

## Today's Prelims Topics

### Turmeric Farming in India

#### Context

Indian turmeric production is projected to be 10-15% lower this season, due to unfavorable weather conditions and crop diseases.

#### About Turmeric

- Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a bright yellow spice derived from the rhizomes of the turmeric plant.
- It has been used for centuries in Ayurvedic medicine due to its numerous health benefits.
- **Growing Conditions:**
  - **Climate:** Warm, humid, tropical climates with temperatures between 20-30°C.
  - **Rainfall:** It requires a high annual rainfall, ideally 1500 mm or more.
  - **Soil:** loamy or sandy loam soil with good drainage.
- **Medical Uses:**
  - **Anti-inflammatory Properties:** Curcumin, the active compound in turmeric, has potent anti-inflammatory effects that can help relieve conditions like arthritis and joint pain.
  - **Antioxidant Effects:** Protects against oxidative stress and lowers the risk of chronic diseases.
  - **Digestive Health:** Used to treat digestive disorders, it can alleviate symptoms of indigestion and bloating.
  - **Cancer Prevention:** Some studies suggest that curcumin may inhibit cancer cell growth and reduce the risk of certain types of cancer.
- **Effects of High Consumption:**
  - **Gastrointestinal Issues:** High doses (over 8 grams per day) can cause abdominal pain, nausea or diarrhoea.
  - **Blood Thinning Effects:** Turmeric can act as a natural blood thinner, which can pose risks for individuals on anticoagulant medications or those about to undergo surgery.

#### Facts

- Turmeric is propagated through **rhizomes (not seeds)**.
- India is the **largest producer, consumer and exporter** of turmeric in the **world**.
- India has more than 62% share of world trade in turmeric.
- **Top Producing States: (1) Maharashtra (2) Karnataka (3) Telangana (4) Tamil Nadu.**
- The Government of India established the **National Turmeric Board in 2023** for Developing and promoting the turmeric sector in India
  - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry

#### Source:

- [The Hindu - Turmeric](#)

## World Happiness Report 2025

### Context

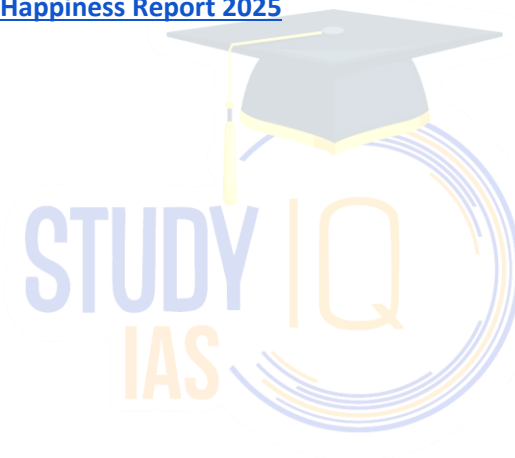
The **World Happiness Report 2025** was recently published by the **Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford**.

### About World Happiness Report 2025

- It is an annual report published by the **University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre in partnership with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Gallup**.
- For the **eighth consecutive year, Finland** has been named the **happiest country in the world**.
- **Top 10 Happiest Countries in 2025:** Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Netherlands, Costa Rica, Norway, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico.
  - **Costa Rica (6th) and Mexico (10th)** entered the **top 10 for the first time**.
- **India's Rank: 118** (Last time India's position was 126th).
  - Countries such as **Pakistan, Nepal, Palestine and Ukraine** are ranked above India.
- **Bottom Five Unhappiest Countries in 2025:** (143) Zimbabwe (144) Malawi (145) Lebanon (146) Sierra Leone (147) **Afghanistan (Ranked as the unhappiest country for the fourth consecutive year)**

### Source:

- [Indian Express - World Happiness Report 2025](#)



## Voyage of Iguanas

### Context

A latest research published in **Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences** has solved a long-standing mystery of how iguanas reached the Pacific islands.

### About Iguana

- Iguanas are large, herbivorous or omnivorous lizards.
- They are **cold-blooded reptiles**, primarily found in tropical and subtropical regions.
- Most iguanas are **arboreal (tree-dwelling)** and have strong claws and tails for defense.
- They are known for their scaly skin, long tails and dewlap (flap of skin under the chin), which helps in **thermoregulation and communication**.
- Iguanas are **native** to tropical regions of Central and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.
- Iguanas are **not naturally found in India** but exist as **pets and in captivity**.
- **Iguanas spotted in India:** Green iguanas and American green iguanas.



### The Puzzle of Fijian and Tongan Iguanas

- Native iguanas of **Fiji and Tonga** have long posed an evolutionary mystery.
- **All other living iguana species** are found in the Americas, from the **southwestern US to the Caribbean and parts of South America**.
- Scientists were unsure how these reptiles reached islands in the **South Pacific**, thousands of kilometers away.
- The research suggests that **Fijian iguanas' ancestors traveled on floating vegetation (rafting) across the Pacific Ocean**.

### What is Rafting?

- **Rafting** is a process where animals cross oceans **by clinging onto uprooted trees or plant debris**.
- This is commonly observed in **invertebrates**, as their small size allows them to survive long periods in floating vegetation.
- Among **vertebrates**, lizards and snakes are known to **raft better than mammals** due to their **slower metabolism**.

### Source:

- [Indian Express- Voyage of Iguanas](#)

## New Defence Procurement Guidelines

### Context

The Defence Acquisition Council has approved guidelines to **reduce delays at different stages of capital acquisition**.

### Key Changes in Defence Procurement Guidelines

- **Faster Procurement Timelines:**
  - **Procurement timelines will be slashed by 50%**, making acquisitions significantly faster.
  - Work will now **proceed simultaneously** on multiple processes instead of waiting for one to finish before starting another.
- **Simplification of Acquisition Processes:** The reforms will shorten the time taken in **several key procedures**, including:
  - **Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)** – The official recognition of the need for a military system.
  - **Request for Information (RFI)** – A market survey conducted before formal tendering.
  - **Request for Proposal (RFP)** – The actual bidding document for suppliers.
  - **Field Evaluation Trials** – Testing the weapon system for military use.
  - **Contract Negotiation Committee (CNC)** – Finalizing the cost and terms of procurement.
- **Fixing Accountability & Reducing Delays:**
  - **Specific officials will be held responsible** for meeting deadlines.
  - Procurement bottlenecks will be **removed**, ensuring smoother and faster acquisitions.

### About Defence Acquisition Council;

- Highest decision-making body in the Ministry of Defence for procurement.
- **Chairman: Defence Minister**
- **Members: Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Chiefs of Army, Navy, and Air Force.**
- It was established in 2001, Post Kargil War.

### Source:

- [The Hindu - Defence Procurement](#)

## News in Shorts

### Tomb of Aurangzeb

- Recent events in **Nagpur** have brought renewed attention to the **tomb of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb**.

#### About Aurangzeb

- Aurangzeb Alamgir was the **sixth Mughal emperor**, ruling from **1658 to 1707**.
- His reign was the **longest of any Mughal ruler (49 years)** and marked both the empire's **greatest territorial expansion** and its **eventual decline**.
- He expanded the Mughal Empire to its **largest extent**, covering almost **all of present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of Afghanistan**.
- He reimposed **jizya tax** on non-Muslims (removed by Akbar).
- He introduced **Fatawa-e-Alamgiri**, a compilation of Islamic laws & Banned music and dance in court (unlike earlier Mughal rulers).



#### Aurangzeb's Burial in Maharashtra

- Aurangzeb ruled for **almost 50 years**, but in his final years, his empire was **collapsing** due to: **Agrarian crisis, Nobility deserting him & Maratha resistance** in the Deccan.
- He died during a **military campaign against the Marathas** in the Deccan at the age of **nearly 90**.
- His last wish was to be **buried in a simple tomb**, in line with **Islamic austerity**.
- His grave is located in the **dargah complex of Sheikh Zainuddin (14th-century Chishti Sufi saint)** in **Khuldabad, Maharashtra**.

#### Source:

- [Indian Express - Aurangzeb's Tomb](#)

### Merchant Discount Rate

- Recently the Union Cabinet approved a **₹1,500 crore incentive** scheme to promote low-value BHIM-UPI transactions.

#### Key Features of the Scheme

- Person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions up to ₹2,000 will be incentivized.
- Banks will receive an incentive of 0.15% per transaction** to encourage UPI adoption.
- Small merchants** will benefit as they pay **zero MDR**.
- Transactions above ₹2,000** will remain **MDR-free** but **will not receive incentives**.

#### What is Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)?

- MDR is a fee charged to merchants** for processing digital transactions.
- It is deducted from the transaction amount before the merchant receives payment.
- MDR covers the costs of banks, payment service providers, and digital payment platforms.
- It is also known as **Transaction Discount Rate (TDR)**.
- Who pays MDR ?**
  - Normally, merchants pay MDR for card-based and UPI transactions.
  - In the UPI framework, the government covers MDR for small transactions to promote digital payments.

**Source:**

- [TOI- MDR](#)

**Amrit Gyaan Kosh Portal**

- It serves as a centralized platform for governance case studies, highlighting **real-life, solution-oriented approaches** to administrative challenges.
- It aims to promote India-centric, scalable governance models to enhance public service delivery across various government departments and institutions.
- The Amrit Gyaan Kosh Portal is integrated with iGOT to ensure that Government officials can access governance case studies as part of their training curriculum.
- It is jointly developed by the **Capacity Building Commission and Karmayogi Bharat**.

**Source:**

- [PIB - AGKP](#)

**UpLink Initiative**

- **UpLink** is a **World Economic Forum (WEF) initiative** launched in **January 2020** to support **early-stage sustainability-focused innovators**.
- It serves as a **digital crowdsourcing platform** connecting entrepreneurs, investors and industry leaders to scale **innovative solutions** that address global environmental and social challenges.
- **UpLink primarily targets four major sustainability challenges:**
  - Climate Action & Carbon Reduction.
  - Nature & Biodiversity Conservation.
  - Water & Waste Management.
  - Circular Economy & Sustainable Supply Chains.

**Source:**

- [Down to Earth - UpLink Initiative](#)

**Sansad Bhashini Initiative**

- The **Lok Sabha Secretariat** and the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to develop the **Sansad Bhashini** initiative.

**About Sansad Bhashini**

- It aims to **modernize parliamentary operations** by leveraging **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and multilingual support** (through Bhashini) to streamline parliamentary operations.
  - **Bhashini** is an AI-powered language translation platform by **MeitY**.

**Key Features of the Sansad Bhashini Initiative**

- AI-driven tools will **translate parliamentary content** (debates, committee meetings, agenda files) into **multiple Indian languages in real time**.
- An **AI chatbot** will be developed to help MPs and officials **retrieve parliamentary rules, procedures, and documents** quickly.
- **Real-time transcription** of **parliamentary debates** into written text.
- **AI-Based Automatic Summarization** for lengthy **parliamentary debates**.

**Source:**

- [DD News - Sansad Bhashini](#)

**Warli Art**

- It is a traditional tribal art form. It originated with the **Warli tribe which resides in North**

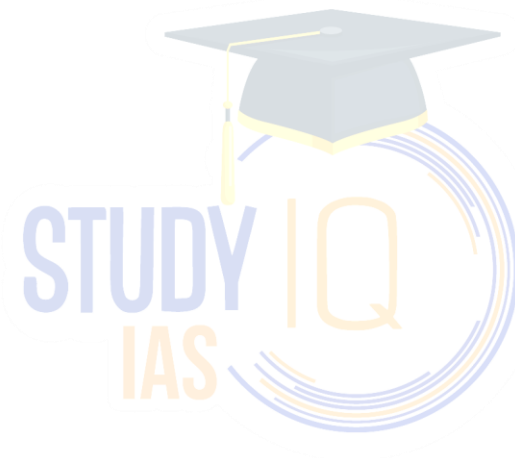
**Sahyadri Range of Maharashtra.**

- It uses basic geometric shapes—**circles, triangles and squares** to depict everyday village life, rituals, and nature, with scenes of hunting, fishing, farming, festivals and dances.
- Traditionally, the art was created on the walls of mud huts using natural pigments like **rice paste (for white) and mud-brown from the earth**.
- **Bamboo sticks** were used as paintbrushes, and the paintings were often created by women of the Warli tribe.



**Source:**

- [The Hindu - Warli Art](#)



## Editorial Summary

### The challenge of policing digital giants

#### Context

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) issued a landmark order, imposing a fine of ₹213.14 crore on Meta and mandating several behavioral remedies.

#### More in News

- The CCI's order found that the privacy policy update introduced by WhatsApp, Meta's subsidiary, in 2021 was deemed an abuse of its dominant position in the "Over-The-Top (OTT) messaging services for smartphones" and "Online Display advertising" markets in India.
- In turn, Meta filed an appeal with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) challenging the CCI's order.
- On January 23, 2025, the NCLAT granted a stay on the five-year ban from sharing user data and the imposed penalty.

#### Past Regulatory Action Against Google in India

- **Fine on Google (2022):** CCI fined Google ₹1,337.76 crore for abusing its dominant position in:
  - Licensable operating systems for smart mobile devices
  - App stores for Android devices
  - Non-OS-specific mobile web browsers
  - Online video hosting platforms
  - General web search services
- **Nature of Abuse:** Forced pre-installation of Google apps on Android devices.
- **NCLAT Ruling:** The penalty was upheld by NCLAT in 2023.

#### Role of Data in Market Dominance

- **Data as a Strategic Asset:** In the 21st-century digital economy, **data is the new oil** but with virtually limitless utility.
  - Unlike oil, data can be **collected, analyzed, and reused indefinitely**.
- **Competitive Advantage:** Data provides insights into consumer behavior, enabling platforms to:
  - Refine algorithms
  - Offer hyper-targeted advertising
  - Create personalized user experiences
- **Data-Driven Network Effects:** More users generate more data → Data improves service quality → Attracts more users → Competitive barriers for rivals.
  - Reinforces platform dominance, making it harder for smaller competitors to enter the market.
- **Lock-in Effect:** Once platforms accumulate enough data, switching costs increase for users.
  - **Example:** Meta's data-sharing across platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram) strengthens ecosystem dependence.
- **Market Entrenchment:** Data enables predictive modeling and product improvements, creating a self-reinforcing loop of market dominance.

#### Global Actions Against Tech Giants

Country/Region	Tech Giant	Violation/Issue	Action Taken	Outcome



United States	Meta	Antitrust violations over acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp	Litigation under antitrust laws	Case ongoing
	Google	Violation of Sherman Act (2024) due to exclusive agreements in search and advertising markets	US District Court found Google guilty	Awaiting final penalties
Europe	Meta (Facebook-Germany Case)	Combining user data from various platforms without user consent	Found guilty under EU competition law and GDPR	Forced to revise data-sharing practices
	Google	Anti-competitive practices in mobile operating systems, app markets, and advertising	Fined over €8 billion in three cases	Fines upheld
	Meta	Ad-supported subscription service under scrutiny for potential anti-competitive practices	Investigation ongoing	Awaiting outcome
Australia	Meta and Google	Market dominance in digital platforms and online advertising	Introduced regulations to curb dominance	Strengthened consumer protections
Historical Cases (U.S.)	AT&T	Monopoly in telecommunications market	Ordered to divest 22 operating companies	Broke up AT&T's monopoly
	Microsoft	Anti-competitive practices in the software market	Court-ordered oversight	Ensured API access for third-party developers and flexibility for PC manufacturers

### Challenges in India

- **Competition Act, 2002:** Lacks explicit provisions to address **data-centric monopolies**.
  - Current framework focuses on **price-based dominance**.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:** Regulates data collection, consent, and usage but it lacks coordination between CCI and the Data Protection Board of India.

### Suggestions for Improvement

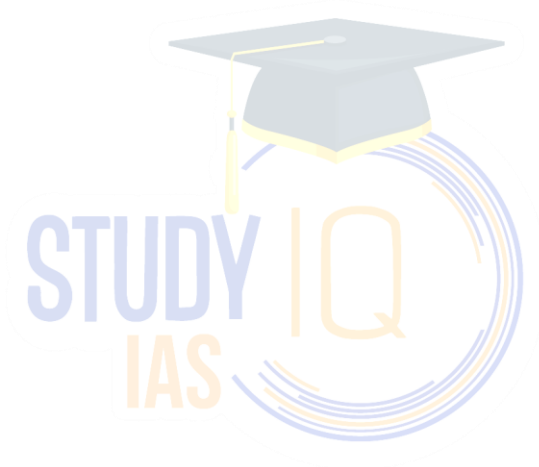
- Suggested Amendments to Competition Act:
  - Include "**data monopolization**" as a criterion for market dominance.
  - Redefine concepts like "**market power**" and "**dominant position**" to reflect data-driven dynamics.
  - Mandate interoperability and data-sharing agreements.

- Introduce separation of integrated services.
- Align competition law with data protection laws, similar to the EU's **DMA** (Digital Markets Act) and **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**.

#### Broader Economic and Regulatory Implications

- **Economic Survey 2024-25:** Highlighted India's rapid digital transformation.
  - Emphasized the role of **AI** in shaping India's economy.
- **Need for Future-Ready Regulatory Framework:** Regulatory frameworks must adapt to address:
  - Evolving market dynamics.
  - Data-driven dominance.
  - Emerging challenges from AI and big tech.

Source: [The Hindu: The challenge of policing digital giants](#)



## Should immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens?

### Context

While international law protects immigrants' right to protest, domestic legal frameworks and political considerations often override these protections.

### International Laws on Immigrants' Right to Protest

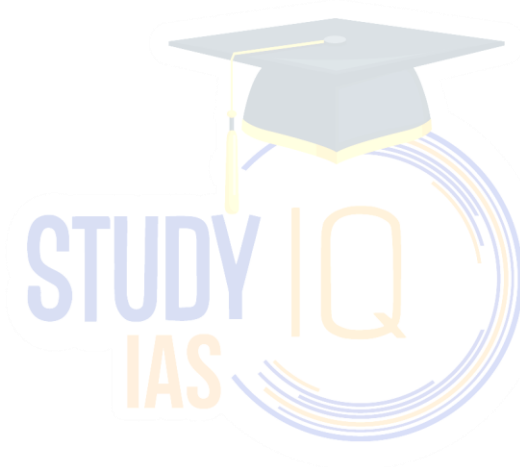
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):**
  - **Article 19:** Guarantees freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information.
    - Extends to **both citizens and non-citizens** without discrimination.
  - **Article 21:** Recognizes the right of peaceful assembly.
    - States may restrict this right for reasons of national security, public order, or public health.
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948:**
  - **Article 19:** Affirms the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
  - **Article 20:** Recognizes the right to peaceful assembly and association.
  - Although non-binding, the UDHR sets the moral and legal foundation for protecting protest rights globally.
- **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 1965:**
  - **Article 5:** Ensures the right to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and association without racial or national origin-based discrimination.
    - Applies to both citizens and immigrants.
- **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), 1950:**
  - **Article 10:** Guarantees freedom of expression.
  - **Article 11:** Recognizes the right to peaceful assembly, subject to national security, public safety, and order.
- **Refugee Convention, 1951:** Ensures that refugees are granted the same basic rights as citizens concerning freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.
  - Protects refugees from deportation unless they pose a threat to national security.

### Why Domestic Legal Frameworks and Political Considerations Limit This Right?

- **National Security Concerns:** States have the right to limit protests that could threaten national security under ICCPR Article 19(3).
  - Governments often classify protests supporting controversial or extremist ideologies as security threats.
  - **Example:** U.S. invoked the **Immigration and Nationality Act (1952)** to deport individuals supporting terrorist organizations.
- **Political Sensitivities:** Protests involving foreign policy issues (e.g., Israel-Palestine conflict) may lead to diplomatic fallout.
  - Political pressure from domestic and international allies can influence how governments respond to immigrant protests.
  - **Example:** Pro-Palestine protests in the U.S. faced crackdowns due to political ties with Israel.
- **Legal Status and Immigration Laws:** Immigrants' legal status (e.g., student visa, green card) affects their rights.
  - Non-citizens lack the constitutional protections and legal standing that citizens enjoy.
  - **Example:** Green card holders face fewer restrictions than student visa holders but more than naturalized citizens.

- **Domestic Legal Exceptions and Vague Laws:** Domestic laws often contain broad terms like “public order” and “national security,” allowing governments to restrict protests selectively.
  - **Example:** U.S. **Section 212(a)(3)(C)** of the Immigration and Nationality Act allows deportation based on "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences."
- **Political Framing and Executive Power:** Executive power over immigration judges allows political influence on deportation cases.
  - **Example:** Trump’s executive order on campus antisemitism influenced enforcement against pro-Palestine protesters.
- **Judicial Independence and Oversight:** Immigration cases often lack independent judicial oversight, leading to politically motivated rulings.
  - **Example:** U.S. immigration judges operate under the Department of Justice, where the Attorney General has removal authority.

Source: [The Hindu: Should immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens?](#)



## Multilateralism and International Law in Trump 2.0

### Context

The 'America First' mantra is defining U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, signaling a major shift for multilateralism and international law.

### More in News

- Since the beginning of Trump's second term, the U.S. has withdrawn from key multilateral institutions and agreements it once helped establish, including:
  - World Health Organization (WHO)
  - United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
  - Paris Climate Agreement
  - Sanctions imposed on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its officials.

### 'America First' and Its Impact on Multilateralism and International Law

- **DEFUND Act and Political Isolationism:** The **Disengaging Entirely from the United Nations Debacle (DEFUND) Act** was introduced.
  - If passed, the DEFUND Act would:
    - Repeal the **United Nations Participation Act of 1945** and the **United Nations Headquarters Agreement of 1947**.
    - Stop all U.S. financial contributions to the UN.
    - End U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping operations.
    - Revoke the functional immunity of UN officials in the U.S., hampering UN activities related to peacekeeping and human rights protection.
  - This would weaken multilateral cooperation and undermine the rules-based international order established post-World War II.
- **Sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC):** On **February 6**, Trump signed an **Executive Order** imposing sanctions on the ICC.
  - The ICC, based in **The Hague**, is the first permanent court for punishing individuals for crimes like:
    - Genocide
    - Crimes against humanity
    - War crimes
  - **Historical Context:** After World War II, the U.S. played a key role in setting up the **Nuremberg Tribunal** to hold individuals accountable for war crimes.

- **Nuremberg Tribunal:** It was the **first international military tribunal** to hold individuals accountable for crimes against humanity, setting a precedent for international criminal law.

- The U.S. has not ratified the **Rome Statute** that established the ICC.
- The Executive Order accused the ICC of “illegitimate and baseless actions” against the U.S. and **Israel**, undermining the court's credibility.
- **Economic Nationalism and Trade Protectionism:** The Trump administration's economic policies reflect a revival of economic nationalism, with aggressive tariffs imposed under the guise of national security.
  - **Historical Parallel:** Similar to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of the 1930s, which led to economic collapse and contributed to World War II.
    - **Post-War Recovery:** Led to the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947, which evolved into the World Trade Organization (WTO).
  - **Current Crisis:**

- The U.S. has blocked appointments to the WTO Appellate Body—crippling the WTO’s dispute resolution function.
- Threat of U.S. withdrawal from the WTO looms large.

### Consequences of U.S. Unilateralism

- Growing U.S. opposition to multilateralism threatens global political and economic cooperation.
- Weakening of international institutions like the UN, WTO, and ICC would harm:
  - **Global health efforts** (e.g., WHO)
  - **Environmental action** (e.g., Paris Climate Agreement)
  - **Accountability for human rights violations** (e.g., ICC)
  - **Economic stability** (e.g., WTO)
- Retaliation from other states could isolate the U.S. and weaken its global influence.
- The “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) vision could falter without multilateral cooperation.

### Role of Non-Western Nations (India's Opportunity)

- The weakening of U.S. leadership creates an opportunity for emerging powers like **India** to take on a more prominent role in global governance.
- India’s consistent support for multilateralism and international law reflects its readiness for leadership.
- At the **G-20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg (February 2025)**, Indian External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** called for:
  - An inclusive and multilateral approach to global challenges.
  - Reform of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** to reflect contemporary global realities.

Source: [The Hindu: The assault on multilateralism and international law](#)