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CONTENTS

1.	GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE	5
1.1	INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT	5
	• INTRODUCTION	5
	• INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)	5
	• SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)	5
	• ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT	6
	• CHALLENGES WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)	6
	• WAY FORWARD FOR THE ICC	7
1.2	THE FORMATION OF BRICS: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION	7
	• FORMATION OF BRICS	7
	• PROGRESS OF BRICS	7
	• CHALLENGES FACED BY BRICS	8
	• INTEREST IN JOINING BRICS	8
	• OPTIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS	8
1.3	BONN CLIMATE MEET	9
	• INTRODUCTION	9
	• OUTCOMES OF THE BONN CLIMATE SUMMIT	9
	• CHALLENGES IN CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS	12
	• WAY FORWARD	13
1.4	G7 SUMMIT IN ITALY	14
	• INTRODUCTION	14
	• WHAT IS THE G-7 GROUP?	14
	• ORIGIN OF THE G-7	14
	• SIGNIFICANCE OF THE G-7 GROUP	15
	• CHALLENGES FACED BY THE G-7 GROUP	15
	• SOME KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE RECENT G-7 GROUP SUMMIT	15
	• SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA'S ASSOCIATION WITH G-7 COUNTRIES	16
	• CHALLENGES WITH INDIA'S FURTHER DEEPENING OF ENGAGEMENT WITH G-7 COUNTRIES	16
	• WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE G-7	17
1.5	MIGRANT DEATHS IN KUWAIT	18
	• INTRODUCTION	18
	• SIGNIFICANCE OF MIGRANT WORKERS	19
	• CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIANS	19
	• INITIATIVES	20
	• WAY FORWARD	21
2.	INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (IGP)	23
2.1	LOW VOTER TURNOUT- A NEW TREND?	23
	• INTRODUCTION	23
	• SIGNIFICANCE OF ENHANCED VOTER TURNOUT	23
	• ISSUES REGARDING VOTER TURNOUT IN INDIA	24
	• WAY FORWARD	25
2.2	PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS– A CAKE HALF BAKED?	26
	• INTRODUCTION	26

• EVOLUTION OF PRIS IN INDIA	26
• PROVISIONS RELATED TO PRI	27
• FUNDING STATUS OF PRIS	27
• SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIS	28
• INITIATIVES TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN PRIS	28
• ISSUES FACED BY PRIS	29
• RECOMMENDATIONS TO REFORM PRIS	30
2.3 RBI SURPLUS TRANSFER TO GOVERNMENT	31
• INTRODUCTION	32
• SOURCES OF RBI SURPLUS	32
• EXPENDITURES OF RBI	32
• MECHANISM FOR TRANSFER OF SURPLUS BY RBI	32
• SURPLUS	32
• TRANSFER OF SURPLUS	32
• REASONS BEHIND THE INCREASE IN RBI SURPLUS	32
• SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RECORD RBI SURPLUS TRANSFER TO THE GOVERNMENT	33
• WAY FORWARD	33
2.4 SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS- THE DEMAND REIGNITES	34
• INTRODUCTION	34
• WHAT IS SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS?	34
• HISTORY OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	34
• FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR AWARDED SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	34
• ANDHRA PRADESH'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	35
• BIHAR'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	35
• BENEFITS OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	35
• CONCERNS WITH SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	36
• WAY FORWARD FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	36
• FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR ACCORDING SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS (ACCORDING TO GADGIL FORMULA)	36
• CHANGES BY THE 14TH FINANCE COMMISSION	37
• STATES RETAINING SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS	37
2.5 WOMEN MPS IN NEW PARLIAMENT: A DECLINE	37
• INTRODUCTION	38
• IMPORTANCE OF GREATER POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA	38
• REASONS FOR LOW POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA	38
• LEGISLATIVE MEASURES	39
• CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES	39
• INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS	40
• OTHER MEASURES AND INITIATIVES	40
• WAY FORWARD	40
2.6 THE HEAT AROUND THE SPEAKER	41
• INTRODUCTION	42
• SPEAKER PRO TEM	42
• SPEAKER OF LOK SABHA	42
• DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE LOK SABHA	43
• CHALLENGES WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE OFFICE OF SPEAKER OF LOK SABHA	43
• OBSERVATIONS ON ENSURING ROBUST FUNCTIONING OF THE OFFICE OF SPEAKER	44

•	WAY FORWARD	44
•	CONCLUSION	45
2.7	NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA): CLOUDS OF CONTROVERSY	45
•	INTRODUCTION	46
•	WHAT IS THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY	46
•	AIM	46
•	COMPOSITION	46
•	INTENTION BEHIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)	46
•	ISSUES WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)	46
•	WAY FORWARD FOR THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)	47
•	ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	47
3.	MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS	49
4.	SCHOLAR DIGEST: KNOW YOUR SCHOLARS	52
4.1	JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD AND HIS MAIN IDEAS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE	52
•	INTRODUCTION	52
•	INCREDULITY TOWARDS METANARRATIVES	52
•	CRITIQUE OF GRAND NARRATIVES	52
•	LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE	52
•	THE POSTMODERN CONDITION	53
•	IMPLICATIONS AND CRITICISMS	53
•	CONCLUSION	53
4.2	HANNAH ARENDT	54
•	INTRODUCTION	54
•	THE NATURE OF POWER	54
•	THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY	54
•	TOTALITARIANISM AND THE BANALITY OF EVIL	54
•	THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES	54
•	THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY AND THE HUMAN CONDITION	55
•	CONCLUSION	55
4.3	HANS JOACHIM MORGENTHAU	55
•	INTRODUCTION	55
•	EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION	55
•	MAJOR WORKS	56
4.4	JOHN RAWLS: A VISIONARY IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY	56
•	INTRODUCTION	56
•	THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE	57
•	PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE	57
•	REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM	57
•	POLITICAL LIBERALISM	57
•	CRITIQUES AND LEGACY	57
5.	ENRICH YOUR ANSWER	58
6.	PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS	62

GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global Centres of Power
- **GS2:** Important International Institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a pre-trial chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) received an application to issue arrest warrants against five individuals associated with the Gaza conflict. These individuals include Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif), and Ismail Haniyeh. The arrest warrants were sought on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the October 7 attack on Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza.

The ICC has played a crucial role in addressing grave international crimes through legal means over the years. However, it faces significant challenges in the effective implementation of its verdicts.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established by the Rome Statute in 1998 and is headquartered in the Netherlands. It builds on the legal precedents and jurisprudence of previous international courts, such as the ad hoc United Nations tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

Aim: The ICC aims to ensure legal redress for grave international crimes, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Jurisdiction: The Rome Statute grants the ICC jurisdiction over four main crimes:

1. **Crime of Genocide:** Acts committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.
2. **Crimes against Humanity:** Large-scale attacks against any civilian population.
3. **War Crimes:** Grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions in the context of armed conflict.
4. **Crime of Aggression:** The use of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, integrity, or independence of another state.

Relationship with the UN: The ICC is an independent organization and is not governed by the UN. It can receive referrals from the UN Security Council (UNSC) but can also initiate prosecutions independently of UN actions.

Funding: The ICC is funded by voluntary contributions from the UN, governments, international organizations, individuals, corporations, and other entities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

1. **Global Court of Last Resort for Human Rights Violations:** The ICC serves as the global court of last resort for addressing four major types of gross human rights violations: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. It intervenes when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute these crimes.
2. **Accountability for Atrocity:** The Rome Statute has established accountability for atrocity crimes as a fundamental aspect of the rule of

law. This ensures that perpetrators of grave crimes are held accountable, whether by national courts or the ICC.

3. **Global Reach and Impact:** The ratification of the Rome Statute by 123 states demonstrates a broad international commitment to upholding international justice.
4. **Emphasis on Victim's Rights:** The ICC places significant emphasis on the rights and welfare of victims, offering support through court-ordered reparations and victim assistance programs, such as the creation of a Trust Fund to provide financial help to victims.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

1. **Institution of Criminal Proceedings Against Heads of State:** Under international law, heads of state generally have immunity from criminal proceedings in foreign or international courts. However, this immunity does not apply at the ICC. For example, in 2023, the ICC issued an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin for his role in Russia's war with Ukraine.
2. **Exercise of Territorial Jurisdiction:** The ICC can exercise territorial jurisdiction to serve justice. This means that if a crime is committed on the territory of a state party to the ICC, the Court can prosecute the crime even if the perpetrators are from a non-member state. This principle has been applied in war crime cases against Russia and Israel, both of which are not ICC members.
3. **Convictions in Cases of War Crimes:** The ICC has heard 31 cases involving genocide and has convicted 10 individuals. The first conviction came in March 2012, when Thomas Lubanga Dyilo was found guilty of war crimes for using child soldiers in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

4. **Growing Deterrent Effect:** The presence of the ICC has shown signs of a growing deterrent effect. Some African states have cited the risk of prosecution by the ICC as a crucial factor in preventing large-scale violence during elections.

CHALLENGES WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

1. **Weak Track Record of Prosecution:** The ICC has struggled to successfully prosecute heads of state. The gap between issuing arrest warrants and actual prosecution is significant. For example, despite an arrest warrant issued in 2009 for former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, he has not been prosecuted.
2. **Dropping of Charges:** The ICC has, on several occasions, dropped charges even after issuing arrest warrants. For instance, charges against Simone Gbagbo, the former first lady of Ivory Coast, were dropped despite an initial arrest warrant.
3. **Selective Targeting:** The ICC has faced criticism for allegedly targeting leaders from third world countries disproportionately, while not pursuing Western powers and their allies with the same vigor.
4. **Lack of Effective Cooperation with the Security Council:** The ICC often lacks effective cooperation from the UN Security Council, which is crucial for implementing Security Council resolutions. For example, the UNSC's lack of support for the release of ICC staff detained in Libya highlights this challenge.
5. **Lack of Funding Support:** The Rome Statute and the relationship agreement between the ICC and the UN anticipate UN funding for costly investigations and prosecutions referred by the UN Security Council. However, resolutions like those concerning Sudan and Libya prohibit

UN funds from aiding the ICC, exacerbating financial difficulties.

6. **Pull-out of Member States:** The withdrawal of member states, such as Burundi in 2017 and the Philippines in 2019, has created a domino effect, encouraging other member states to consider pulling out and weakening the ICC's credibility.
7. **Non-Universality of the Rome Statute:** The ICC's membership is not universal, with 70 of the 193 UN member states not being ICC members. Notably, countries like China, India, and Saudi Arabia have never signed the Rome Statute. Additionally, three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—China, Russia, and the USA—actively seek to shield themselves from the Court's jurisdiction.
8. **Political Interference:** The ICC has faced accusations of political interference from member states in its governing body, and in the election of judges and the ICC's Prosecutor, compromising its independence and efficacy.

WAY FORWARD FOR THE ICC

1. **Universal Ratification of the Rome Statute:** Efforts should be made to encourage non-ICC

member states to ratify the Rome Statute. Civil society organizations and international bodies should advocate for universal ratification to strengthen the ICC's global legitimacy and authority.

2. **Ensuring Smooth Functioning by Member States:** ICC member states must commit to providing consistent financial support to the ICC and avoid political interference. This will help maintain the Court's independence and effectiveness in prosecuting international crimes.
3. **Maintaining Neutrality:** The ICC must demonstrate political neutrality and impartiality in its operations. For example, prosecuting leaders from both Israel and Hamas showcases the ICC's commitment to unbiased justice, enhancing its credibility as an impartial institution.
4. **Providing Necessary Manpower:** The ICC lacks its own enforcement mechanisms and relies on cooperation from member states for support. Adequate manpower, including law enforcement and investigative resources, should be provided to enable the ICC to effectively carry out its mandate.

THE FORMATION OF BRICS: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Evolution of the International Economic System
- **GS2:** Regional and global groupings

FORMATION OF BRICS

- ❑ **BRIC concept:** The concept of BRIC, a grouping of four emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), was proposed by Jim O'Neill.
- ❑ **IBSA formation:** Two components of BRIC (Brazil and India) formed IBSA with South Africa in 2003, excluding China.

- ❑ **China's inclusion:** China expressed interest in joining IBSA and managed to enlist South Africa's support. This led to the formation of BRICS, overshadowing IBSA.

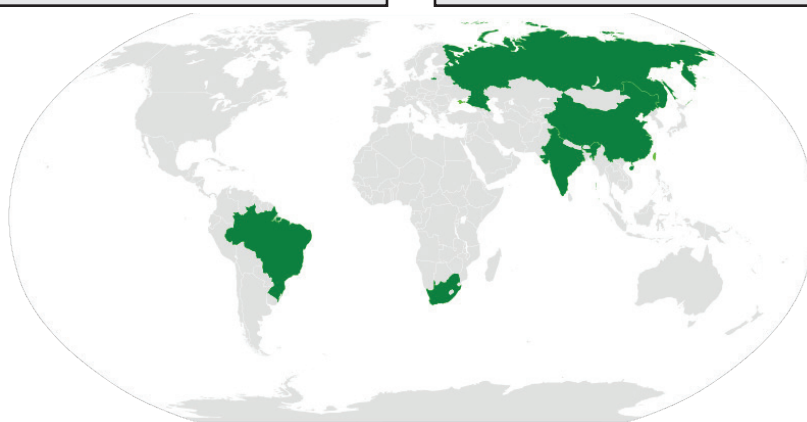
PROGRESS OF BRICS

- ❑ **Geopolitical and economic focus:** BRICS has focused on geopolitical and economic

dimensions, articulating a common view on global and regional issues and projecting a non-western perspective.

- ❑ Strengthening multipolarity: BRICS has contributed to the strengthening of multipolarity and reducing the dominating influence of the West.

- ❑ Economic initiatives: BRICS launched initiatives such as the New Development Bank, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), and a comprehensive program for trade and investment cooperation.



CHALLENGES FACED BY BRICS

- ❑ Lack of support in UN Security Council: China and Russia did not fully support other members' bids for UN Security Council membership, causing disappointment within the group.
- ❑ Imbalance due to China's rise: China's rapid economic growth and increased military assertiveness have disrupted the internal balance of BRICS.
- ❑ Russia-China cooperation: The consolidation of Russia-China cooperation after the Ukraine crisis, economic issues in South Africa, and Brazil's rightist policies have created new tensions within BRICS.
- ❑ Push for a common currency: China's push for a common currency for intra-BRICS trade has also raised concerns about the group's internal dynamics.

INTEREST IN JOINING BRICS

- ❑ Demand for membership: Nineteen countries have expressed eagerness to join BRICS, driven by the fear of missing out on membership in a

visible club and the desire to create a forum of the Global South.

- ❑ Anti-western sentiment: Many countries seek BRICS membership due to prevailing anti-western sentiments and the aspiration to establish a platform representing the Global South.

OPTIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS

- ❑ Mega expansion: One option is to expand BRICS membership from five to 21, surpassing the G-20.
- ❑ Limited admission: Another option is limited admission of 10 new members, with two each supported by an existing member.
- ❑ Admission of five new members: The third option involves admitting only five new members, with one each supported by an existing member. Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, UAE, and Bangladesh are potential candidates in this scenario.

The upcoming BRICS summit hosted by South Africa may address the expansion issue and decide on the criteria for new members.

BONN CLIMATE MEET

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Contemporary Global Concerns
- **GS2:** Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements



BONN CLIMATE MEET

INTRODUCTION

During the recent climate change negotiations in Bonn, Germany, delegates faced challenges in agreeing on a new climate finance target beyond the current \$100 billion annually pledged by developed countries to support developing nations by 2024. The negotiations, which aimed to establish specific financial targets ahead of COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, resulted in a detailed “input paper” rather than definitive figures. According to the 2015 Paris Agreement, developed countries must regularly increase their financial contributions above the \$100 billion annual target post-2025, reflecting the growing climate finance needs. The new financial target, referred to as the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), is anticipated to be set at the upcoming COP summit.

A UNFCCC report from last year highlighted that developing countries require approximately \$6 trillion by 2030 to meet their climate commitments. For adaptation efforts alone, they need between \$215 billion and \$387 billion annually. The report also emphasizes that global investments of around \$4.3 trillion per year are necessary until 2030 to transition to clean energy, with an additional \$5 trillion annually needed after 2050 to achieve global net-zero emissions.

OUTCOMES OF THE BONN CLIMATE SUMMIT

1. **Inadequate Progress on New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG):** The meeting made little progress on setting a new target for climate finance that developed countries must

provide to developing nations after 2024, with disagreements on the amount and contributing countries.

2. **Divergence on NCQG Amount:** There was a significant divergence on deciding the NCQG amount. Developing countries proposed annual figures of \$1.1-\$1.3 trillion, whereas developed nations did not present any specific financial offer.
3. **Trust Deficit:** The discussions underscored the ongoing lack of trust between developed and developing countries. Developing nations stressed that the Paris Agreement obligates developed countries to provide climate finance.
4. **Disagreements over Global Stocktake (GST) Dialogue:** The first annual dialogue after the GST at COP28 revealed disagreements. Developed nations demanded stronger emission reduction targets from all parties but avoided discussions on transitioning away from fossil fuels.
5. **Fossil Fuel Transition:** There are concerns that the important topic of transitioning away from fossil fuels may not receive adequate attention at COP29, which will take place in Azerbaijan, an oil-producing nation.
6. **Inadequacy of Loss and Damage Support:** Developing nations, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs), emphasized that current mechanisms to handle loss and damage from climate change impacts are insufficient.
7. **Deadlock on Mitigation Work Programme (MWP):** Negotiations on the MWP have stalled, with developing countries resisting additional pressures while developed countries are advocating for further discussions.
8. **Lack of Consensus on Article 6 (Market Mechanisms):** Although there were clarifications on some positions, no agreement was reached on the guidelines for market mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Why climate change negotiations are significant

1. **Global Cooperation:** These negotiations provide a platform for countries worldwide to come together and collectively address the pressing issue of climate change. They foster collaboration and joint efforts towards mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate impacts.
2. **Setting Targets and Commitments:** Negotiations establish targets for emissions reductions, adaptation measures, and financial support. For instance, the Paris Agreement set a framework for countries to set nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and long-term climate goals, guiding national policies and actions.
3. **Legal and Policy Frameworks:** Global agreements like the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement establish legal frameworks that enforce countries' specific commitments. These agreements promote transparency and accountability by enabling nations to monitor progress and ensure mutual responsibility in combating climate change.
4. **Financial Support:** Climate negotiations involve discussions on climate finance, where developed countries pledge financial assistance to developing countries for both mitigation (reducing emissions) and adaptation (building resilience). This financial support is crucial for vulnerable countries to cope with and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
5. **Technology Transfer:** They facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge between developed and developing countries to support sustainable development and enhance climate resilience. This transfer is essential for implementing effective climate solutions worldwide.
6. **Long-Term Goals:** Negotiations set long-term goals, such as achieving net-zero emissions or limiting global temperature rise to specific

thresholds (e.g., 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels). These goals provide a clear direction for global efforts and guide strategies towards achieving a sustainable future.

7. **Public Awareness and Engagement:** Climate negotiations raise public awareness about the urgency of climate action and the need for global solidarity. They mobilize civil society, businesses, and other stakeholders to support climate goals and advocate for ambitious climate policies.
8. **Addressing Equity and Justice:** Negotiations address fairness concerns by acknowledging historical responsibilities for emissions and vulnerabilities to climate impacts. They aim to achieve equitable sharing of responsibilities and benefits among nations and communities, promoting climate justice.
9. **Adaptive Governance:** They advocate for adaptive governance approaches that promote flexibility in policies and strategies. This adaptability helps nations respond to evolving scientific knowledge and changing climate conditions effectively.
10. **Accountability and Transparency:** Negotiations establish frameworks for monitoring, reporting, and verifying countries' actions and progress towards their climate commitments. This accountability promotes transparency and ensures that nations are taking meaningful steps to address climate change and fulfill their obligations.

The outcomes of the recently concluded Bonn climate meet highlighted several key issues and challenges

1. **Inadequate Progress on New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG):** There was little advancement in setting a new target for climate finance that developed countries are expected to provide to developing nations after 2024.

Disagreements persisted over the amount of funding and which countries should contribute.

2. **Divergence on NCQG Amount:** Developing countries proposed an annual figure between \$1.1 trillion and \$1.3 trillion for the NCQG, whereas developed nations did not commit to any specific financial offer, underscoring the disparity in expectations.
3. **Trust Deficit:** Discussions underscored the ongoing lack of trust between developed and developing countries. Developing nations reiterated that the Paris Agreement obligates developed countries to provide climate finance, highlighting unresolved issues of trust and accountability.
4. **Disagreements over Global Stocktake (GST) Dialogue:** The first annual dialogue post-Global Stocktake at COP28 revealed disagreements. Developed countries called for stronger emission reduction targets across all parties but avoided substantive discussions on transitioning away from fossil fuels.
5. **Fossil Fuel Transition Concerns:** With COP29 scheduled in Azerbaijan, an oil-producing nation, concerns arose about whether adequate attention would be given to transitioning away from fossil fuels, a critical aspect of global climate action.
6. **Inadequacy of Loss and Damage Support:** Developing nations, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs), emphasized that existing mechanisms to address loss and damage from climate change impacts are inadequate and need substantial improvement.
7. **Deadlock on Mitigation Work Programme (MWP):** Negotiations on the Mitigation Work Programme stalled as developing countries resisted additional pressures while developed countries advocated for further discussions, reflecting ongoing challenges in finding common ground.

8. Lack of Consensus on Article 6 (Market Mechanisms): Although there were clarifications on some positions, there was no agreement on the guidelines for market mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, highlighting continued disagreements on key operational aspects.

CHALLENGES IN CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

1. Conflicting National Interests: Countries have diverse economic, political, and developmental priorities that often conflict with climate action goals. Balancing these interests while fostering collective action is challenging.
2. Equity and Burden-Sharing: Determining fair and equitable distribution of responsibilities for climate action, particularly between developed and developing nations, remains contentious. Disagreements over historical responsibilities and capacities hinder progress.
3. Finance and Funding Issues:
 - a. Insufficient Funding Levels: Developed countries' financial contributions for climate action in developing nations are inadequate to meet the ambitious goals set by agreements like the Paris Agreement.
 - b. Lack of Predictability and Stability: Developing countries face challenges in planning and executing long-term climate projects due to unpredictable and fluctuating funding.
 - c. Balancing Adaptation and Mitigation: There is a disparity in funding allocation between adaptation (building resilience to climate impacts) and mitigation (reducing emissions).
 - d. Private Sector Engagement: Mobilizing private finance for climate projects is difficult due to perceived risks, insufficient

incentives, and challenges in aligning private sector goals with climate objectives.

- e. Debt Sustainability Concerns: Climate finance instruments like loans can increase debt burdens in developing countries.
4. Technology Transfer: Facilitating the transfer of clean technologies to developing countries on favorable terms faces hurdles such as intellectual property rights, market barriers, and capacity limitations.
5. Emissions Targets and Commitments: Setting ambitious yet achievable emission reduction targets and ensuring countries adhere to their commitments is challenging, often due to concerns about economic competitiveness and growth.
6. Inclusion and Participation: Ensuring meaningful inclusion of diverse stakeholders, including civil society, indigenous communities, and marginalized groups, in the negotiation process remains challenging.
7. Scientific Uncertainty: Despite scientific consensus, skepticism about climate science in some quarters complicates efforts to reach agreements and take decisive action.
8. Implementation and Compliance: Ensuring effective implementation and compliance with agreed-upon measures by all parties is difficult due to varying levels of political will, resource constraints, and enforcement mechanisms.
9. Complexity and Scope: Climate change spans multiple sectors such as energy, agriculture, and transportation, making negotiations complex and comprehensive.
10. Geopolitical Tensions: Geopolitical rivalries, trade disputes, and shifting global power dynamics can influence climate change negotiations and hinder international cooperation.

WAY FORWARD

- 1. Enhance Transparency and Trust:** Increase transparency in reporting emissions and climate actions during negotiations to build trust among parties.
 - 2. Strengthen Scientific Collaboration:** Promote cooperation among scientific communities and include more experts in negotiations to provide reliable data and minimize uncertainties.
 - 3. Prioritize Adaptation and Loss and Damage:** Give greater focus to adaptation strategies and address the loss and damage experienced by vulnerable nations due to climate change effects.
 - 4. Promote Climate Justice and Equity:** Address equity concerns by recognizing historical emissions responsibilities and supporting vulnerable groups in decision-making processes.
 - 5. Facilitate Technology Transfer and Capacity Building:** Ensure developed nations fulfill commitments to transfer climate-friendly technologies and assist in building capacities in developing nations.
 - 6. Explore Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Promote innovative financing mechanisms like carbon pricing, green bonds, and public-private partnerships to supplement traditional financing channels.
 - 7. Encourage Inclusive Participation:** Include all stakeholders—civil society, indigenous communities, marginalized groups—in negotiations to increase support for climate policies and actions.
 - 8. Promote Sectoral Approaches:** Focus on sector-specific approaches (energy, agriculture, transportation) to address climate challenges and identify targeted solutions.
 - 9. Enhance Compliance and Accountability:** Propose mechanisms to enhance compliance with commitments and use incentives or penalties to motivate countries to fulfill their obligations.
 - 10. Foster Regional and Sub-national Cooperation:** Encourage regional and sub-national cooperation alongside global negotiations to address local climate challenges and share best practices.
 - 11. Navigate Geopolitical Tensions:** Acknowledge and manage the impact of geopolitical tensions and power dynamics on climate negotiations to foster consensus and cooperation.
- Implementing these strategies can contribute to more effective and productive climate change negotiations, facilitating meaningful global action to address the challenges of climate change.

G7 SUMMIT IN ITALY

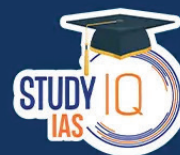
RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** India and the Global Centres of Power
- **GS2:** Regional and global groupings



G7 SUMMIT 2024



INTRODUCTION

The Prime Minister of India attended the 50th G7 Summit, held from June 13 to 15, 2024. Although India is not a G7 member, it participated as a guest in the 2019, 2021, and 2022 summits, invited by France, the UK, and Germany, respectively. This participation highlights India's growing global importance and its recognition as a key economic and geopolitical player. India's involvement with the G7 brings both benefits and challenges.

WHAT IS THE G-7 GROUP?

The G-7, or Group of Seven, is an organization consisting of the world's most developed and advanced economies. Its members include France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, and Canada. The group holds annual

summits, which are hosted on a rotational basis by its members.

ORIGIN OF THE G-7

- ❑ **Oil Crisis and Financial Turmoil:** The G-7 was established in response to the 1973 oil crisis and the ensuing financial crisis, prompting leaders from six major industrial nations to meet in 1975.
- ❑ **Initial Members:** The original participants were the US, UK, France, West Germany, Japan, and Italy. Canada joined in 1976, forming the G-7.
- ❑ **G8 Period:** Russia joined the group in 1997, leading to the G-7 being known as the G8. However, it reverted to G-7 in 2014 after Russia was expelled following its annexation of Crimea.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE G-7 GROUP

1. **Grouping of Advanced Economies:** The G-7 countries collectively control 60% of global net wealth and generate 46% of the world's GDP, while representing 10% of the global population.
2. **Facilitates Dialogue:** The G-7 provides a platform for open and candid discussions on critical global issues, allowing members to understand different perspectives and build consensus.
3. **Forges Collective Action:** The group aims to develop coordinated political responses to global challenges, such as trade agreements, security threats, and climate change initiatives.
4. **Innovations in Governance:** Initiatives like the "Hiroshima AI Process" demonstrate the G-7's commitment to addressing emerging technological challenges.
5. **Global Crisis Response:** The G-7 has coordinated actions for global economic recoveries, health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical conflicts, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE G-7 GROUP

1. **Lack of Representation in Current Times:** Originally, the G-7 accounted for two-thirds of global GDP. Today, it accounts for only one-third on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis and less than 50% on a nominal basis (market prices). Major emerging economies like India, China, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and Turkey (E7) are not part of the G-7, which limits its representation of the global economy.
2. **Failure to Address Global Issues:** The G-7 has been criticized for its inadequate response to significant global challenges, including climate change, terrorism, the West Asian crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. **Historical Polluters:** The G-7 countries are responsible for 59% of historical CO2 emissions and have pledged to phase out fossil fuels. However, there has been little progress, and the G-7 currently emits twice the amount of CO2 as the entire African continent.
4. **Trade Conflicts:** Trade disputes among G-7 members and with other nations disrupt global economic stability. The weakening of the rules-based trade regime through the WTO and the rise of trade wars involve active participation from G-7 countries.
5. **Rise of Populism and Nationalism:** The increasing influence of populist and nationalist movements within G-7 countries challenges multilateral cooperation and the group's commitment to globalism and liberal democratic values.

SOME KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE RECENT G-7 GROUP SUMMIT

1. **Promotion of G7 PGII (Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment):** The G7 committed to mobilizing USD 600 billion by 2027 to fund infrastructure projects in developing and middle-income countries.
2. **Support and Promotion of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** The G7 pledged to support and promote the IMEC, which is also part of the PGII initiative.
3. **Support for Infrastructure Projects:** The G7 extended support for the development of the Lobito Corridor in Central Africa, the Luzon Corridor, and the Middle Corridor.
4. **Enhancing Interoperability of AI Governance:** The G7 countries aim to improve the interoperability of their AI governance frameworks to foster greater certainty, transparency, and accountability.
5. **Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loans for Ukraine:** The G7 countries agreed to provide approximately USD 50 billion in

additional funding to Ukraine by the end of 2024.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA'S ASSOCIATION WITH G-7 COUNTRIES

1. **India's Economic Significance:** As one of the fastest-growing economies globally, according to the IMF, India has an economy larger than those of four G-7 members—France, Italy, the UK, and Canada. Its abundant young and skilled workforce, coupled with market potential, low manufacturing costs, and a favorable business climate, make India an attractive investment destination.
2. **Growing Strategic Importance in the Indo-Pacific:** India has become a key strategic partner for Western G-7 countries, playing a crucial role in countering China's growing influence, especially in the Indian Ocean region.
3. **Role in Addressing the European Energy Crisis:** India's ability to secure discounted Russian oil and supply refined fuels to Europe positions it as a significant player in mitigating the European energy crisis.
4. **Potential for Mediating the Russia-Ukraine Conflict:** Due to its long-standing relationships with both Russia and Western countries, India holds potential as a mediator in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
5. **Regulation of AI:** India actively participates in global discussions on AI regulation. With the G-7's focus on this issue, India's collaboration with these countries can contribute to developing a common global framework for AI regulation.



CHALLENGES WITH INDIA'S FURTHER DEEPENING OF ENGAGEMENT WITH G-7 COUNTRIES

1. **Escalating Conflict in Europe:** The ongoing conflict in Europe poses a challenge for India.

This is evident from the Indian Prime Minister's decision to abstain from the Ukraine peace conference in Switzerland following the G-7 summit, highlighting India's difficulty in navigating the conflict's consequences.

2. **Defence Dependence on Russia:** India's heavy reliance on Russia for over 60% of its military equipment complicates its position. The strained relationship between the West and Russia could disrupt these supply chains, compelling India to seek diversified defense partnerships.
3. **Economic Interdependence:** India's deep economic ties with both the US and China present a challenge in balancing its trade relations. The competing interests of these two major economies make it difficult for India to maintain an impartial stance.
4. **Geopolitical Rivalry:** The increased competition between the US and China in the Indian Ocean region pressures India to take sides on issues that may not align with its national interests, complicating its strategic choices.
5. **Non-Inclusion as a Permanent Member:** The G-7's outdated membership structure does not include emerging economies like India. This exclusion limits India's influence within the group and presents a challenge to its deeper engagement with G-7 countries.

WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE G-7

India's evolving relationship with the G-7 highlights its growing significance in global economic and strategic affairs. The synergies between India and G-7 nations, rooted in shared values and mutual interests, offer vast opportunities for collaborative growth. As India continues to ascend on the global stage, its partnership with the G-7 will be crucial in shaping a balanced and inclusive world order. The following steps should be taken to strengthen this relationship:

1. **Deepening Economic Ties:**
 - **Investment Promotion:** Encourage investment in key sectors such as renewable energy, technology, and infrastructure.

- **Trade Liberalization:** Enhance efforts to liberalize trade, making it easier for businesses from India and G-7 countries to operate and invest in each other's markets.
2. **Strategic Collaborations:**
 - **Defense Cooperation:** Strengthen defense ties through joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and technology transfers.
 - **Security Partnerships:** Collaborate on addressing common security challenges, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.
 3. **Multilateral Engagement:**
 - **Active Participation:** India should actively participate in G-7 forums to influence and shape inclusive global governance frameworks.
 - **Climate Action:** Collaborate on climate action initiatives, focusing on sustainable development and the promotion of green technologies, to set benchmarks for global environmental policies.
 4. **Technological Innovation:**
 - **Digital Infrastructure:** Work together on developing robust digital infrastructure and enhancing cybersecurity measures.
 - **Artificial Intelligence:** Engage in joint efforts to regulate and advance artificial intelligence technologies.
 - **Research Initiatives:** Foster joint research initiatives in fields such as biotechnology, space exploration, and renewable energy to drive innovation and technological advancements.

By following these steps, India and the G-7 can strengthen their partnership, contributing to global stability and progress while ensuring a balanced and inclusive world order.

MIGRANT DEATHS IN KUWAIT

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Indian Diaspora
- **GS2:** Indian Diaspora



INTRODUCTION

The recent tragedy where more than 40 Indian migrant workers died in a fire in Kuwait has once again drawn attention to the unsafe living conditions and poor safety standards faced by Indian migrants in Gulf countries. Similar incidents, like the harsh working conditions during Qatar's World Cup preparations, rapid development for the Dubai Expo, and the impact of COVID-19 on migrants in Saudi Arabia, highlight the urgent need for action from the Indian government.

Status of Migrant Workers

1. Indian Diaspora in GCC Nations - According to the Ministry of External Affairs, approximately 8.88 million NRIs reside in six Gulf countries. Specifically, there are 3.41 million NRIs in the United Arab Emirates, 2.59 million in Saudi Arabia, 1.02 million in Kuwait, 0.74 million in

Qatar, 0.77 million in Oman, and 0.32 million in Bahrain. Indians constitute the largest expatriate community in the GCC nations, making up about 30% of the total expatriate workforce in the region.

2. State-wise Trend of Migrating Workforce - The Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) 2023 estimates that 2.2 million people from Kerala have migrated, with 80% residing in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Recently, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have started replacing Kerala as significant contributors of the blue-collar workforce from India to the GCC region, as highlighted by the UAE-based organization, Huntr.
3. Profile of the Migrating Workforce: A) Age - Most workers migrating to GCC countries are aged between 20 and 40 years, considered the

prime working age. B) Gender - Historically dominated by men, there is now increased participation of women, particularly in sectors like hospitality, according to the Huntr report. C) Education - The educational backgrounds of migrant workers vary widely, ranging from minimal formal schooling to vocational training and job-specific skills. Many originate from low-income families seeking improved financial opportunities in Gulf countries.

4. Job Composition - Approximately 70% of Indian migrants in the GCC are employed in blue-collar roles, which include low or semi-skilled work.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MIGRANT WORKERS

1. For India:

- (A) Economic Contribution - Remittances from Indians working in the Gulf countries constitute a significant portion of India's foreign exchange earnings. These remittances contribute more than a quarter of the total annual remittances from the Indian diaspora, providing crucial support to India's economy.
- (B) Skill Development - Working in Gulf countries allows Indian migrants to acquire new skills and gain valuable work experience. Upon returning to India, these workers bring back enhanced skills and knowledge that can benefit various sectors of the Indian economy, contributing to overall skill development.
- (C) Enhance India's Soft Power - The large Indian diaspora in Gulf countries strengthens India's diplomatic ties and trade relations with these nations. The diaspora acts as a cultural bridge, promoting cultural exchange, facilitating investments, and fostering business partnerships between India and the Gulf region.

2. For Gulf Countries:

- (A) Labor Supply - Indian migrant workers play a crucial role in filling labor gaps across various sectors of Gulf economies, including construction, infrastructure, healthcare, hospitality, and domestic services. For example, in Kuwait, Indian workers constitute a significant portion of the country's workforce, addressing labor shortages.
- (B) Diversity and Multiculturalism - The presence of Indian migrant workers enriches the cultural diversity of Gulf countries. They bring diverse customs, traditions, languages, and cuisine, contributing to the multicultural fabric of Gulf societies.
- (C) Economic Growth - Indian migrant workers contribute to the economic growth of Gulf countries by supporting key industries, generating employment opportunities for locals, and increasing consumer spending. Their contributions help boost economic development and stability in the region.

CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIANS

1. Exploitative Labor Practices - Indian workers in Gulf countries, especially those in low-skilled or unskilled sectors, often face exploitative practices such as withheld wages, poor working conditions, and disregard for labor rights by employers.
2. Recruitment Malpractices - Migrants encounter unfair recruitment practices, including excessive fees charged by agents and the substitution of contracts with altered terms upon arrival. Additionally, there is a risk of passport confiscation by employers or sponsors, further compromising the workers' rights.

3. **Legal and Visa Issues** - Concerns related to visas, work permits, and legal status expose Indian migrants to the threat of deportation or exploitation. The kafala system prevalent in some Gulf countries ties workers to their employers, limiting their mobility and ability to seek better living and working conditions.
4. **Poor Living Conditions** - Many Indian migrant workers reside in overcrowded and substandard accommodations, which adversely affect their health and well-being. For instance, the recent fire in a labor camp in Kuwait highlighted issues such as overcrowding and inadequate safety measures like fire exits and firefighting equipment.
5. **Lack of Data and Invisibility** - There is a significant lack of comprehensive data on migrant workers, both in their countries of origin and destination. This lack of data complicates efforts to address their issues effectively. In Qatar, for example, inconsistent data across various agencies contributes to the invisibility of migrant workers, particularly those in low-wage jobs, hindering efforts to safeguard their rights and well-being.
6. **Legal Frameworks and Redressal Mechanisms** - The complexity and extended duration of legal procedures, coupled with high associated costs and the absence of legal aid and interpreters, exacerbate the challenges faced by vulnerable Indian migrant workers seeking justice and protection.
7. **Language and Cultural Barriers** - Indian migrants often encounter difficulties due to language barriers and cultural differences, which hinder effective communication and integration into local communities. These barriers contribute to social isolation and make it challenging for migrants to access support networks and essential services.
8. **Discrimination and Racism** - Indian migrant workers frequently face discrimination and

racism, both in the workplace and in broader society. This discriminatory treatment can impact their living conditions, job opportunities, and overall well-being, creating barriers to their integration and advancement in the host country.

9. **Mental Health Issues** - The stress and hardships associated with migration, coupled with the challenges of living and working abroad, contribute to mental health issues among Indian migrants. Common issues include anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation, which are exacerbated by the lack of adequate mental health support services in their host countries.
10. **Strain in Family Relationships** - Strict sponsorship rules and costly family reunion processes force Indian migrants to endure prolonged separations from their families. This separation places strain on family relationships and can lead to emotional distress for both migrants and their families. Additionally, the financial burden of remittances, which many migrants feel compelled to send home, further strains their finances and makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and economic hardship.

INITIATIVES

1. **Emigration Act:** Enacted in 1983, this Act provides the legal framework to regulate the emigration of Indian workers. It mandates that recruitment agencies must register and follow regulations on emigration procedures.
2. **E-Migrate System:** An online platform that facilitates skilled and semi-skilled workers to obtain emigration clearances and track their immigration status. It aims to prevent exploitation by recruiting agents and unregistered subagents.
3. **Labor Mobility Partnerships:** India has entered into labor agreements and Memorandums of

Understanding (MoUs) with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, focusing on employment contracts, model labor policies, and worker rights.

4. **Pre-Departure Orientation Programs (PDOS):** These programs are designed to enhance the soft skills of Indian migrant workers, particularly those heading to the Gulf region and Malaysia. They provide training on understanding local culture, language, traditions, and laws of the destination country.
5. **Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF):** Established to provide emergency financial support to distressed Indian workers abroad. It covers expenses such as repatriation, legal assistance, accommodation in shelters, and medical aid.
6. **Indian Workers Resource Centres (IWRC):** Centres set up in Dubai and approved in other locations like Sharjah (UAE), Riyadh and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). IWRCs offer guidance, counseling, and support on all matters concerning overseas Indian workers.
7. **Awareness Campaigns:** Initiatives like 'Surakshit Jaaye Prasikshit Jaaye' (Go Safe, Go Trained) have been launched to promote safe and legal migration among Indian workers, emphasizing the importance of preparedness and awareness.

WAY FORWARD

1. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** India should prioritize finalizing and implementing the draft Emigration Bill 2023 to establish a robust legal framework safeguarding migrant workers' rights.
2. **Regulation of Recruitment Agents:** Strict monitoring and regulation of recruitment agents in India are essential to prevent exploitation such as excessive fees and contract

violations. Mandatory registration with the eMigrate system should be enforced for all migrant workers.

3. **Robust Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** Expand initiatives like the MADAD portal to enable migrant workers to easily file and resolve complaints regarding their employment and living conditions.
4. **Enhancing Diplomatic Efforts:** Engage in bilateral dialogues with Gulf countries to advocate for Indian migrant workers' rights. Push for reforms in systems like the Kafala sponsorship system through bilateral agreements and diplomatic negotiations.
5. **Leveraging Global Platforms for Advocacy:**
 - Utilize sessions at the United Nations Human Rights Council to raise awareness about the challenges faced by migrant workers and advocate for international standards of labor rights.
 - Reference international agreements such as the UN Human Rights Convention and ILO's Declaration on Workers' Rights to bolster arguments for better protection and rights for Indian migrant workers.
6. **Enhancing Welfare Measures:** Increase budget allocations for the Indian Community Welfare Fund to provide enhanced emergency assistance to distressed workers. Expand the network of Indian Workers Resource Centers in Gulf countries to offer comprehensive support services.
7. **Promoting Skill Development:** Offer skill training and certification programs for prospective migrant workers to improve their employability and access to skilled job opportunities abroad.
8. **Promoting Financial Literacy:** Provide migrant workers with financial literacy programs to help them manage their finances effectively, avoid debt traps, and make informed decisions about remittances and investments.

9. Promoting Social Integration: Launch initiatives promoting social integration between migrant workers and local communities. This includes language and cultural training programs, community outreach activities, and recreational events.

10. Encouraging Family Reunification: Streamline visa processes and reduce financial barriers to facilitate easier family reunification for migrant workers in Gulf countries, enabling them to bring their families to join them.



The advertisement features a dark blue background with a grid of white dots in the top left corner. In the top right, there is a logo for 'STUDY IQ IAS' featuring a graduation cap. The main title 'PSIR' is in large white letters, followed by 'Political Science and International Relations' in smaller white text. Below this, a yellow banner reads 'Optional for UPSC'. A large blue speech bubble contains the text 'SPECIAL DISCOUNT 40% OFF' and the price reduction from '₹30,000' to '₹18,000'. To the right of the speech bubble, three circular icons represent '400+ Hours Live Classes' (a person at a screen), 'Test Series (12 Tests)' (a document with 'TEST' and a pencil), and 'PSIR Starter Kit' (a stack of books). A white button with yellow text says 'ENROLL NOW'. At the bottom left, the name 'Shashank Tyagi' is written in large white letters, with 'Senior Faculty, PSIR' below it in yellow. On the bottom right is a portrait of a smiling man with a beard, wearing a grey suit and a green tie.

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Senior Faculty, PSIR

INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (IGP)

LOW VOTER TURNOUT- A NEW TREND?

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- PSIR: trends in electoral behavior



INTRODUCTION

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has faced criticism for delays in uploading final voter turnout data, raising concerns about low voter participation during the ongoing Lok Sabha Elections.

A petition filed by the NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has prompted a 3-Judge Supreme Court (SC) bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud to address discrepancies in voter turnout data. The petition urges the SC to direct the ECI to publish polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours after each phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

Moreover, there has been a notable decline in voter turnout across several states compared to the 2019 and 2014 elections. For instance, Assam has seen a drop from 85.3% in 2019 to 74.6% in 2024. This decline underscores concerns about voter engagement in the world's largest democracy, necessitating further analysis of contributing factors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ENHANCED VOTER TURNOUT

1. Greater Legitimacy and Mandate for Government: A surge in voter turnout indicates broad support for the elected government, enhancing its legitimacy and mandate.

2. **Increased Accountability and Representation:** Higher voter turnout encourages politicians to be more accountable to their constituents and fosters a more representative government that reflects the diverse electorate.
3. **Promotion of Democratic Health and Civic Education:** High and transparent voter turnout reflects a robust democracy with strong civic norms and institutions, promoting civic engagement and education among citizens.
4. **Social Cohesion:** Low voter participation can exacerbate feelings of alienation and division within society, undermining social cohesion and national unity.

ISSUES REGARDING VOTER TURNOUT IN INDIA

1. Lack of Transparency in Voter Turnout Calculation and Publication

Having accurate data is crucial for determining the actual voter turnout and identifying trends over time to address voter issues effectively.

The recent controversy surrounding discrepancies in the calculation and release of voter turnout data has faced criticism from opposition parties and civil society. Here's a breakdown of the issue:

a. Delay and Discrepancy in Initial and Final Turnout Figures

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has faced criticism for delays in publishing final voter turnout percentages. The final figures were released 11 days after the first phase of polling on April 19 and four days after the second phase on April 26.

Initially, the provisional polling percentages released by the ECI were around 60% for the first phase and 60.96% for the second phase. However, the final figures showed a significant increase, with 66.14% for the first phase and 66.71% for the second phase.

b. Non-Disclosure of Absolute Number of Votes Polled

Political parties have raised concerns about the ECI not disclosing the exact voter turnout data for each polling station, as recorded in Form 17C. Some candidates have also reported delays in receiving Form 17C from the returning officer.

According to the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, the ECI maintains two forms containing data on electors and votes polled: Forms 17A and 17C.

- ❑ Form 17A records details of voters who cast their votes at polling booths.
- ❑ Form 17C documents all actual votes recorded, including the total number of voters, those who chose not to vote after registering, and those who were unable to vote.

Part I of Form 17C includes essential information such as the identification numbers of EVMs, the total number of test votes and votes recorded per EVM, and the total number of assigned electors.

Part II of Form 17C contains the results of the counting conducted on the designated day.

Candidates use Form 17C data to verify election results on the counting day by cross-referencing it with EVM counts. Any discrepancies can lead to election petitions being filed in the relevant High Court.

2. Decreasing Voter Turnout:

Voter turnout is witnessing a decline in both rural and urban regions, attributed to several factors:

- a. **Urban Voter Apathy:** Urban areas, including parliamentary constituencies in cities like Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, and Lucknow, reflect a growing trend of apathy towards voting.
- b. **Missing Voter Slips:** Numerous voters have reported instances of their names being deleted from electoral rolls, along with delays in receiving voter slips, thereby hampering their ability to vote.
- c. **Impact of Heat on Voter Turnout:** The scorching heat experienced during April

and May has adversely affected voter participation, particularly in rural areas, where individuals are deterred from undertaking long journeys to polling stations due to the heat.

Steps taken by the Election Commission to address issues with Voter Turnout:

1. Transparency in Voter Turnout Calculation and Publication:

- ❑ Mandatory sharing of Form 17C: Presiding officers share copies of Form 17C with polling agents as per Rule 49S(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961. This ensures that candidates possess precise voter turnout data in absolute numbers before it is officially released by the ECI.

2. Increasing Voter Turnout:

Addressing Voter Apathy:

- a. Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program: The ECI initiated the SVEEP program in 2010 to educate voters about the significance of voting.
- b. Turnout Implementation Plan (TIP): Targeted interventions are implemented under the TIP to encourage participation in constituencies with low turnout.
- c. Revision of electoral rolls: ECI conducts regular revisions of electoral rolls to eliminate duplicate and ineligible entries and include new eligible voters.

3. Heat Wave Impact:

- a. Task Force Creation: ECI established a task force comprising officials from IMD, NDMA, and MoHFW to assess the impact of heat waves and humidity.
- b. Health Authority Instructions: ECI instructed the MoHFW to prepare state

health authorities for providing assistance during heat wave conditions affecting election operations.

- c. Enhanced facilities at Polling Stations: ECI arranged shelters, drinking water, and fans at polling stations to alleviate the impact of heat on voters.

WAY FORWARD

1. Online Publication of absolute voting data by ECI: ECI should adopt a transparent approach by publishing absolute voting data based on Form 17C on its website. While concerns about confusion and misuse exist, transparency is crucial, especially for smaller political parties with limited resources for polling agents.
2. Ready availability of Form 17C: ECI needs to address delays in providing Form 17C data by the returning officers to ensure timely access to accurate information.
3. Rescheduling of Elections: ECI should consider rescheduling elections to cooler months to mitigate the impact of extreme heat on voter participation, thereby enhancing overall turnout.
4. Enhancement of On-site Facilities: There should be a focus on expanding facilities such as shelters, fans, and water provision at all polling stations to improve voter comfort and accommodate staff during hot weather conditions.
5. Collaborative Task Force Review: ECI should continue and strengthen the collaborative task force responsible for reviewing weather impacts before each polling phase. This will ensure timely and effective response measures to address challenges arising from weather conditions.

PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS– A CAKE HALF BAKED?

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Grassroots Democracy
- **GS2:** Devolution of Powers



INTRODUCTION

A recent World Bank report advocates for increasing the power and financial capacity of Panchayats to address the centralization effects of online payment systems and digital beneficiary tracking. The report highlights that strengthening Panchayats is crucial for effective local governance and suggests delegating more authority to them rather than diminishing their power. This article will explore the development of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India, their importance in promoting social justice and inclusive growth, the challenges they face, and potential solutions to overcome these obstacles.

EVOLUTION OF PRIS IN INDIA

The evolution of the Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) in India began with constitutional recognition under Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which emphasized the importance of local self-government. Initially, varying structures existed across states due to the non-binding nature of the Directive Principles. Several committees were formed to standardize their structure:

1. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) advocated a three-tier model consisting of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad. Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh were early adopters of this system.

2. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) proposed a two-tier system, suggested granting taxation powers to Panchayats, and called for constitutional recognition.
3. The GVK Rao Committee (1985) underscored the developmental role of Zilla Parishads and recommended the appointment of District Development Commissioners.
4. The LM Singhvi Committee (1986) recommended constitutional status for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the establishment of Nyay Panchayats.
5. The culmination of these efforts was the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, which conferred constitutional status to PRIs. It introduced uniformity in structure, elections, and reserved seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women. The Amendment also mandated the devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries to PRIs. Part IX of the Constitution, titled "The Panchayats," and the Eleventh Schedule specifying 29 subjects were added to facilitate their functioning.

PROVISIONS RELATED TO PRI

- ❑ Article 243B: This article mandates the direct election of members to Panchayats at the village, intermediate, and district levels. It also specifies their tenure and the process for their dissolution.
- ❑ Article 243D: Provides for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Panchayats, proportionate to their population. Additionally, it reserves one-third of the total seats for women.
- ❑ Article 243G: Empowers state legislatures to endow Panchayats with authority and powers to function as self-government institutions.
- ❑ Article 243H: Grants state legislatures the authority to authorize Panchayats to levy, collect, and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls, and fees.

- ❑ Article 243I: Mandates the formation of State Finance Commissions every five years by the Governor to review the financial position of Panchayats and suggest measures to strengthen their finances.
- ❑ Article 243K: Provides for the establishment of an independent State Election Commission tasked with conducting regular and fair elections to the Panchayats.

FUNDING STATUS OF PRI

The funding status of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India, as per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report, reveals the following:

1. Revenue Composition:
 - PRIs derive only 1% of their revenue from taxes, with the majority coming from grants provided by the Central and State governments.
 - Approximately 80% of PRI revenue is sourced from Central government grants, while 15% comes from State government grants.
2. Revenue Statistics (Fiscal Year 2022-23):
 - Total revenue of Panchayats amounted to Rs 35,354 crore.
 - Own tax revenue sources contributed Rs 737 crore, derived mainly from taxes on professions, land, stamps, properties, and services.
 - Non-tax sources, such as interest payments and Panchayati Raj programs, generated Rs 1,494 crore.
 - Panchayats received significant grants amounting to Rs 24,699 crore from the Central government and Rs 8,148 crore from State governments.
3. Revenue Per Panchayat:
 - On average, each Panchayat earned about Rs 21,000 from its own tax revenue and Rs 73,000 from non-tax sources.

- In contrast, grants from the Central government averaged around Rs 17 lakh per Panchayat, while State government grants totaled over Rs 3.25 lakh per Panchayat.

4. State Revenue Share and Inter-State Disparities:

- Panchayats' share in their respective State's own revenue remains minimal and varies significantly between states.
- For instance, in Andhra Pradesh, revenue receipts of Panchayats constitute just 0.1% of the State's own revenue, whereas in Uttar Pradesh, it forms 2.5%, the highest among states.

This funding structure highlights the heavy reliance of PRIs on grants from higher levels of government, indicating a need for sustainable revenue generation mechanisms at the local level to strengthen financial autonomy and ensure effective local governance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIS

Strengthening Grassroots-level Democracy: PRIs provide a direct platform for people to participate in governance at the local level, fostering democratic values and ensuring accountable administration.

Decentralization of Power: The three-tier structure of PRIs facilitates decentralization of authority from the state to local levels (Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad), enabling better understanding and addressing of local needs and priorities.

Promoting Rural Development: PRIs play a crucial role in planning and implementing rural development programs spanning agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, and social welfare. They contribute significantly to the development of villages and communities across India.

Inclusive Governance and Empowerment of Women: The reservation system in PRIs ensures representation of marginalized groups such as

women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, promoting inclusive governance and empowering these sections of society.

Fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Being closer to the people, PRIs are effective in delivering public services promptly and addressing local issues, thereby contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the grassroots level.

Addressing Climate Change:

- ❑ **Adaptation:** PRIs leverage local knowledge and traditional practices to develop adaptation strategies against climate change impacts like droughts, floods, and erratic weather patterns.
- ❑ **Mitigation:** They promote sustainable natural resource management practices such as water conservation, afforestation, and soil conservation to mitigate climate change effects.

Social Mobilization: PRIs serve as platforms for community engagement in developmental projects, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among local residents.

Preservation of Local Culture and Traditions: They contribute to preserving and promoting indigenous cultures, traditions, and knowledge systems, ensuring the conservation of India's diverse cultural heritage.

Enhanced Accountability and Transparency: Direct elections of PRI representatives and regular Gram Sabha meetings promote transparency and accountability in local governance processes.

INITIATIVES TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN PRIS

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA):

- ❑ Aims to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system by enhancing the capacities of Panchayats for effective governance and service delivery.

- ❑ Focuses on training, capacity building, and providing technical support to Panchayats.

e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project:

- ❑ Seeks to transform the functioning of Panchayats through the use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- ❑ Develops applications for planning, implementation, and monitoring of schemes and services at the Panchayat level.

Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) through PRIs:

- ❑ Aims to integrate key development programs at the Panchayat level and promote activities across all villages.
- ❑ Utilizes digital technology for transparency and accountability in achieving local SDGs.

Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme:

- ❑ Provides incentives to states for devolving functions, funds, and functionaries to Panchayats, aligned with the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission.
- ❑ Encourages states to empower Panchayats and enhance accountability in local governance.

e-Gram Swaraj e-Financial Management System:

- ❑ Simplified work-based accounting application for PRIs aimed at enhancing financial management and credibility through increased fund devolution.

Geo-tagging of assets:

- ❑ Utilizes “mActionSoft” mobile-based solution to geo-tag photos of assets developed through Panchayat-led initiatives, ensuring transparency and accountability.

SVAMITVA Scheme:

- ❑ Launched to provide “Record of Rights” to every rural household owner, facilitating economic progress in rural areas through improved land ownership records.

Gram Urja Swaraj Abhiyaan:

- ❑ Collaboration between the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to promote adoption of renewable energy in Gram Panchayats.
- ❑ Aims to make Gram Panchayats self-reliant in energy and transition them from consumers to producers of energy.

Citizen Charter:

- ❑ Initiative to ensure that Gram Panchayats have a Citizen Charter approved by Gram Sabhas.
- ❑ Specifies the services provided by the Panchayat to citizens and sets time limits for service delivery, promoting transparency and accountability.

ISSUES FACED BY PRIS

Inadequate Devolution of Functions, Funds, and Functionaries:

- ❑ PRIs often lack sufficient authority, resources, and personnel to effectively carry out their mandated responsibilities. Devolution from higher levels of government is often incomplete or insufficient.

Capacity Constraints and Lack of Training:

- ❑ There is a significant need for capacity building among elected representatives and officials of PRIs. Lack of adequate training limits their ability to effectively govern and manage local affairs.

Multiplicity of Agencies and Lack of Coordination:

- ❑ Various agencies involved in rural development programs often operate independently, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficient use of resources. Lack of coordination hampers effective implementation of development initiatives.

Interference from Bureaucracy and State Governments:

- ❑ Excessive bureaucratic control and interference from state government officials undermine the autonomy and decision-making authority of PRIs. This bureaucratic control often delays or obstructs local initiatives.

Lack of Clarity in Roles and Responsibilities:

- ❑ Roles and responsibilities among the three tiers of PRIs (Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad) are not clearly defined. This ambiguity leads to overlapping functions, conflicts, and inefficiencies in governance.

Insufficient Data and Monitoring Mechanisms:

- ❑ There is a lack of robust data collection and monitoring mechanisms to assess the performance and impact of PRIs. This hinders effective decision-making and evaluation of service delivery and development outcomes.

Lack of Financial Autonomy:

- ❑ PRIs often rely heavily on irregular and inadequate grants from state governments, limiting their financial autonomy. This dependency affects their ability to plan and implement local development projects independently.

Lack of Accountability and Transparency Mechanisms:

- ❑ There is a deficiency in effective accountability and transparency mechanisms within PRIs, such as social audits and performance evaluation systems. This contributes to potential misuse of funds and undermines public trust.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources:

- ❑ Basic infrastructure such as office buildings, equipment, and human resources are often inadequate or lacking in PRIs. This shortfall impairs their administrative capacity and ability to deliver services effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REFORM PRIS

Recommendations by the 2nd ARC:

- ❑ **Strengthening the Gram Sabha:** Empower the Gram Sabha not only to supervise but also to actively participate in planning economic development and social justice programs at the local level.
- ❑ **Devolution of Functions, Funds, and Functionaries:** Ensure greater devolution of power, funds, and staff to PRIs based on the principle of subsidiarity. Transfer all responsibilities listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution to PRIs.
- ❑ **Capacity Building and Training:** Provide comprehensive training to elected officials and staff of PRIs to enhance their governance skills. Establish specialized institutions for training and research focused on the Panchayat Raj system.
- ❑ **State Finance Commissions:** Empower State Finance Commissions to recommend adequate transfer of resources from the state to local bodies, ensuring financial autonomy and capability.
- ❑ **Separate Election Commission for Local Bodies:** Establish separate State Election Commissions for conducting elections to PRIs and urban local bodies to ensure their autonomy and impartiality.
- ❑ **E-Governance and Citizen Participation:** Utilize information and communication technologies (ICT) for e-governance initiatives to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation at the grassroots level.

Miscellaneous Recommendations by Various Experts:

- ❑ **Build Local Tax Capacity:** Enable PRIs to generate revenue by digitizing property records, filling

vacancies for tax collectors, and granting them autonomy to levy taxes and cesses locally.

- ❑ **SHG-Panchayat Linkages:** Strengthen linkages between Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and PRIs to enhance village governance and promote financial access and collective action, particularly benefiting marginalized groups like women.
- ❑ **Improve Administrative Data Quality:** Enhance the quality and accessibility of administrative data by using visual tools such as maps and

interactive charts that are easily understandable by citizens. Involve citizens in creating these tools to foster informed decision-making.

- ❑ **Develop Scoring Systems for Panchayats:** Establish transparent scoring systems to assess the performance of PRIs, overseen by an independent body. Reward high-performing Panchayats with certificates and increased funds, motivating officials and staff to perform their duties diligently and improve accountability.

RBI SURPLUS TRANSFER TO GOVERNMENT

RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Planning and Economic Development
- **GS2:** Government Policies



RBI's payout to Centre over the years

(In Rs. Cr)



INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved a surplus transfer of Rs. 2.11 lakh crore to the Central Government for the accounting year 2023-24. This represents a 141% increase compared to the previous year's (2022-23) dividend transfer of Rs. 87,416 crore. Additionally, the contingency risk buffer has been raised to 6.5% from the previous 6%.

SOURCES OF RBI SURPLUS

1. Profits from foreign currency assets: Includes earnings from bonds, treasury bills, and central bank deposits.
2. Earnings from domestic government securities: Income from local, rupee-based government securities.
3. Short-term lending: Interest income from short-term loans.
4. Borrowing management: Fees from managing borrowings for central and state governments.
5. Regulation of financial institutions: Revenue from regulating banks and non-banking financial institutions.
6. Commission for government transactions: Fees for overseeing government transactions and specific underwriting endeavors.

EXPENDITURES OF RBI

1. Operating Expenses: General expenses related to the day-to-day operations.
2. Currency Printing: Costs associated with printing and distributing currency.
3. Staff Remunerations: Salaries and benefits for RBI employees.
4. Transaction Commissions for Banks: Fees paid for facilitating transactions between banks.
5. Dealer Compensations: Payments to dealers involved in various transactions.

6. Interest Paid on Deposits and Borrowings: Interest expenses on deposits and borrowings.

MECHANISM FOR TRANSFER OF SURPLUS BY RBI

The Reserve Bank of India, after meeting all its expenses and provisioning requirements, transfers its surplus earnings to the Central Government. This transfer is usually done annually and is a significant source of non-tax revenue for the government. The surplus is calculated after accounting for all income and expenditures, and the decision on the quantum of transfer is approved by the Central Board of the RBI.

SURPLUS

- ❑ Definition: Surplus is the net income derived from total income (sources of income) minus total expenditure (expenses).
- ❑ Risk Provisioning: From the surplus, RBI makes provisions for monetary and financial stability risks, and credit and operational risks.

TRANSFER OF SURPLUS

- ❑ Legal Framework: The RBI transfers its surplus to the government under Section 47 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- ❑ Calculation: The surplus calculation is based on the Economic Capital Framework (ECF) recommended by the Bimal Jalan committee.
- ❑ Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB): The Bimal Jalan committee advised the RBI to maintain a CRB between 5.5% and 6.5% of its balance sheet.

REASONS BEHIND THE INCREASE IN RBI SURPLUS

1. High Profits from US Treasury Bonds:
 - ❑ The RBI has invested \$240.6 billion in US Treasuries as of March 31, 2024.

- ❑ High yields on these bonds, due to monetary policy tightening, have generated substantial interest income from foreign assets.
- 2. Surge in Forex Holdings:**
 - ❑ Higher income from the central bank's forex holdings has contributed to the increased surplus.
 - ❑ In FY24, the RBI's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$68 billion, the highest in five years.
- 3. Higher Earnings from Interest:**
 - ❑ The shift of domestic liquidity into deficit mode has increased the RBI's income.
 - ❑ In a liquidity deficit, the RBI lends to banks, earning interest on these loans.
- 4. Increase in Gold Prices:**
 - ❑ Rising gold prices have expanded the RBI's balance sheet, contributing to higher income.
- 5. Intervention in Forex Market:**
 - ❑ The RBI's intervention in the forex market has boosted its income.
 - ❑ For instance, the RBI sold securities worth \$153 billion in the forex market in FY24.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RECORD RBI SURPLUS TRANSFER TO THE GOVERNMENT

- 1. Increased Capital Expenditure (CAPEX):**
 - ❑ The surplus transfer offers a vital fiscal stimulus, allowing the government to boost allocations for infrastructure projects in roads, railways, and defense.
- 2. Reduced Borrowing and Fiscal Consolidation:**
 - ❑ With a fiscal space of 0.3% of GDP, the surplus transfer helps reduce government borrowing and supports fiscal discipline, aiding in meeting the fiscal deficit target of 4.5% by FY26.

- 3. Boost to Bond Markets:**
 - ❑ The surplus transfer raises optimism among bond traders, potentially leading to corrections in the yields of government securities.
- 4. Meeting Revenue Shortfall:**
 - ❑ The RBI's dividend payout helps compensate for any shortfalls in tax revenue, providing a financial buffer for the government.
- 5. Covering the Disinvestment Target:**
 - ❑ The government has set a disinvestment target of ₹50,000 crore for FY25. Given past misses on disinvestment targets, the surplus transfer provides a safety net to cover any potential shortfalls this year.

WAY FORWARD

- 1. Absorption of Excessive Liquidity:**
 - ❑ RBI should absorb the excess liquidity generated by the surplus transfer through open market operation sales and foreign exchange interventions.
- 2. Increasing Government Tax-GDP Ratio:**
 - ❑ The government should avoid reliance on transfers from the central bank or dividends from public-sector enterprises. Effective fiscal management should be implemented to improve the tax-to-GDP ratio.
- 3. Rationalization of GST Rates:**
 - ❑ The government should promptly work on rationalizing the rates and slabs of GST within the GST Council to boost tax revenues.
- 4. Disinvestment in Public Sector:**
 - ❑ The government should expedite its disinvestment plans for public sector enterprises to address potential future revenue shortfalls.

SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS- THE DEMAND REIGNITES

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Federalism
- **GS2:** Federal Structure



INTRODUCTION

With the formation of the new NDA government at the Centre relying on the support of two regional parties from Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, the demand for special category status has once again become a prominent issue.

WHAT IS SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS?

Special Category Status (SCS) is a classification given by the Central Government to states in India to assist in their development, particularly those that face significant geographical and socio-economic challenges.

HISTORY OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

□ Introduction and Aim: The SCS mechanism was introduced in 1969, based on the

recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission of India and the Gadgil formula. The primary aim was to support states with historical economic or geographical disadvantages, thereby aiding their development and accelerating growth.

FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR AWARDED SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

1. **Hilly Terrain:** States with challenging mountainous landscapes that complicate infrastructure development.
2. **Strategic International Borders:** States sharing international borders which necessitate additional security and infrastructure considerations.

3. **Economic and Infrastructural Backwardness:** Regions lagging in economic development and infrastructure.
4. **Low Population Density:** Areas with sparse population distribution, which poses challenges for implementing widespread development programs.
5. **Tribal Population:** States with a significant percentage of tribal communities needing targeted development efforts.
6. **Non-viable Nature of State Finances:** States struggling with inadequate financial resources and facing fiscal challenges.

ANDHRA PRADESH'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

1. **Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh to create Telangana:** Andhra Pradesh experienced a significant revenue loss and the loss of its developed capital, Hyderabad, due to the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.
2. **Increased Debt Level:** The debt of the residuary state of Andhra Pradesh increased from Rs 97,000 crore at the time of bifurcation to Rs 2,58,928 crore by 2018-19.
3. **Reduced Post-Devolution Revenue Deficit:** The 14th Finance Commission estimated a post-devolution revenue deficit of Rs 22,113 crore for AP for the period 2015-20, but the actual deficit was Rs 66,362 crore.
4. **Unjust and Inequitable Distribution:** Andhra Pradesh inherited nearly 59% of the population, debt, and liabilities of the original state, but only 47% of its revenues.

BIHAR'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

1. **Economic Backwardness:** Approximately one-third of Bihar's population lives in poverty, and the state has a low per-capita GDP of around ₹54,000, making it one of India's poorest states.

2. **Impact of Bifurcation:** The bifurcation led to an industrial decline, with many industries moving to Jharkhand, reducing employment opportunities.
3. **Natural Challenges:** Bihar faces regular floods in the north and droughts in the south, affecting agriculture and livelihoods.
4. **Need for Welfare Funding:** Bihar's Chief Minister highlighted the need for SCS to secure approximately ₹2.5 lakh crore for various welfare measures over five years.
5. **Lack of Resources:** Bihar argues that its lack of natural resources and continuous water supply for irrigation contributes to its underdevelopment.

BENEFITS OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

Special Category Status (SCS) provides significant financial and tax benefits to the recipient states, aiding their development to overcome geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.

1. **Higher Grants-in-Aid:** SCS states receive higher grant-in-aid from the Centre. For example, per capita grants to SCS states amount to Rs 5,573 crore per year, while Andhra Pradesh, which is seeking SCS, receives only Rs 3,428 crore.
2. **Enhanced Central Funding:** The Central government funds 90% of centrally sponsored schemes in SCS states, compared to 70% in non-SCS states. Additionally, unspent money does not lapse at the end of the financial year and is carried forward.
3. **Tax Exemptions and Incentives:** SCS states benefit from special industrial incentives such as income tax exemptions, customs duty waivers, reduced excise duty, corporate tax exemptions for a certain period, GST concessions, and lower state and central taxes.
4. **Improvement of Employment Opportunities:** The incentives provided to SCS states promote

rapid industrialization in primarily agrarian regions, leading to improved employment opportunities for the youth and overall state development.

5. Investment in Infrastructure: SCS encourages investments in infrastructure projects such as specialty hospitals, five-star hotels, manufacturing industries, high-value service industries like IT, and premier institutions of higher education and research.

CONCERNS WITH SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

The 14th Finance Commission opposed the continuation of Special Category Status (SCS) on several grounds:

1. Increased Burden on Central Finances: Providing additional funds, tax concessions, and other benefits to SCS states imposes a significant financial burden on the central government's budget, raising concerns about fiscal sustainability.
2. Inequitable Distribution of Resources: Granting SCS to some states while denying it to others can lead to an uneven distribution of resources, creating disparities among states.
3. Increase in Dependency and Reduction of Accountability: SCS states may become overly reliant on central assistance, reducing their incentive to mobilize their own resources and develop a self-sustaining economy. This dependency can also diminish their accountability.
4. Permanent Continuation of Temporary SCS Status: Some states that were granted SCS for a temporary period have continued to enjoy it for decades without periodic impact assessment and re-evaluation, undermining the temporary nature of the status.
5. Lack of Constitutional Basis: SCS lacks a clear constitutional or legal foundation. It is granted by the administrative decision of the

National Development Council or the central government, making it susceptible to changes and political influences.

WAY FORWARD FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

1. Reassessment Criteria for SCS: The criteria for granting SCS should be revisited and expanded to include factors such as revenue deficits. This reassessment can ensure a more equitable and justified allocation of resources to states truly in need.
2. Alternative Funding Models: Explore new funding models based on a multi-dimensional index, as suggested by the Raghuram Rajan Committee. This approach can provide a more comprehensive evaluation of states' needs and ensure targeted financial support.
3. Increased Devolution by Finance Commission: The Finance Commission should increase the devolution of funds to address issues such as poverty alleviation, disaster management, agriculture support, and policies that attract new industries and create job opportunities. This would ensure a more balanced development across all states.

FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR ACCORDING SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS (ACCORDING TO GADGIL FORMULA)

1. Difficult and Hilly Terrain: States with challenging geographical features that make development projects more expensive and difficult to implement.
2. Low Population Density and/or Sizable Tribal Population: States with sparse populations or significant tribal communities that require additional resources to improve their living conditions and integrate them into the broader economic framework.

3. **Strategic Location Along Borders:** States located along national borders, which may face security challenges and require enhanced infrastructure and development to ensure stability and growth.
4. **Economic and Infrastructural Backwardness:** States that lag in economic development and infrastructure, necessitating extra assistance to bring them up to par with more developed regions.
5. **Non-Viable Nature of State Finances:** States with financial structures that cannot sustain development initiatives without substantial assistance from the central government.

CHANGES BY THE 14TH FINANCE COMMISSION

The 14th Finance Commission has eliminated the 'special category status' for most states, retaining it only for the Northeastern and three hill states.

Instead, it recommends filling the resource gaps of states by increasing the devolution of tax revenue from 32% to 42%.

STATES RETAINING SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

1. Assam
2. Nagaland
3. Himachal Pradesh
4. Manipur
5. Meghalaya
6. Sikkim
7. Tripura
8. Arunachal Pradesh
9. Mizoram
10. Uttarakhand
11. Telangana

WOMEN MPS IN NEW PARLIAMENT: A DECLINE

RELEVANCE

□ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Legislature
- **GS2:** Parliament



INTRODUCTION

The recent declaration of the Lok Sabha Results has reignited discussions on the political empowerment of women in India. However, the number of elected women MPs has seen a decline in the 2024 Lok Sabha, dropping to 74 from the 78 women MPs elected in 2019. Out of the 797 women who contested the elections, only 74 were successful in securing seats. This means that the representation of women in the lower house stands at 13.63% of the total elected strength, falling significantly short of the proposed 33% reservation for women representatives after the next delimitation exercise.

IMPORTANCE OF GREATER POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

1. **Accountability and Gender-sensitive Governance:** Women's political empowerment enables them to participate directly in decision-making, ensuring better accountability and governance that is sensitive to gender issues. This leads to reforms that promote gender equality in public policy and its effective implementation.
2. **Breaking the Patriarchal Mold:** Indian politics has traditionally been patriarchal, with male dominance in top party positions and positions of power. Increased representation of women in parliament challenges this patriarchal nature and promotes inclusivity.
3. **Focus on Gender Issues:** Higher representation of women in parliament leads to greater attention to women's issues. This ensures the introduction of policies and measures that address gender disparities and promote women's rights.
4. **Gender Equality:** Women's political participation is essential for achieving gender equality and fostering genuine democracy. It helps in raising awareness about women's

issues, influencing government agendas, and shaping legislative programs to address gender inequalities.

5. **Changing Stereotypes:** Increased representation of women in politics challenges traditional stereotypes that portray women solely as homemakers. It helps in changing societal perceptions by portraying women as capable lawmakers and leaders.
6. **Improvement of Economic Performance and Infrastructure:** Studies have shown that women legislators contribute to improved economic performance in their constituencies compared to male legislators. Additionally, female-led constituencies tend to have better infrastructure development, as seen in the completion rates of projects like the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

REASONS FOR LOW POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

1. **Gender Gaps in Political Ambition:**
 - **Lack of Encouragement:** Women receive less encouragement to run for office compared to men.
 - **Aversion to Competition:** Women tend to shy away from competition, perceiving the political selection process as highly competitive.
 - **Fear of 'Big Politics':** Self-doubt, stereotypes, and personal reservations prevent many women from entering government.
 - **Family and Relational Considerations:** Women's willingness to advance in politics can be influenced by family considerations. For example, in Sweden, female politicians promoted to mayor experience a significant increase in the likelihood of divorcing their partner, a phenomenon not observed in men.

2. Patriarchal Society:

- Gender Disparities: Obstacles in leadership positions arise from gender inequality in education, access to resources, and the persistence of biased views.
- Sexual Division of Labour: The responsibility of housework and child care falls predominantly on women, hindering their ability to participate in politics.
- Cultural and Social Expectations: Cultural and social norms force expectations on women, discouraging their political participation.

3. Cost of Contesting Elections:

- The rising cost of contesting elections poses a significant barrier. Women, lacking access to resources and assets, are less likely to raise the necessary funds for campaigning.

4. Male Politicians as Gate-keepers:

- Party leaders often prefer male candidates over female ones, based on biased assumptions about the electability of women, which prevents the selection of female leaders for elections.

5. Growth of Criminalisation and Corruption:

- The increasing criminalization and corruption in politics, coupled with a lack of political education among women, contribute to their exodus from the political arena.

LEGISLATIVE MEASURES

1. Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act):

- This Act provides 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. It aims to ensure a significant increase in the representation of women in legislative bodies.

2. 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts:

- These amendments to the Constitution mandate a 33% reservation for women in local government bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities). Some states, such as Bihar, have further increased this reservation to 50%, ensuring greater participation of women in grassroots governance.

3. Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women:

- Formed in 1997 during the 11th Lok Sabha, this committee focuses on improving the status of women in India. It reviews and monitors various policies and programs for women's empowerment and makes recommendations to ensure their effective implementation.

4. Gender-Neutral Rules of Lok Sabha:

- In 2014, under the leadership of Meira Kumar, the rules of the Lok Sabha were revised to be completely gender-neutral. This change means that all official documents now refer to the head of a Lok Sabha Committee as the "Chairperson" instead of the previously used gender-specific titles.

CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES

1. Article 14:

- Establishes equality before the law and equal protection of the laws in India. This fundamental right ensures women have the same legal status as men, promoting equal opportunities, including in politics.

2. Article 15:

- Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. It also allows the state to make special provisions for women and children, enabling affirmative actions to enhance women's political representation.

3. Article 46:

- Mandates the state to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections of society, protecting them from social injustice and exploitation. This indirectly supports women's empowerment by targeting vulnerable groups, which often include women.

4. Article 243D:

- Ensures women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions by mandating that at least one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat are reserved for women. It also reserves one-third of the offices of chairpersons in Panchayats at each level for women.

5. Article 326:

- Provides for elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and to the Legislative Assemblies of States to be conducted on the basis of adult suffrage, ensuring all citizens, including women, have the right to vote and participate in elections.

INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS

Globally, various international commitments have been made to achieve gender equality, emphasizing the enhancement of women's representation in the political sphere.

1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979):

- Upholds women's right to participate in public life.

2. Beijing Platform for Action (1995), Millennium Development Goals (2000), and Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030):

- Call for the removal of barriers to equal participation and consider increasing women's representation in parliament as

a measure of progress towards gender equality.

OTHER MEASURES AND INITIATIVES

1. Electoral Reforms and Initiatives:

- Political parties are encouraged to field more female candidates in elections. Some parties have taken voluntary measures to ensure a higher representation of women among their candidates.

2. Awareness and Training Programs:

- Various NGOs and government agencies run awareness and training programs to educate women about their political rights and encourage them to participate in politics. These programs often include leadership training, public speaking skills, and campaign management.

3. Financial Support and Resources:

- Initiatives to provide financial support and resources to female candidates have been implemented to help them contest elections. This support aims to overcome the financial barriers that often prevent women from entering politics.

4. Gender Sensitization:

- Gender sensitization programs for elected representatives and political parties aim to create a more inclusive environment that supports women's participation in politics. These programs address issues of gender bias and promote gender equality within political institutions.

WAY FORWARD

1. Checks on the Criminalisation of Politics:

- Address the broader issues of electoral reforms, such as measures to check the criminalisation of politics and the influence of black money, to achieve the desired outcomes of women's reservation.

2. Intra-Party Democracy:

- Institutionalizing intra-party democracy will make a wider pool of women candidates available.

3. Nomination to Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils:

- Every political party must nominate 33% women and 67% men for every election to Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils to achieve true women's representation.

4. Promotion of Women Participation at Panchayat Level:

- Strengthen women's self-help groups to promote women's participation at the

panchayat level. This will ensure capable women candidates for MP/MLA elections.

5. Strengthening Women's Agencies and Organizations:

- Build a progressive society with equality of opportunities among all citizens by strengthening women's agencies and organizations.

6. Promotion of Girls' Participation in College/ University Politics:

- Encourage girls' participation in college/ university student political parties and political debates to enhance their political prowess for the future.

THE HEAT AROUND THE SPEAKER

RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Legislature
- **GS2:** Parliament



INTRODUCTION

The commencement of the 18th Lok Sabha has brought significant attention to the roles of the pro tem speaker, speaker, and deputy speaker. Bhartruhari Mahtab, a seven-time MP, was appointed as the Speaker pro tem by the President, sparking tensions between the ruling coalition and the opposition. Om Birla was elected the Lok Sabha Speaker (2nd time) by defeating the opposition candidate Kodikkunil Suresh.

SPEAKER PRO TEM

Constitutional Provision: Article 95(1) of the Constitution provides for the office of Speaker Pro tem, who is appointed by the President. The term 'pro tem' means 'for the time being' or 'temporary'.

Mentions in the Constitution:

1. The term 'Speaker Pro tem' is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution or the rules of the Lok Sabha. It is a conventional term used in the Handbook on the working of Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
2. Traditionally, one of the senior-most members of the Lok Sabha is selected by the government to serve as Speaker Pro tem. This member is then administered the oath of office by the President.

Functions:

1. **Administering Oath:** The Speaker Pro tem administers the oath of office to newly elected MPs at the beginning of a new Lok Sabha session.
2. **Presiding Over Speaker Election:** The Speaker Pro tem presides over the election process of the full-time Speaker of the Lok Sabha, until the Speaker is elected.

SPEAKER OF LOK SABHA

Constitutional Provision: Article 93 of the Constitution mandates that the Lok Sabha shall elect two members as its Speaker and Deputy

Speaker. The election of the Speaker is scheduled by the President, and historically, all Speakers in independent India have been elected unopposed.

Functions:

1. **Certifying Money Bills:** The Speaker certifies whether a Bill is a Money Bill, which limits the role of the Rajya Sabha in its passage.
2. **Deciding on Disqualification:** The Speaker adjudicates on disqualification cases under the Tenth Schedule concerning defection.

Other Functions:

1. **Presiding Over House Proceedings:** The Speaker presides over Lok Sabha sessions, ensuring discipline and decorum among members. They also determine the agenda for parliamentary meetings and interpret procedural rules.
2. **Final Interpreter Within the House:** Within the Lok Sabha, the Speaker is the ultimate authority in interpreting the Constitution, Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, and parliamentary precedents.
3. **Constitution of Committees:** The Speaker forms and oversees the functioning of parliamentary committees, appointing Chairman of all Parliamentary Committees.
4. **Referral of Bills:** The Speaker has the authority to refer Bills introduced in the Lok Sabha to Standing Committees for detailed examination.
5. **Permission for Motions:** Except for a no-confidence motion, all other motions require the Speaker's permission before being presented in the House.
6. **Guardian of House Privileges:** The Speaker safeguards the rights and privileges of the Lok Sabha, its Committees, and its members.
7. **Suspension of Members:** In cases of serious disorder, the Speaker can suspend members from the Lok Sabha for up to five days.
8. **Administrative Authority:** The Speaker heads the Lok Sabha Secretariat, managing

administrative affairs and security within the Parliament Estate.

9. **Inter-Parliamentary Relations:** As the ex-officio President of the Indian Parliamentary Group, the Speaker facilitates relations with other parliaments globally, promoting inter-parliamentary cooperation.

DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE LOK SABHA

Constitutional Provisions

- ❑ **Article 93:** Provides for the office of the Deputy Speaker. The election of the Deputy Speaker is held on a date fixed by the Speaker.

Constitutional Conventions

- ❑ **Opposition Post:** Since 1991, the convention has been to offer the post of Deputy Speaker to the Opposition. This practice was followed until the 16th Lok Sabha. However, no Deputy Speaker was elected in the 17th Lok Sabha.

Functions

1. **Acting Speaker:** The Deputy Speaker steps in during the vacancy or absence of the Speaker, assuming all the duties of the Speaker.
2. **Presiding Over Joint Sitzings:** In the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker presides over the joint sittings of both Houses of Parliament.
3. **Committee Chairmanship:** When appointed as a member of a parliamentary committee, the Deputy Speaker automatically becomes its chairman.

CHALLENGES WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE OFFICE OF SPEAKER OF LOK SABHA

1. **Issue of Partisanship in Deciding Disqualification Under the Tenth Schedule:**
 - **Favoring the Ruling Party:** The Speaker's role in deciding disqualification under the anti-defection law has been criticized for partisanship, often favoring the ruling party.
 - ✓ **Example:** In 2016, Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Nabam Rebia

disqualified 16 MLAs despite them not officially leaving the party or defying directives.

- **Prolonged Decision Periods:** The Speaker's delay in deciding disqualification cases can benefit the ruling dispensation.
 - ✓ **Example:** In Manipur's 2017 anti-defection case, despite a court's directive for a decision within four weeks, the complaint remained pending for years.
2. **Misuse of Certification Power:**
 - **Money Bill Certification:** The Speaker's discretionary power to certify money bills has been alleged to be misused for political gains.
 - ✓ **Example:** The certification of the Aadhaar Bill as a money bill was controversial and opposed by many legal experts.
 3. **Bypassing Committees and Scrutiny:**
 - **Decline in Referrals:** There has been a significant decline in the referral of bills to parliamentary committees, reducing scrutiny and deliberation.
 - ✓ **Statistics:** Referral of bills to committees dropped from 71% during 2009-14 to 16% during 2019-24, undermining consensus-building.
 4. **Suspension of MPs:**
 - **Partisan Suspension Decisions:** The opposition parties have accused the Speaker of partisan decisions in suspending MPs.
 - ✓ **Example:** Large-scale suspensions of opposition MPs during the winter session of 2023 have raised concerns about fairness.
 5. **Lack of Due Deliberation and Discussion:**
 - **Restriction of Debates:** Limiting debates and discussions on bills of national importance can lead to poorly crafted legislation.



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- ✓ Example: The passage of the three farm laws in 2020 without adequate debate and discussion led to widespread protests and eventual repeal.

6. Increased Disruptions and Stalling of Proceedings:

- Perceived Bias: A Speaker perceived as biased can cause frustration and disruptions from the opposition, hindering parliamentary functioning.

OBSERVATIONS ON ENSURING ROBUST FUNCTIONING OF THE OFFICE OF SPEAKER

Issue of Partisanship in Disqualification Decisions:

1. Kihoto Hollohan vs. Zachilhu (1993): The Supreme Court ruled that the Speaker's decisions on disqualification are subject to judicial review and can be challenged in court based on grounds like malafide or perversity.
2. Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs. The Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly (2020): The Supreme Court recommended constitutional amendments to replace the Speaker as arbiter of disqualification disputes with an independent tribunal headed by a retired judge. It also urged that disqualification cases be resolved within three months, except in exceptional circumstances.
3. Nabam Rebia vs. Deputy Speaker (2016): The Supreme Court ruled that Speakers cannot decide on disqualification if a notice for their removal is pending.

Reports and Recommendations:

1. 255th Report of the Law Commission of India (2015): It reiterated the need for an independent mechanism to decide on disqualification, proposing to remove this responsibility from the Speaker.
2. 2010 Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Personnel, Public Grievances,

Law and Justice: It suggested replacing the Speaker's role in disqualification petitions with an independent mechanism.

Political Neutrality in Certification of Bills and Debates: Learning from Global Practices:

1. United Kingdom: The Speaker of the House of Commons is expected to be non-partisan, resigning from their political party upon election, and refraining from voting except in the case of a tie.
2. Germany: The President of the Bundestag is similarly required to maintain political neutrality, resigning from party affiliation and not casting a vote in case of a tie.

V.S. Page Committee: The committee recommended that Speakers demonstrating impartiality and efficiency during their tenure should be eligible for continuation in the next Parliament.

WAY FORWARD

1. Amendment of the Constitution: India should consider amending the Constitution to mandate that the Lok Sabha Speaker resigns from their political party upon election, aligning with global practices observed in countries like the UK, Germany, Canada, and Australia.
2. Code of Conduct for Speaker: Develop a comprehensive code of conduct for the Speaker that emphasizes principles of impartiality, transparency, and accountability. This code should be enforced by an independent oversight body.
3. Enhanced Scrutiny of Bills: Ensure that the Speaker refers important Bills to Standing Committees for thorough scrutiny. Exercise restraint in suspensions that disrupt the robust functioning of Parliament.
4. Greater Security of Tenure: Provide the Speaker with greater security of tenure by amending constitutional provisions for their removal.

to require a high threshold (such as a 2/3rd majority). This will shield them from undue political pressures.

5. **Training and Development Programs:** Implement regular training and development programs for the Speaker to enhance their knowledge, skills, and ability to maintain impartiality. This should cover parliamentary procedures, leadership, and conflict resolution.
6. **Empower Parliamentary Committees:** Strengthen parliamentary committees to scrutinize the Speaker's decisions and actions, and recommend corrective measures if

necessary. This will enhance accountability in the Office of the Speaker.

CONCLUSION

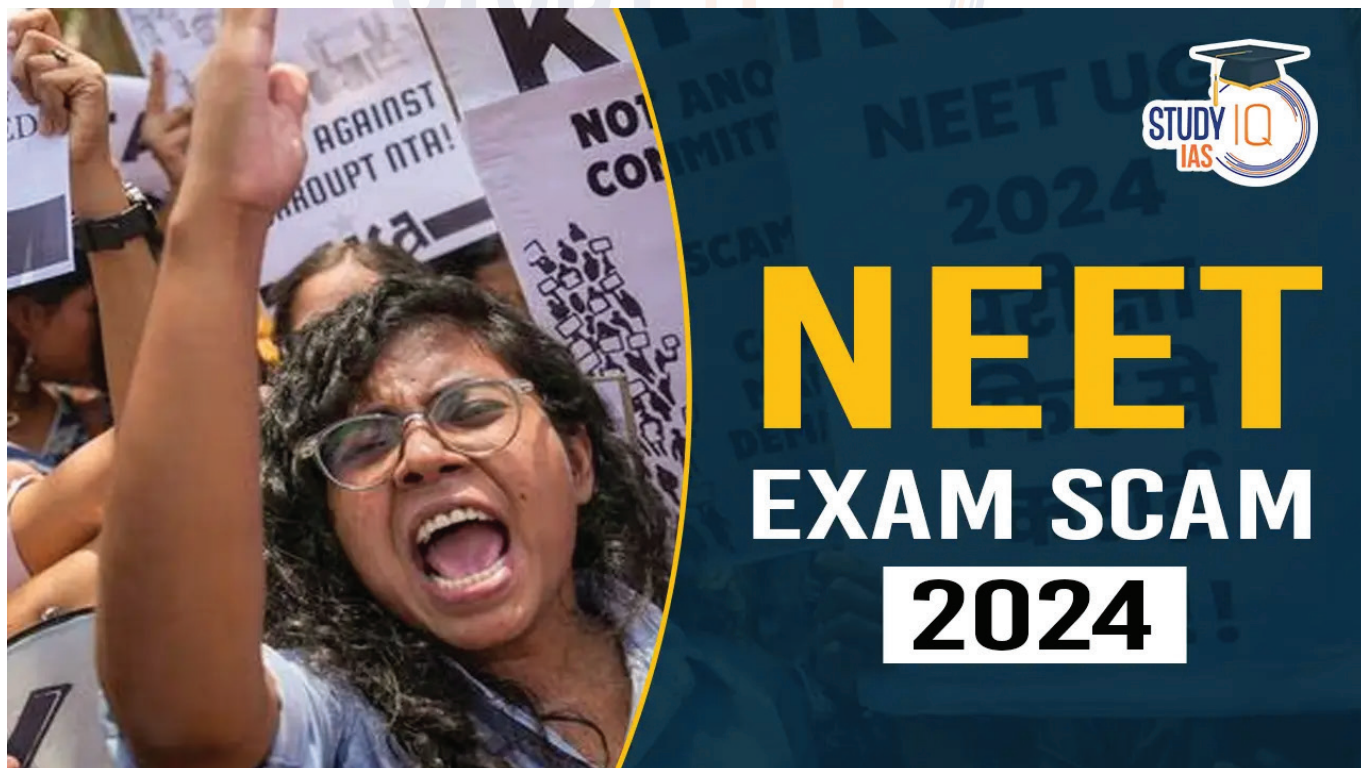
Pranab Mukherjee famously remarked on the role of the Speaker, stating, "The Speaker's role is not just about running the House; it's about being a bridge between the government and the opposition, and ensuring that the democratic process is upheld." Emulating positive precedents like N. Sanjiva Reddy's resignation from his party upon assuming the Speaker's role in 1967, India must continue to foster a healthy parliamentary democracy by ensuring the political neutrality of the Speaker's office.

NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA): CLOUDS OF CONTROVERSY

RELEVANCE

❑ Syllabus:

- **PSIR:** Statutory Institutions/Commissions
- **GS2:** Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.



INTRODUCTION

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has found itself at the center of controversy due to issues surrounding the NEET examination. The recent cancellation of the UGC-NET examination has further damaged the NTA's reputation. Complaints about paper leaks, procedural deviations, and irregularities in examinations have further eroded trust in the agency.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY

The National Testing Agency (NTA) was established as a Society registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860. It is an autonomous and self-sustained organization responsible for conducting entrance examinations for admissions and fellowships in higher educational institutions.

AIM

The NTA aims to conduct efficient, transparent, and internationally standardized tests to assess the competency of candidates for admission and recruitment purposes.

COMPOSITION

- ❑ Chairperson: An eminent educationist appointed by the Ministry of HRD.
- ❑ CEO/Director General: Appointed by the Government, responsible for overall functioning and assisted by 9 verticals headed by academicians/experts.
- ❑ Board of Governors: Comprising members from user institutions to oversee the activities and policies of the NTA.

INTENTION BEHIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)

1. Relieved Other Agencies from the Duty of Examination Conduction:
 - The establishment of the NTA has allowed other agencies like CBSE and AICTE to focus

on their primary responsibilities by relieving them of the task of conducting entrance examinations.

2. Incorporation of Online Mode of Examination:
 - NTA conducts some examinations, such as JEE Mains, in the online mode at least twice a year. This provides multiple opportunities for candidates and helps to bring out the best in them.
3. Infrastructure for Simulated Practice:
 - NTA has developed online infrastructure like a mobile app and Test Practice Centres (TPCs) to assist students in practicing and taking mock tests on their own devices, contributing to the democratization of education.
4. Adoption of Global Best Practices:
 - NTA was designed to integrate technology and best global practices to ensure high reliability, transparency, and standardized difficulty levels in examinations. It has collaborated with international organizations like ETS (Educational Testing Services).
5. Implementation of Programme of Action (POA) 1992:
 - The creation of the NTA was to implement the Programme of Action (POA) 1992, which envisioned a common entrance exam on an all-India basis for admission to professional programs.
6. Research and Training:
 - The NTA aims to establish a robust R&D culture and a pool of experts in different aspects of testing. It also provides training and advisory services to institutions in India.

ISSUES WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)

1. Controversies and Irregularities in the Conduction of Examinations:

- Allegations of irregularities in exams like NEET-UG, including suspected question paper leaks, distribution of wrong question papers, and technical glitches, have raised serious concerns about the integrity of the NTA.

2. High Scores and Grace Marks:

- The awarding of grace marks and the unusual spike in the number of candidates securing full marks in exams like NEET (67 students securing full 720/720) have cast doubt on the procedures adopted by the NTA.

3. Lack of Transparency and Accountability:

- The NTA has faced allegations of being an opaque body, lacking transparency and accountability in addressing student concerns. For instance, its denial of demands for a CBI inquiry and a retest of the NEET exam has fueled criticism.

4. Operational and Administrative Challenges:

- The centralized nature of the NTA has created operational and administrative challenges. Many of the empaneled test centers lack infrastructure such as CCTVs for monitoring the examination process.

5. Reverting to Pen-Paper Mode from Progressive Online Medium:

- The shift from online to pen-paper mode for certain exams has increased their vulnerability to leaks. For example, the UGC-NET exam, which was made online by the NTA, was reverted to an offline, pen-and-paper format, potentially making it more susceptible to paper leaks.

WAY FORWARD FOR THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)

1. Full Operational Transparency:

- Conduct and Results: Ensure complete transparency in the conduct of exams and

the publication of results. This includes clear communication of processes, real-time updates during exams, and detailed result disclosures to regain trust among candidates.

2. Accountability and Punishment of the Guilty:

- System Overhaul: Implement a thorough overhaul of NTA's systems and personnel. This includes stringent measures to address technical glitches, cheating scams, paper leaks, and the use of proxy candidates.
- Legal Action: Take decisive legal action against those found guilty of misconduct to set a precedent and deter future violations.

3. Dismantling the Centralized Structure:

- Decentralization: Consider dismantling the centralized structure of the NTA to make examinations more manageable. A decentralized approach could involve regional centers with localized control, making it easier to oversee and secure exams.
- Reduced Scale: Smaller, more localized exams can be better managed and secured, reducing the risk of large-scale issues.

4. Collaboration with State Governments:

- Joint Responsibility: Encourage state governments to join the central government in maintaining the integrity of the examination system. Sharing responsibilities for entrance exams with states can enhance oversight and management.
- State-Level Implementation: Implement state-level measures and support systems to assist with the administration and monitoring of exams, leveraging local expertise and infrastructure.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Strengthening Technological Infrastructure:

- Advanced Security: Invest in advanced security measures such as biometric verification, AI-based monitoring, and secure online platforms to prevent cheating and leaks.
- Robust IT Systems: Develop robust IT systems to handle large-scale online exams efficiently and address technical glitches proactively.

6. Regular Audits and Reviews:

- Independent Audits: Conduct regular independent audits of the NTA's processes and systems to identify and rectify vulnerabilities.
- Stakeholder Feedback: Create mechanisms for continuous feedback from students, educators, and other stakeholders to improve exam processes and address concerns promptly.

7. Training and Capacity Building:

- Staff Training: Provide comprehensive training for NTA staff and personnel involved in exam administration to ensure they are equipped to handle their responsibilities effectively.
- Capacity Building: Enhance the capacity of test centers with necessary infrastructure and resources to conduct exams smoothly and securely.

8. Public Awareness and Communication:

- Clear Communication: Maintain clear and consistent communication with the public regarding exam procedures, security measures, and any changes or updates.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate students and parents about the measures in place to ensure fair and secure examinations.



MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. Trace the origins of realism to its present utility in field of international relations.

Realism is indeed considered one of the dominant theories in international relations. It offers an explanation for the state of war, which is seen as a regular condition in the international system. Realism is based on several fundamental assumptions, including state centrism, the anarchical structure of international relations, the security dilemma, and power as the primary driving force.

The history of realism can be traced back to intellectual precursors in both the West and the East. Some notable precursors in the West include Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes. Thucydides, an ancient Greek historian, emphasized the role of fear and power in driving conflicts between states. His concept of the “Thucydides trap” suggests that war can arise from the fear associated with a shift in the balance of power.

Machiavelli’s work, particularly in “The Prince,” revived realism by highlighting the importance of protecting and consolidating political power. He argued that rulers should prioritize their own interests and use any means necessary to maintain their authority. Similarly, Hobbes explored human nature and the pursuit of power, which he believed led to anarchy and a security dilemma in international relations.

In the East, Kautilya (also known as Chanakya), an ancient Indian scholar, viewed international relations as a jungle where the strength of the lion (state) prevails. He emphasized the need for states to constantly seek power. Sun Tzu, the author of “The Art of War,” provided strategic insights and various types of warfare, including guerrilla warfare.

The resurgence of realism as a dominant theory in international relations occurred with the works of Hans Morgenthau and other scholars. Morgenthau’s book “Politics Among Nations” became a seminal work in realism, outlining key principles such as the primacy of national interest, the pursuit of power, and the role of the balance of power in international relations.

Overall, the precursors of realism laid the foundation for its development as a dominant theory, with subsequent scholars contributing to its revival and further elaboration. Realism continues to be influential in analyzing and understanding international relations, particularly in explaining state behavior and the dynamics of power in the global arena.

Q. Examine the evolution of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India as a Constitutional Court.

The Supreme Court of India, established under the Constitution of India, has undergone a remarkable transformation over the years, evolving into a Constitutional Court with extensive jurisdiction and substantial powers. At its inception, the Supreme Court had relatively limited original jurisdiction, primarily focused on resolving disputes between the Union government and individual states or between states themselves, as enshrined in Article 131 of the Indian Constitution.

However, over time, the Supreme Court expanded its role and acquired significant appellate jurisdiction. Initially, it could only hear appeals on constitutional matters from the High Courts. Subsequent amendments broadened its appellate jurisdiction to encompass a wide array of cases, including civil, criminal, and non-constitutional matters. Today, the Supreme Court stands as the ultimate court of appeal in the country, hearing appeals not only from the High Courts but also from various tribunals and other judicial bodies.

The Court's jurisdiction as a Constitutional Court further developed with the expansion of its writ jurisdiction under Articles 32 and 226 of the Constitution. These articles empower the Court to issue writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights, making it a guardian of these rights. The landmark Keshavanand Bharati case gave birth to the basic structure doctrine, which places certain core principles of the Constitution beyond the reach of parliamentary amendments. While the doctrine established the inviolability of the Constitution's basic structure, the specific components of this structure remain a matter for the judiciary to determine. This doctrine has acted as a check on the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution in a manner that would undermine its foundational principles.

In the 1980s, the Supreme Court of India introduced the concept of Public Interest Litigation (PIL), a groundbreaking innovation that significantly expanded the Court's jurisdiction. PIL empowered the Court to address a wide range of issues related to social justice, the environment, human rights, and administrative matters, often by responding to petitions from concerned citizens, NGOs, or others acting in the public interest. This proactive approach to addressing pressing societal concerns demonstrated the Court's commitment to constitutional interpretation and judicial activism.

Moreover, the Supreme Court's exercise of judicial review plays a pivotal role in solidifying its position as a Constitutional Court. By reviewing the constitutionality of laws, policies, and actions of the government, the Court ensures that the Constitution remains supreme in the Indian legal system. This power is essential in upholding the fundamental rights of citizens and preventing potential abuse of power by the legislative and executive branches.

In summary, the Supreme Court of India has evolved from its origins with limited original jurisdiction to become a powerful Constitutional Court with extensive powers. This evolution has strengthened the Court's role in protecting fundamental rights, upholding the Constitution's sanctity, and serving as the final interpreter of the law in India. Through landmark decisions, innovations like PIL, and the development of the basic structure doctrine, the Supreme Court has played a vital role in shaping the legal landscape of India and safeguarding its constitutional framework.

Q. What are the fundamental principles underlying World Systems Theory in the field of International Relations?

World systems theory, which falls under the umbrella of structuralism in International Relations, is closely associated with the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. Drawing inspiration from Marx's analysis of capitalism and Fernand Braudel's examination of extensive economic networks, Wallerstein aimed to provide an explanation for the persistent poverty in Third World countries.

According to Wallerstein, global history can be understood as a series of world systems that originated in 16th century Europe and eventually became global in nature. He defines a world system as a social system characterized by boundaries, structures, members, groups, rules of legitimacy, and coherence.

Wallerstein classifies the world system into three main categories:

1. **Core:** This refers to the countries or regions that have benefited the most from the system. These entities possess politically strong governments, bureaucracies, and armies. The core allows local bourgeoisie to gain control over international trade and accumulate surplus wealth.
2. **Periphery:** The periphery comprises countries or regions that lack a strong state apparatus. The core exploits the surplus generated by the periphery, leading to their economic and political subordination.

3. Semi-periphery: The semi-periphery consists of countries within the periphery that have managed to improve their relative positions to some extent. While they are still exploited by the core, they play a role in stabilizing the overall world system.

Wallerstein argues that the modern world system is essentially a capitalist system driven by the continuous accumulation of capital. He contends that the system's inherent capitalist nature is responsible for its unequal structure. This inequality manifests as a hierarchical relationship among the three types of states mentioned earlier, with wealth being systematically drained from the periphery towards the core through exploitative mechanisms.

Q. Make a comparative assessment of Greek perspective of Justice with the Rawlsian concept of Justice.

The concept of justice has evolved over time, as evident from the perspectives of various philosophers across history. In Plato's "Republic," justice was one of the four cardinal virtues alongside temperance, wisdom, and courage. Plato envisioned an ideal state where individuals fulfilled their roles based on their inherent nature. Justice was a fundamental principle, and each person's duty was to be diligently carried out.

Aristotle, building on this foundation, introduced additional dimensions to justice, including considerations of equality, proportionality, and maintaining societal balance. The Greek understanding of justice often included hierarchical elements, drawing from divinity, natural principles, or established traditions.

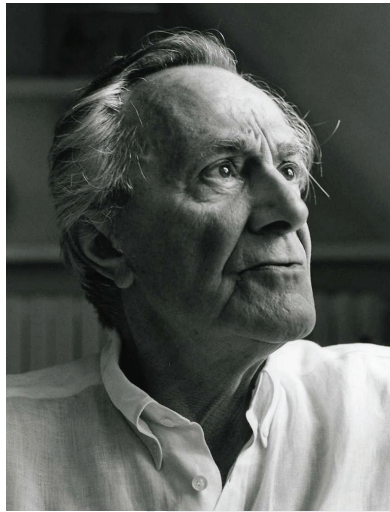
Moving forward in history, John Rawls introduced a modern perspective on justice. He emphasized that justice was achieved when deviations from equality could be reasonably justified. Rawls' theory of justice revolved around the idea of fairness, where societal and economic conditions played a crucial role. His works, "A Theory of Justice" and "Justice as Fairness," delved into the economic and social realities of contemporary societies.

Rawls' assertion that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions" and the emphasis on the "basic structure of society" being the primary focus of justice continues the classical legacy. This echoes Aristotle's observation that people pursue what they consider good and prefer more to less. While Rawls' approach is less abstract than Plato's and more attuned to the current social context, the evolution of justice is evident as it incorporates both historical ideas and contemporary considerations.

In essence, justice remains a moral virtue throughout this evolution. Like Plato, Aristotle, and Rawls, the concept of justice is still tied to a "public conception of justice." As societies evolve, so does the notion of justice, yet it continues to draw from its early philosophical roots while adapting to the changing dynamics of the world.

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.

INCREDULITY TOWARDS METANARRATIVES

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

CRITIQUE OF GRAND NARRATIVES

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

LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE

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

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

THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

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

IMPLICATIONS AND CRITICISMS

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

HANNAH ARENDT



INTRODUCTION

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

THE NATURE OF POWER

Arendt's examination of power is a key aspect of her political thought. She argued that power is not merely coercive force but a collective phenomenon that emerges from the actions and interactions of individuals in a public realm. Her emphasis on power as a relational concept informs discussions on power dynamics, democratic participation, and the role of citizens in political processes.

THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY

Arendt delved into the concept of authority, highlighting its distinction from power. She viewed authority as rooted in legitimacy, consent, and respect rather than coercion. Her analysis sheds light on the sources of authority, the relationship between authority and obedience, and the erosion of authority in modern societies.

TOTALITARIANISM AND THE BANALITY OF EVIL

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

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

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

THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

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

CONCLUSION

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

HANS JOACHIM MORGENTHAU



INTRODUCTION

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

EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION

Morgenthau's academic journey commenced in Germany, where he pursued his education at the esteemed Universities of Berlin, Frankfurt, and

Munich. Following his studies in Germany, he furthered his knowledge through postgraduate work at the Graduate Institute for International Studies in Geneva. After being admitted to the bar in 1927, he gained valuable experience by serving as acting president of the Labour Law Court in Frankfurt.

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

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

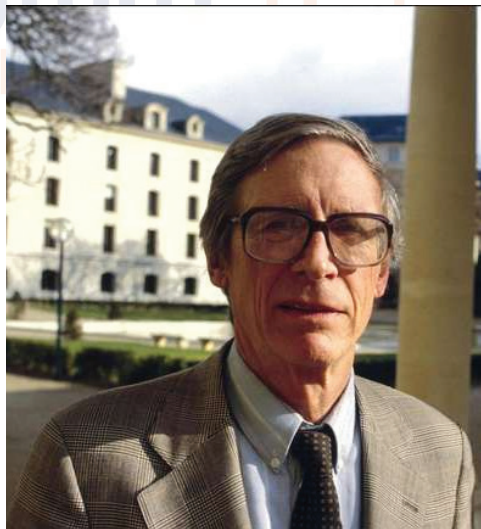
MAJOR WORKS

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

Morgenthau’s approach centered around the state, rejecting the idea that a state’s moral aspirations should be equated with the universal objective moral laws. Instead, he emphasized that all state actions are driven by the pursuit of acquiring, showcasing, or enhancing power. He advocated for acknowledging the nature and limitations of power and advocated for the use of conventional diplomatic methods, including the willingness to compromise.

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

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.

ENRICH YOUR ANSWER

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)

Q. Compare Ambedkar and Gandhi's views on Social Justice.

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

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

Body

① Mention the differences between views of Gandhi & Ambedkar

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

② Mention similarities

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

Conclusion

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

Q. Circulation of elites. Comment

Approach to Answer

Intro: Start by explaining the concept of Power

Body

1 Explain the elitist theory of Power including Pareto's Circulation of Elites theory.

→ Elitist theory accepts broad division of society into dominant and dependent group.

→ Pareto's theory of Power divides society into 'governing elite' and 'non governing elite'.

→ Explain the 'governing elites' and 'non governing elites'.

→ Can give criticism of his theory

Conclusion

Show the significance of Pareto's theory in understanding the concept of Power

Q. India needs some creative diplomacy to address the changing environment of the relations between China and Sri Lanka. Comment

Q → "India needs some creative diplomacy to address the changing environment of the relations between China and Sri Lanka".
Comment.

Answer

Intro: Give India's relations with respect to Sri Lanka.

→ Relationship between India and Sri Lanka is inter twined in historical bond. (Rajasingham Jayawardene)

Body: Tell the emerging China-Sri Lanka relations

→ Hambantota port lease to Sri Lanka.
→ Sri Lanka's debt to China tripled in last decade.

Give ideas of creative Diplomacy

→ Using Buddhism as a common link
→ Resolving small disputes of fishing etc
→ Economic interdependence.

Conclusion

→ Resolve the impending issues and build people to people relations.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which one of the following statements correctly describes the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of India?
 - (a) It contains the scheme of the distribution of powers between the Union and the States
 - (b) It contains the languages listed in the Constitution
 - (c) It contains the provisions regarding the administration of tribal areas
 - (d) It allocates seats in the Council of States
2. Which one of the following Articles of the Constitution of India says that the executive power of every State shall be so exercised as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive power of the Union?
 - (a) Article 257
 - (b) Article 258
 - (c) Article 355
 - (d) Article 358
3. Which Article of the Constitution of India says, 'No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment'?
 - (a) Article 24
 - (b) Article 45
 - (c) Article 330
 - (d) Article 368
4. Consider the following statements:
 1. Part IX of the Constitution of India provisions for Panchayats and was inserted by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1992.
 2. Part IX A of the Constitution of India contains provisions for Municipalities and the Article 243 Q envisages two types of Municipalities a Municipal Council and a Municipal Corporation for every State.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) Only 1
 - (b) Only 2
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. 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.
6. 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
7. The Election Commission of India consists of how many members, including the Chief Election Commissioner?
 - (a) One
 - (b) Two
 - (c) Three
 - (d) Four
8. 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

Answers

1. (d) Fourth schedule allocates seats in the Council of States i.e. Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament).
2. (a)

3. (a) Article 24 of the constitution states that, no child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.
4. (a)
5. (a) Establishment of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)
6. (b) Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
7. (c) Three
8. (c) Article 324



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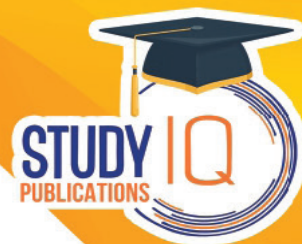
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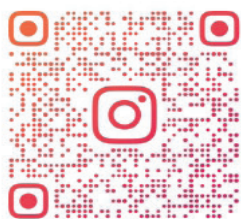
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