentiments by politicians turns them into intense caste-based passions.

According to Rajni Kothari, the political process involves identifying and manipulating existing structures to mobilize support and consolidate political positions. In India, where the caste system is a prominent social structure, politics often revolves around caste-based organization. Kothari argues that this interaction between caste and democracy has led to a blend of traditional values with modernity and the modernization of traditional customs. This politicization of caste is a consequence of introducing democracy into a traditional society, where politics often centers on conflicts and alliances between entrenched and emerging castes.

Kothari identifies three key aspects of politicization of caste: secularization, integration, and ideological. He believes that caste plays a crucial role in the success of democracy in India, setting it apart from other third-world countries that have struggled to establish democratic systems.

In conclusion, Rajni Kothari suggests that the politicization of caste has revitalized the electoral system in India. Various studies have demonstrated that due to this politicization, the influence of caste groups has grown, and even smaller castes have gained significant bargaining power thanks to their voting strength.

Q. Elaborate on feminist critique on traditional view of National Security.

Feminists have been vocal critics of the traditional concept of national security, arguing against discriminatory practices towards women. They contend that the prevailing model of national security reflects a dominance of masculine ideals. Additionally, feminists scrutinize the male-centric structure of government and global politics, asserting that it often sidelines feminist perspectives, leaving the voices of women unheard. Scholars like R.W. Connel label this phenomenon as “hegemonic masculinity,” shaping the conventional notion of security.

Despite women’s crucial roles in global politics, they remain on the peripheries of power, as highlighted by J. Ann Tickner. This marginalization is evident not only at the state level but also within the broader international system. Women are often relegated to a complementary status, both in their societal standing and how they perceive the world.

In contrast to conventional security studies, feminists adopt a bottom-up approach, examining the micro-level impact of conflict. They are particularly concerned with the effects of war on women and civilians, challenging the stereotype that wars aim to protect the “vulnerable.” Feminist perspectives shed new light on ethno-national wars, bringing issues like wartime rape and military prostitution into the security discourse. They question the state’s role as a security provider, suggesting that in many contemporary conflicts, states may pose threats to their own populations through direct violence or trade-offs between warfare and welfare.

A notable development since the end of the Cold War is the increasing recognition of feminist perspectives in world politics and security. This recognition is exemplified by key UN resolutions, such as Security Council Resolution 1325, which advocates for the integration of gender perspectives across all fields. Member states are urged to enhance women’s participation in peace processes and security decision-making. While only partially successful, these efforts contribute to a crucial discourse challenging the notion that security is exclusively a male domain.

Q. How can India effectively balance its relations with the United States and China amidst the ongoing superpower rivalry?

India finds itself strategically nestled between the two titans of the 21st century - the United States and China. Balancing relations with these competing superpowers necessitates a nuanced approach, guided by pragmatism, national interests, and a strategic autonomy that preserves India's independence.

The competing pulls:

The United States- Shared Democratic Values and Security Partnership: a natural alliance against China's assertiveness, providing access to sophisticated defence technology, economic partnerships, and a shared commitment to democratic principles.

China- Economic Interdependence and Trade Ties: China is India's largest trading partner, presenting immense opportunities for economic cooperation and infrastructure development.

Balancing Strategies: Maneuvering the Tightrope:

Strategic Autonomy: As C Raja Mohan advocates in "India's Grand Strategy," maintaining self-reliance in critical sectors like defence technology, energy, and pharmaceuticals remains crucial for long-term sustainability and avoiding dependence on either superpower.

Multi-alignment and Global Partnerships: Engaging with diverse players like the European Union, ASEAN, and other regional groupings, as suggested by Harsh V. Pant in "Modi's Foreign Policy: New Perspectives," allows India to leverage multipolarity, secure its interests, and avoid getting ensnared in the US-China binary.

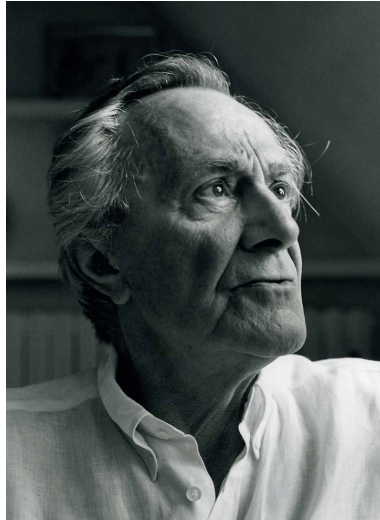
Economic Diversification: Reducing dependence on China by fostering trade ties with the US, Africa, and other emerging markets like Latin America and Oceania.

Defense Cooperation and Soft Power Prowess: Balancing security cooperation with the US and maintaining an open dialogue with China on border issues, as suggested by Ashley Tellis, can help deter conflict and maintain regional stability. Concurrently, leveraging India's rich cultural heritage, democratic values, and development expertise to build soft power globally.

India's future lies in charting a course that transcends the US-China binary. By prioritizing strategic autonomy, diversifying partnerships, and utilizing its inherent strengths, India can emerge as a powerful, independent player on the global stage, shaping its destiny amidst the ongoing superpower rivalry.

SCHOLAR DIGEST: KNOW YOUR SCHOLARS

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



INTRODUCTION

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

INCRECULITY TOWARDS METANARRATIVES

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

diversity and incommensurability of different perspectives and experiences.

CRITIQUE OF GRAND NARRATIVES

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

LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE

Lyotard explored the relationship between language and knowledge, emphasizing the limitations and complexities of linguistic representation. He rejected the idea that language could provide an objective and transparent representation of reality. Instead, he argued that language is

inherently unstable, fragmented, and subject to different interpretations. Knowledge, according to Lyotard, is contingent upon language games, which are socially constructed systems of meaning. These language games shape our understanding of reality, but they are not universally valid or comprehensive.

THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

Lyotard's ideas were influential in defining the postmodern condition. He described the postmodern era as characterized by a skepticism towards grand narratives, a celebration of diversity, and a recognition of the fragmentation of knowledge. In the postmodern condition, truth becomes a matter of individual interpretation and subjective experience. This challenges traditional notions of authority and encourages a constant reassessment of knowledge and its foundations.

IMPLICATIONS AND CRITICISMS

Lyotard's ideas have both positive and negative implications. On one hand, his emphasis on the plurality of narratives and the rejection of grand narratives allows for a more inclusive and democratic society, where diverse perspectives are

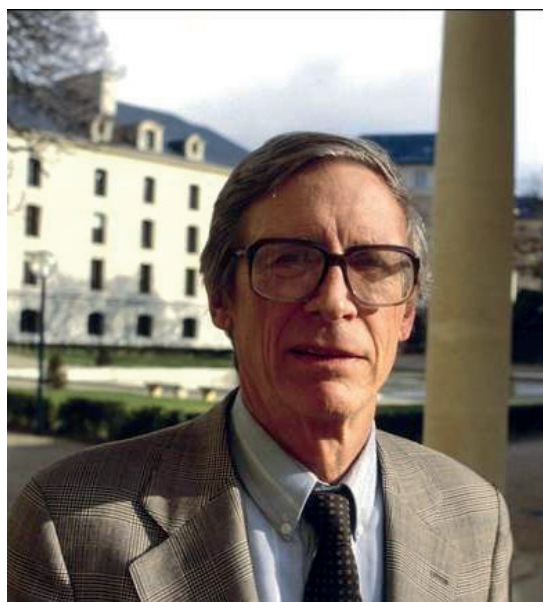
valued. It promotes critical thinking, as individuals are encouraged to question dominant narratives and engage in dialogue. On the other hand, critics argue that Lyotard's ideas can lead to a relativistic stance, where all narratives are considered equally valid, undermining the pursuit of objective truth.

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

CONCLUSION

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

JOHN RAWLS: A VISIONARY IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY



INTRODUCTION

John Rawls, an American philosopher, made significant contributions to political philosophy, particularly in the realms of justice and fairness. Born in 1921 in Baltimore, Maryland, Rawls grew up witnessing the socio-political turbulence of the 20th century, which significantly shaped his intellectual pursuits.

Rawls's magnum opus, "A Theory of Justice," published in 1971, revolutionized political philosophy by introducing a fresh perspective on justice and equality. His ideas have influenced scholars, policymakers, and activists worldwide.

THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

At the core of Rawls's philosophy is the concept of the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance." He asks us to imagine a hypothetical scenario where individuals are about to create a new society but are unaware of their personal attributes, such as wealth, talents, or social status. This "veil of ignorance" ensures that the decision-makers are unbiased and rational, as they are oblivious to their own positions in the forthcoming society.

PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE

From behind the veil of ignorance, Rawls argues that rational individuals would agree upon two fundamental principles of justice:

The Principle of Equal Basic Liberties: Each person is entitled to the most extensive basic liberties compatible with similar liberties for others.

The Difference Principle: Social and economic inequalities should be arranged so that they benefit the least advantaged members of society. Any inequality must be to everyone's advantage and, notably, attached to positions and offices open to all.

These principles are foundational to Rawls's vision of a just society. They prioritize individual rights, especially those of the most vulnerable,

and propose a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.

REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

Rawls introduced the concept of "reflective equilibrium" to address criticisms and refine his theory continuously. It suggests that moral judgments should align coherently with our considered beliefs. Rawls encourages an ongoing dialogue between our fundamental principles and our intuitive judgments, seeking a state of reflective equilibrium where they mutually reinforce each other.

POLITICAL LIBERALISM

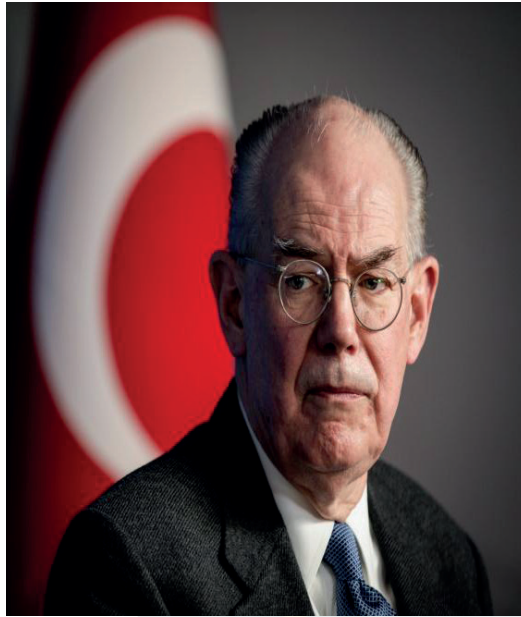
In his later works, particularly in "Political Liberalism" (1993), Rawls adapted his theory to be more inclusive, recognizing the diversity of comprehensive doctrines in a pluralistic society. He aimed to provide a framework for political cooperation that people from different moral, religious, and philosophical backgrounds could accept.

CRITIQUES AND LEGACY

While Rawls's theory has been influential, it has faced criticism. Some argue that the veil of ignorance is an unrealistic abstraction, while others question the feasibility of achieving the principles of justice in a complex, real-world society. Critics also argue that Rawls's focus on justice can sideline other important values, such as efficiency or economic growth.

Despite these critiques, Rawls's ideas have left an enduring legacy in political philosophy. His emphasis on justice as fairness, the original position, and the veil of ignorance has shaped debates on distributive justice, societal fairness, and the role of institutions in creating an equitable social order. Rawls's work continues to inspire scholars, policymakers, and activists seeking to create a more just and egalitarian world.

JOHN JOSEPH MEARSHEIMER



INTRODUCTION

John Joseph Mearsheimer, born on December 14, 1947, in New York, New York, is a distinguished American academic specializing in international relations. He is most renowned for developing the concept of offensive realism within this field.

MAJOR WORKS

John Mearsheimer is well known for his work "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". In 2007, John Mearsheimer collaborated with Stephen M. Walt on a book titled "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," which garnered significant attention but also sparked controversy. The book argued that an influential lobby had a distorting effect on U.S. foreign policy, leading it to prioritize unwavering support for Israel over the nation's own interests. While some critics dismissed the work as propagating conspiracy theories or lacking in factual accuracy, supporters commended the authors for their willingness to address a significant policy matter.

Mearsheimer's body of work also encompassed other notable titles such as "Conventional Deterrence" (1983), "Liddell Hart and the Weight

of History" (1988), "Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics" (2011), and "The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities" (2018).

INFLUENCES

Much like many scholars specializing in international relations from his era, Mearsheimer was significantly shaped by the ideas of Kenneth Waltz, the originator of neorealism in the field. While classical realists like Hans Morgenthau attributed global conflicts to the inherent drive of political leaders to enhance their own power, neorealists (also called structural realists) such as Waltz attributed the root cause of war to the arrangement of international relations. In Waltz's framework, the absence of a higher authority governing states (referred to as anarchy) compels them to form alliances as a means of containing potential threats emanating from competing powers. Essentially, the global order is shaped by the equilibrium of power among states. According to Waltz, the pursuit of security prompts states to support the existing state of affairs and to assume a defensive stance towards their rivals.

THEORY OF OFFENSIVE REALISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mearsheimer's alternative perspective, termed "offensive realism," posits that the pursuit of security and, fundamentally, survival drives states to aggressively seek to maximize their power. Rather than cooperating extensively, states predominantly engage in temporary alliances while consistently striving to weaken rivals and strengthen themselves.

Mearsheimer's theory rests on five fundamental assumptions:

1. The international system operates without a central authority to mediate state conflicts.
2. All states possess some degree of military capability, regardless of its extent.
3. States are unable to definitively discern the intentions of other states.
4. Survival ranks as the paramount concern for states.
5. States act rationally to advance their own interests.

According to Mearsheimer, these conditions generate strong incentives for states to adopt aggressive behavior towards one another. Since states cannot accurately predict the intentions of others, it becomes rational for them to bolster their military strength and adopt assertive stances to counteract potential aggression.

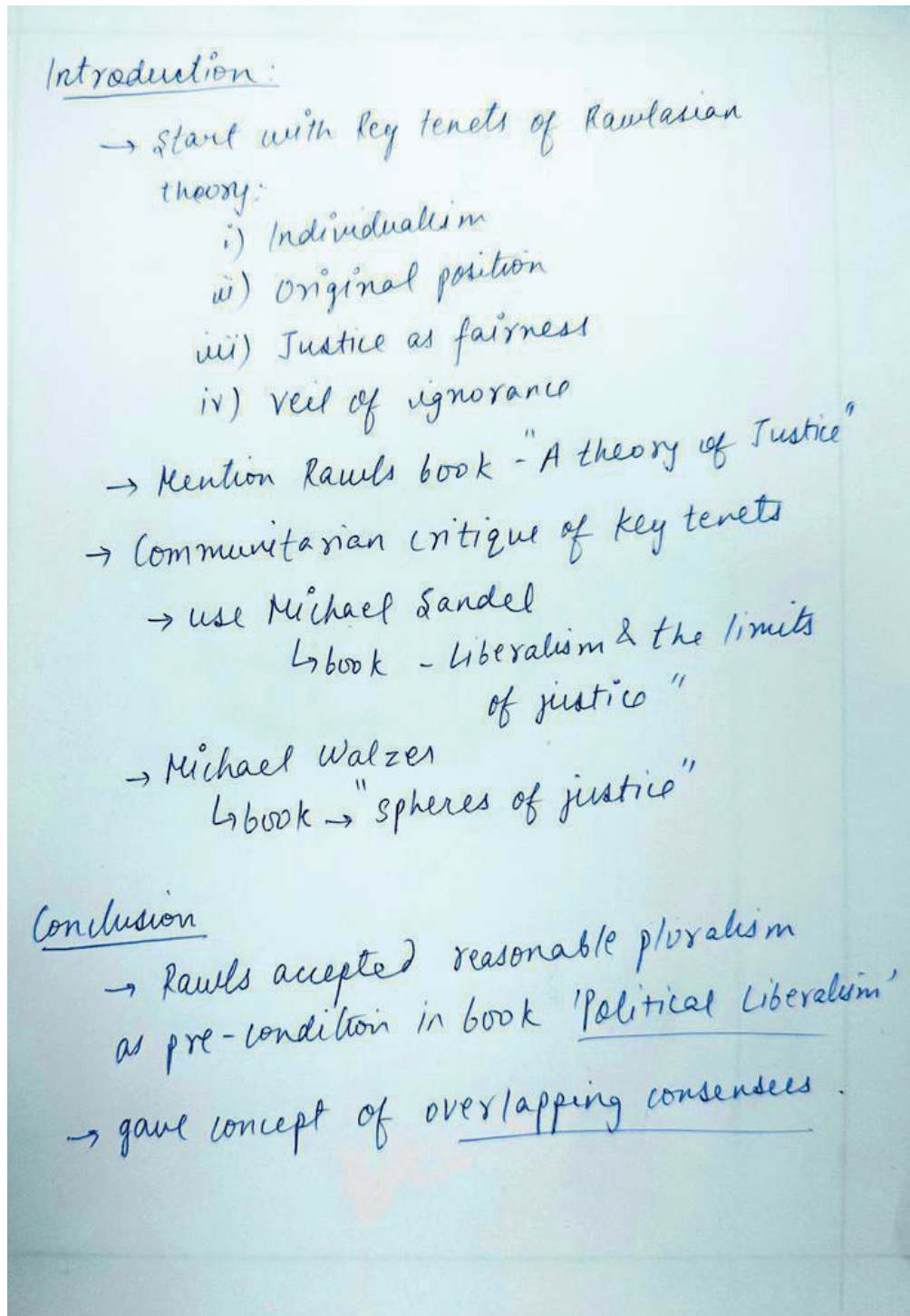
MEARSHEIMER'S CRITICISM OF IRAQ WAR AND USA'S FOREIGN POLICY

While Mearsheimer acknowledged war as a viable tool of statecraft, he held reservations about its blanket justification. He notably expressed strong disapproval of the Iraq War (2003–2011), viewing it as an instance where the United States sought to exert global policing authority. Concerning U.S. foreign policy, his stance favored a strategy of "global balancing" over "global hegemony." He believed that powerful nations, like the U.S., should refrain from imposing their dominion across all continents, intervening selectively when a major rival poses a threat to a strategically significant region.

Mearsheimer applauded U.S. involvement in World War II, deeming it appropriate due to the ambitions of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan to establish dominance in their respective regions. However, he criticized the post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy for overestimating its military prowess and its ability to exert force at its discretion. A notable aspect of Mearsheimer's viewpoint was his proposition for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe, contending that their continued presence lacked rationale given the absence of any current dominant threat to the continent.

ENRICH YOUR ANSWER

Q. Examine communitarian critique of Rawls theory of Justice.



Q. What do you mean by offensive and defensive realism? (15) (UPSC MAINS 2023)

Intro → Start by explaining realism as hegemonic school of IR and give its basic idea → anarchy

Body

→ Explain defensive realism

- Kenneth Waltz
- Security maximisation
- power as means

→ Explain offensive realism

- Mearsheimer, Kautilya
- Power as ends and means
- Hegemony aspiration

conclude

- Criticism by liberals, social constructivists
- Relevance - ex. China in South China Sea.

Q. Comment: Hobbesian idea of Political Obligation.

Introduction

Explain the concept of political obligation using various thinkers

- Plato
- Aristotle
- Marx etc.

body → Background of Hobbes
↳ reasoning for absolute obligation

→ Explain Hobbesian concept of state absolutism

→ Give criticism → subjugates individual
→ totalitarian state

Conclusion → Give defence → concern for life

→ Give relevance → COVID (China)

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 1. Which of the following initiatives has been undertaken by India to promote the international use of the Indian Rupee (INR)?**
 - (a) Establishment of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC).
 - (b) Adoption of a fixed exchange rate regime for the INR.
 - (c) Imposing strict capital controls to limit INR flows across borders.
 - (d) Encouraging the use of foreign currencies for trade transactions.
- 2. The Cauvery River dispute primarily involves which Indian states, each vying for a fair share of its waters?**
 - (a) Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka
 - (b) Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
 - (c) Tamil Nadu and Kerala
 - (d) Kerala and Karnataka
- 3. The Election Commission of India consists of how many members, including the Chief Election Commissioner?**
 - (a) One
 - (b) Two
 - (c) Three
 - (d) Four
- 4. Which article of the Indian Constitution outlines the provisions for the Election Commission of India?**
 - (a) Article 320
 - (b) Article 340
 - (c) Article 324
 - (d) Article 330
- 5. 'Economic Justice' as one of the objectives of the Indian Constitution has been provided in**
 - (a) the Preamble and the Fundamental Rights
 - (b) the Preamble and the Directive Principles of State Policy
 - (c) the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy
 - (d) None of the above
- 6. Which one of the following Schedules of the Constitution of India contains provisions regarding anti-defection?**
 - (a) Second Schedule
 - (b) Fifth Schedule
 - (c) Eighth Schedule
 - (d) Tenth Schedule
- 7. In the Constitution of India, promotion of international peace and security is included in the**
 - (a) Preamble to the Constitution
 - (b) Directive Principles of State Policy
 - (c) Fundamental Duties
 - (d) Ninth Schedule
- 8. The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to**
 - (a) protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes
 - (b) determine the boundaries between States
 - (c) determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats
 - (d) protect the interests of all the border States

Answers

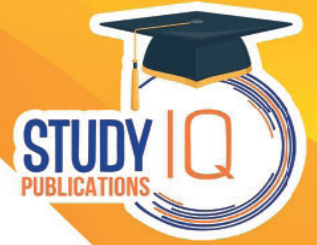
- 1. (a)** Establishment of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)
- 2. (b)** Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
- 3. (c)** Three
- 4. (c)** Article 324
- 5. (b)** The Preamble to the Constitution of India in its introductory statement says- "Justice- Social, Economic and Political" and the Directive Principles of state policies aim to create social and economic condition under which the citizens can lead a good life. They also aim to establish social and economic democracy through a welfare state.

6. **(d)** The 52nd Amendment act of 1985, added 10th schedule to the Constitution. This is often referred to as anti-defection law.
7. **(b)** Promotion of international peace and security is included in the Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 51 of constitution that mentions to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honourable relations between nations; to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, and to encourage settlements of international disputes by arbitration.
8. **(a)** The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India deals with administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes in these areas. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India contains provisions concerning the administration of tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.



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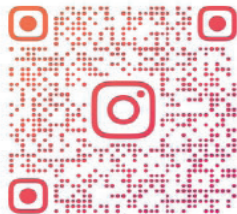
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