

PSIR Pulse

January 2026



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GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE

IRAN PROTESTS



INTRODUCTION

What began as a localised strike by shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar on December 28 has now snowballed into the largest uprising against the Islamic Republic since the 1979 Revolution that toppled the Shah regime & brought the Islamic regime to power.

The severe repression by the security forces against the protestors has led to the killing of over 2500 people. The US President has warned Iran that the US may take military action over the killing of peaceful protestors. The Indian government has also issued an advisory to Indians in Iran to leave the country immediately.

REASONS BEHIND PROTESTS

ECONOMIC

- **Hyperinflation:** Price rise has remained persistently high, crossing 40–50 percent in recent years, with food and housing costs increasing even faster. This has severely reduced real incomes and household savings, pushing large sections of the population into economic distress.

- **Unemployment and Underemployment:** Youth unemployment officially stands at nearly one fourth of the workforce, but the actual level is believed to be significantly higher, particularly among educated young people and women. The absence of stable employment opportunities has generated widespread frustration and hopelessness about the future.
- **Currency Collapse:** Over the last decade, the Iranian rial has lost more than 90 percent of its value against the US dollar. The sharp depreciation has made imports extremely costly and has drastically reduced real wages, worsening living standards.

SOCIAL

- **Women’s Rights and Morality Laws:** The 2026 protests are rooted in the social mobilisation that followed the 2022 Mahsa Amini movement. What began as opposition to compulsory dress codes has evolved into a broader challenge to the theocratic legal order that institutionalises gender discrimination.
- **Youth Alienation:** More than 60 percent of Iran’s population is below the age of 30. This young, urban, and digitally connected generation is exposed to global ideas through social media and VPNs, yet remains constrained by rigid social norms and limited avenues for political participation.
- **Ethnic and Religious Minority Discontent:** The protests initially erupted in Kurdish areas and rapidly spread to Baluch, Arab regions in Khuzestan, and Azeri قاطانم. These communities face persistent cultural suppression, economic neglect, political exclusion, and disproportionate use of coercive force by the state.
- **Corruption:** Deeply entrenched corruption has hollowed out the promise of social justice. Malpractices permeate all levels of governance, from elite power structures to everyday administration, intensifying public anger and distrust.
- **Water and Energy Crisis:** Long-standing mismanagement has produced acute water scarcity and recurring electricity outages. In a country endowed with natural resources, the failure to provide basic utilities has come to symbolise administrative incompetence and state failure.

POLITICAL

- **Theocratic Power Structure:** Iran’s political system blends republican institutions with theocratic control, placing ultimate authority in the hands of the Supreme Leader, who is not directly accountable to the electorate. Control over the armed forces, judiciary, and media sidelines elected bodies and fuels resentment against unanswerable power.
- **Suppression of Dissent:** Persistent crackdowns on political opposition, civil society groups, independent journalism, and labour organisations have closed off institutional channels for grievance redressal. As a result, mass protests have emerged as the primary outlet for accumulated political frustration.
- **Israel–US Strikes (2025):** The military strikes carried out by Israel and the United States in mid-2025 inflicted serious damage on Iran’s nuclear and missile facilities. These attacks exposed vulnerabilities in the regime’s security apparatus, emboldening protesters who perceived the state as weakened.

EXTERNAL

- **US-Led Sanctions:** Punitive economic sanctions, especially those reimposed after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, have devastated Iran’s economy. Their effects include soaring inflation, currency devaluation, job losses, and shortages of essential goods, all of which have intensified popular resentment.
- **Global Solidarity Campaigns:** International mobilisation through social media, particularly during the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests, brought global visibility and moral backing to domestic movements. Activists and diaspora groups abroad played a key role in amplifying internal dissent.
- **Strategic Reversals in the Region:** Developments such as the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria in 2024 and the weakening of groups like Hezbollah and Hamas during 2024–25 have undermined Iran’s image as a dominant regional power, weakening regime confidence and encouraging internal opposition.

RESPONSE BY MAJOR POWERS

Iranian Government

- **Official Narrative:** State authorities and official media have consistently framed the protests as violent disturbances orchestrated by external forces. The blame is placed primarily on the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, with the government portraying the unrest as a foreign conspiracy aimed at weakening national security and political stability.

- **Security Response:** The state has relied heavily on coercive measures, including the deployment of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and police forces. This has been accompanied by widespread arrests, restrictions on internet access, and stringent judicial action, including the awarding of capital punishment in certain protest-related cases.

Iranian Civil Society and Protesters

- **Continued Resistance:** Despite sustained repression, resistance has not fully subsided. Protest activity has adapted into decentralized and low visibility forms such as night-time slogans, wall graffiti, labour strikes, and symbolic acts of defiance.
- **Expansion of Demands:** What began as protests over specific issues such as hijab enforcement and economic hardship has broadened into demands for fundamental political change. Popular slogans such as “Woman, Life, Freedom” reflect a direct challenge to the authority of the Supreme Leader and the existing political order.

International Actors

- **United States:** Former President Donald Trump has issued repeated warnings under the slogan “Make Iran Great Again,” threatening intervention if executions of protesters continue. The United States has also warned of imposing a 25 percent tariff on countries that maintain commercial relations with Iran.
- **Russia:** Moscow has openly supported the Iranian government, accusing Western powers of deliberately destabilizing the country. In the context of its own isolation following the Ukraine conflict, Russia has deepened military and economic cooperation with Tehran.
- **United Nations:** The UN Human Rights Council has established independent fact-finding mechanisms to examine allegations of human rights violations during the protests, increasing international scrutiny of Iran’s internal actions.

WHAT COULD BE THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON THE REGION?

- **Economic Disruptions:** The region occupies a pivotal position in the global economy, particularly in energy and trade. Iran alone contributes around 4 percent of global oil supply, while key chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz handle nearly 20 percent of global oil flows, alongside other vital routes like the Suez Canal. Any instability can therefore trigger sharp spikes in energy prices, disrupt food and commodity supply chains, and generate shortages far beyond the region. Prolonged economic breakdown would deepen poverty, unemployment, and inequality across West Asia and adjoining regions.
- **Escalation of Proxy Conflicts:** Iran has long supported a network of non-state actors, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shia militias in Iraq and Syria. Domestic turmoil or a shift in Iran’s strategic outlook could reshape this pattern. If Tehran turns inward, support to proxies may decline, altering regional power balances. Conversely, hardline elements may intensify external aggression to project strength and divert attention from internal unrest, raising the risk of wider regional confrontation.
- **Actions by Regional Rivals:** Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE may interpret Iran’s internal crisis as an opportunity to weaken its strategic position. This could result in increased covert operations, diplomatic pressure, or efforts to isolate Iran further within regional and international forums.
- **Refugee Crisis:** A violent crackdown or prolonged instability could generate fresh waves of refugees. Neighboring countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq would be the first to feel the impact, placing additional strain on already stretched economic and social systems.
- **Ideological Ripple Effects:** If protest movements in Iran achieve tangible outcomes, they could inspire reformist or opposition forces elsewhere in the region, particularly in societies marked by youth discontent and economic distress. On the other hand, a severe and successful repression may have the opposite effect, discouraging democratic movements and reinforcing the perception that entrenched authoritarian regimes are difficult to challenge.

WHAT COULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS FOR INDIA OR INDIAN INTERESTS IN THE REGION?

- **Chabahar Port:** Chabahar remains India’s most strategically important asset in Iran, providing a crucial alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia that bypasses Pakistan. Although India secured a 10-year agreement for operating the Shahid Beheshti terminal in 2024, the recent withdrawal of a long-standing U.S. sanctions exemption has created uncertainty. At present, India is functioning under a temporary waiver that is valid only until April 2026, making the project vulnerable to geopolitical shifts.

- **Trade Disruptions:** Iran was once a major destination for Indian agricultural exports, particularly basmati rice. However, trade has largely stalled due to sanctions and Iran’s currency collapse. The sharp depreciation of the Iranian rial has left importers unable to settle payments, resulting in more than ₹2,000 crore in outstanding dues to Indian exporters.
- **Energy Security and Inflation:** Although India has not imported Iranian crude since 2019, regional instability still affects its energy security. Tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant share of global oil passes, contribute to price volatility. For India, every \$10 rise in global oil prices typically widens the current account deficit substantially, pushing up domestic fuel prices and inflation.
- **Safety of the Indian Diaspora:** Escalation of conflict or proxy warfare could endanger Indian expatriate communities, particularly the nearly 8 million Indians living across the Gulf region. Security concerns have already prompted India to issue a “Strong Leave Now” advisory for its more than 10,000 citizens currently in Iran, many of whom are students or pilgrims.
- **Impact on Afghanistan:** Iran plays a significant role in Afghanistan’s political and economic landscape. Instability within Iran could spill over into Afghanistan, complicating India’s efforts to support stability, humanitarian assistance, and development projects there.
- **Terrorism and Radicalisation Risks:** Wider regional unrest may embolden extremist and radical groups, potentially spilling over into South Asia. For India, this raises concerns about internal security, particularly in sensitive regions such as Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Diplomatic Balancing Pressures:** India maintains working relationships with Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. A deepening crisis would intensify the challenge of balancing these ties, especially if tensions escalate between Washington and Tehran. In such a scenario, India could face pressure from secondary sanctions, constraining its energy and trade engagement with Iran.
- **China’s Expanding Role:** Periods of crisis often create strategic vacuums. China may use the situation to deepen its influence in Iran through infrastructure investment, long-term strategic partnerships, and Belt and Road Initiative projects. This could gradually marginalise India’s role and reduce its strategic space in the region.

INDIA-EU RELATIONSHIP



The India-EU trade agreement, which is expected to be signed on January 26, is considered to be the most comprehensive & mutually advantageous agreement for both the sides. The India-EU trade agreement has been decades in the making. Both have finally come close to signing the agreement after talks were re-launched in 2022. Negotiations were started in 2007, but abandoned in 2013.

What is the SIGNIFICANCE of India-EU Relations?

- Major Trading Partner —

- EU is India's 2nd largest trading partner
→ (\$137 Billion Trade in 2024-25)
- EU is India's #1 Export Destination.

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) —

- 17% of FDI Inflow
→ EU FDI to India ↑ 70% (2015-2022)

- Shared Values —

- Democracy, Rule of Law & Human Rights

- Multipolar World Balance —

- Counter to Unipolar or Bipolar Powers

- Supply Chain Diversification —

- 'China +1' Strategy & 'Make in India'

- BTIA Negotiations —

- Comprehensive FTA Talks
→ Boost Trade & Investment

- The China Factor —

- Strategic Challenge for Both India & EU

What are the CHALLENGES to the India-EU relationship?

— Stalled Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations —

- BTIA talks started in 2007, paused in 2013; slow, difficult restarts. Symbolic hurdle.
- Key sticking points:
 - Market Access: EU wants lower tariffs on automobiles, wines, spirits, and dairy products. India seeks greater access for its professionals (made: 4 services) and easier visa regimes.
 - Geographical Indications (GIs): EU strongly protects GIs (like Champagne, Parmesan), which can conflict with generic names used in India (e.g., "Scotch Whisky").
 - Data Localization & Digital Trade: India's data privacy and localization rules are a major concern for EU digital firms.

— Sustainable Development —

- EU insists on linking trade to strict labor and environmental standards, which India views as potential non-tariff barriers.

— Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) —

- This new tax on carbon-intensive imports (like steel, cement, aluminum) is seen by India as discriminatory and a de facto trade barrier that could hurt its exports.

— Technology Transfer and Digital Regulations —

- While India seeks greater technology transfer, concerns over data privacy, digital sovereignty, and cybersecurity regulations (like EU's GDPR) create hurdles for Indian businesses.

— Visa and Mobility Issues —

- Indian students and professionals face strict visa, work permit, and mobility regulations in the EU, limiting people-to-people and business links.

— Defence and Strategic Divergences —

- India's dependence on Russian defence systems limits deeper collaboration with Europe on advanced military technology for e.g. Despite projects like submarine collaborations with France and C-295 Aircraft with Spain, EU-India defence ties lag behind those with the US or Russia.

What have been the INITIATIVES to bolster the India-EU relationship?

- Resumption of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations —
 - FTA & IPA talks restarted in 2021 after 9-year hiatus to boost trade & investment opportunities.
 - Key Focus Areas:
 - Market Access, Resilient Supply Chains,
 - Digital & Green Transitions.
- India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) —
 - Launched in 2022, is a strategic forum for cooperation in
 - Strategic Technologies & Digital Governance
 - Green & Clean Energy Technologies
 - Trade & Investment Resilience.
- High-Level Dialogue on Trade & Investment —
 - Ministerial-level talks for regular strategic engagement and addressing market access barriers.
- India-EU Strategic Partnership Roadmap to 2025 —
 - Adopted in 2020, guides joint actions in trade, climate, security, and sustainable development.
- Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) & Maritime Security —
 - India and EU on cooperate maritime security & stability in Indo-EU.
- India-EU Strategic Partnership - A Roadmap to 2025 —
 - Provides political interest in trade, energy, & stability.
- Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) & Maritime Security —
 - Deeper collaboration on green hydrogen, renewable energy.
- India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) —
 - Major connectivity project linking, India, Middle East, & Europe for trade, energy, & digital cooperation.

WAY FORWARD

- **Fast Tracking FTA Negotiations with Pragmatism:** India and the EU need to move forward with trade negotiations through a calibrated and flexible approach. Sensitive sectors should be addressed in a phased manner rather than through rigid all at once commitments. Greater regulatory convergence can be achieved through mutual recognition agreements, while outstanding concerns related to market access, intellectual property protection, and sustainability norms should be resolved through dialogue rather than conditionality.
- **Deepening Technology and Innovation Collaboration:** A structured framework for technology cooperation is essential to ensure fair technology transfer and shared access to innovation ecosystems. Cooperation should focus on frontier areas such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, cybersecurity, and digital manufacturing. Data sharing arrangements must strike a balance between privacy safeguards and innovation needs. Europe's strengths in deep technology and advanced manufacturing complement India's advantages in software, digital public infrastructure such as UPI, and scalable platforms. Together, they can jointly lead innovation in clean energy, biotechnology, ocean sustainability, food systems, and resilient healthcare.
- **Resolving Climate and Energy Policy Frictions:** Both sides should develop a common roadmap for climate action that aligns renewable energy investments and green transition policies. Special attention is required to address the implications of mechanisms such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism so that Indian exports are not unfairly disadvantaged. Expanding financial support and technology cooperation in areas such as green hydrogen, energy storage, and carbon neutrality will strengthen climate partnership while preserving development space.

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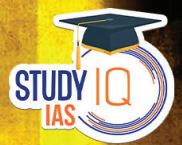
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- **Expanding Security and Defence Cooperation:** India and the EU should explore deeper defence industrial collaboration through joint production and co development of military platforms. Cooperation in maritime security in the Indo Pacific, along with enhanced cybersecurity and intelligence sharing, will strengthen collective resilience. India's interest in participating in EU initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation and concluding a Security of Information Agreement reflects growing strategic convergence.
- **Reinforcing Multilateral Coordination:** Both partners should intensify coordination in global forums such as the United Nations, G20, and World Trade Organization to address shared challenges including supply chain resilience, digital governance, climate change, and global health. Joint efforts should also focus on reforming multilateral institutions so that they better represent contemporary global power realities and emerging economies.
- **Facilitating Human Mobility and Knowledge Exchange:** A comprehensive mobility framework for students, researchers, scientists, and professionals would deepen people to people ties and expand innovation capacity on both sides. Such mobility can help address skill shortages, support employment generation, and foster cross border knowledge creation. In a knowledge driven global economy, the movement of ideas and talent is as critical as the movement of capital.

CONCLUSION

India and the European Union must unlock the full potential of their partnership by cooperating across critical and emerging technologies, strengthening resilient supply chains, and enhancing strategic and security collaboration. By building mutual trust, shaping global governance, and upholding shared commitments to democracy, rule of law, and multilateralism, the partnership can emerge as a stabilising force in an increasingly fragmented world order.

INDIA-UAE RELATIONS



INDIA-UAE RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has recently visited New Delhi. Both the countries have agreed upon a range of bilateral agreements & outcomes, from defense to space & LNG. This visit holds significant importance particularly against the backdrop of growing military tension in the Gulf region..

Agreements signed during the 2026 visit:

- Strategic Defense Partnership —

- Signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to establish a formal framework for defense industrial collaboration, cybersecurity, and joint technology development.

- Space Ecosystem —

- An LoI between IN-SPACe (India) and the UAE Space Agency was signed to develop joint infrastructure, including launch complexes, satellite fabrication facilities, and joint space missions.

- 10-Year LNG Deal —

- A \$3 billion agreement was signed between HPCL and ADNOC Gas. The UAE will supply 0.5 million tonnes of LNG per annum to India for 10 years, starting in 2028.

- Civil Nuclear Push —

- Following India's new SHANTI Law (2025), both nations agreed to explore partnerships in advanced nuclear technologies, specifically focusing on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and large nuclear reactors.

- Digital Embassies —

- Both sides agreed to explore the establishment of "Digital/Data Embassies" to store sovereign data across borders under mutually recognized sovereignty arrangements.

- Supercomputing Cluster —

- An agreement between C-DAC (India) and G42 (UAE) was reached to set up a supercomputing cluster in India as part of the AI India Mission.

- Agri-Export Boost —

- An MoU was signed between APEDA (India) and the UAE Ministry of Climate Change to streamline food safety and technical standards, facilitating easier export of Indian rice and produce.

- House of India —

- Announced the establishment of a permanent cultural space called the "House of India" in Abu Dhabi to showcase Indian art and heritage.

Evolution of India-UAE Relations

— Historical & Maritime Foundations (Pre-1971) —

- The bond predates the formation of the UAE. For centuries, the Malabar coast and the Arabian Peninsula were linked by maritime trade.
- Indian seafarers exchanged spices, textiles, and precious stones for dates and pearls.
- Until 1966, the Gulf Rupee (issued by the Reserve Bank of India) was the official currency in the region, illustrating the deep economic integration.

— Diplomatic Birth & The “Oil-Labor” Era (1971-2014) —

- Following the unification of the UAE in 1971, formal diplomatic ties were established in 1972.
- The relationship was primarily defined by two factors:
 - India's need for crude oil and the UAE's need for labor to build its infrastructure.
- This era saw a massive influx of Indian blue-collar workers.

— The Strategic Leap (2015-Present) —

- The visit of PM Narendra Modi in 2015 marked a “renaissance” in bilateral ties.
- Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2017): The relationship was formally elevated during MBZ's visit as the Chief Guest for India's Republic Day.
- The signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2022 transformed the economic landscape.

— House of India —

- Announced the establishment of a permanent cultural space called the “House of India” in Abu Dhabi to showcase Indian art and heritage.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA-UAE RELATIONS

- **Geopolitical Importance:** The UAE occupies a central position in West Asia and the broader Islamic world, particularly within the Gulf Cooperation Council. A strong partnership with Abu Dhabi enhances India's diplomatic reach across the Middle East and improves its engagement with Arab states. Both India and the UAE value strategic autonomy in a region marked by rivalry and flux. Their partnership offers India a dependable anchor in West Asia, especially amid evolving power equations such as renewed Saudi-Pakistan defence cooperation. The UAE also plays an important role in advancing India's interests in multilateral and minilateral platforms including I2U2, BRICS, and the United Nations, thereby strengthening India's global diplomatic voice.
- **Economic and Trade Significance:** The UAE has emerged as one of India's most important commercial partners. It is India's third largest trading partner and the second largest destination for Indian exports. Bilateral trade crossed the hundred billion dollar mark in financial year 2024-25, driven significantly by the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement signed in 2022. Beyond trade, the relationship has evolved into an investment driven partnership. UAE sovereign wealth funds have made large scale commitments in Indian infrastructure, renewable energy, logistics, and technology sectors, including a pledged seventy five billion dollars in infrastructure investment. Additionally, the UAE functions as a major logistics and re export hub. Ports such as Jebel Ali enable Indian goods to access markets in West Asia, Africa, and Europe with efficiency.
- **Energy Security Dimension:** The UAE remains a reliable supplier of crude oil and liquefied natural gas for India, contributing to India's energy stability. At the same time, cooperation is expanding into clean energy. UAE investments in India's solar sector and other renewable projects signal a gradual shift from a hydrocarbon centric relationship toward a diversified energy partnership.
- **Diaspora and Remittance Linkages:** The Indian community in the UAE, numbering around three and a half million people, constitutes the largest expatriate population in the country and forms the backbone of several sectors of its economy. Remittances from the UAE represent the single largest source of inflows to India, contributing between fifteen and eighteen billion dollars annually. These flows are crucial for household incomes and foreign exchange stability, particularly in states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. Beyond economics, the diaspora acts as a living conduit of cultural exchange and mutual trust.
- **Strategic and Security Cooperation:** India and the UAE have strengthened cooperation in counter terrorism, intelligence sharing, and deradicalisation efforts. Defence engagement has expanded through regular joint military exercises, naval



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The advertisement features a background image of the Indian Parliament building. On the right side, there is a portrait of Shashank Tyagi, a man with a beard wearing a light blue suit and a green tie. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts, including white, red, and black. The 'STUDY IQ IAS' logo is in the top right corner.

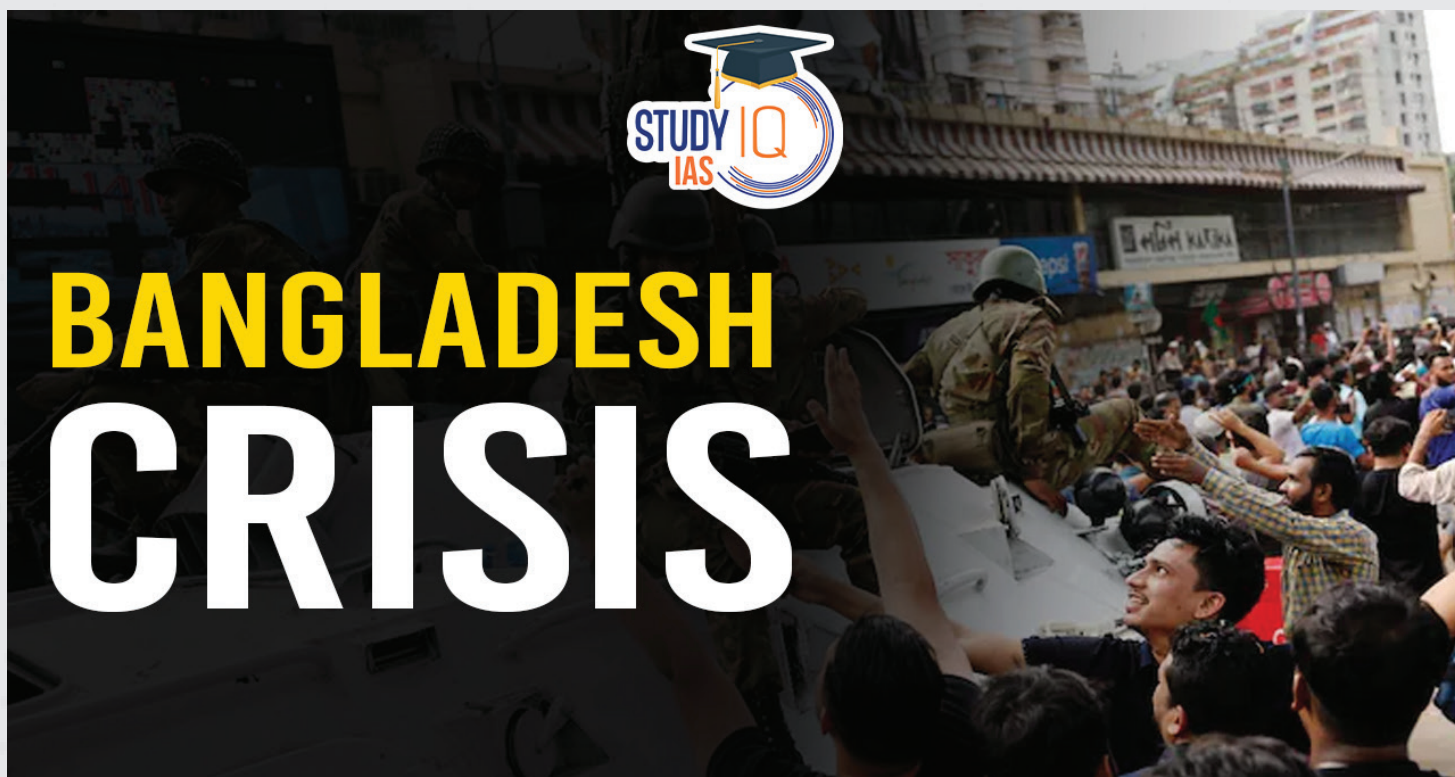
port calls, and institutional defence dialogues. Maritime security collaboration in the Gulf and the western Indian Ocean is particularly important, given India's dependence on these sea lanes for trade and energy imports.

- **Cultural and Soft Power Dimensions:** Cultural ties have acquired new visibility with the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi. The temple stands as a powerful symbol of religious tolerance and mutual respect, significantly enhancing India's soft power presence in the region.

CHALLENGES IN INDIA-UAE RELATIONS

- **Economic and Trade Related Issues:** Despite the CEPA, Indian exporters continue to face non tariff barriers such as strict standards, certification requirements, and customs procedures that limit market access. Trade imbalances persist, largely due to India's heavy imports of oil and gold from the UAE. Although diversification is underway, hydrocarbons still dominate economic exchanges, exposing both economies to global price volatility and the accelerating global transition toward green energy.
- **Geopolitical Balancing Pressures:** The UAE maintains long standing ties with Pakistan even as it has elevated its partnership with India. This requires India to carefully manage regional tensions, as instability in South Asia directly affects Gulf security. Similarly, India's engagement with Iran, particularly in relation to Chabahar Port and energy interests, demands diplomatic finesse given the UAE's historically cautious approach toward Tehran. The evolving Middle Eastern landscape, shaped by the Abraham Accords and the UAE's growing engagement with China, further complicates strategic calculations.
- **Diaspora Related Concerns:** Changes in labour policies and visa regimes, including Emiratization initiatives, can generate uncertainty for Indian workers, especially those in low skilled sectors. Ensuring worker welfare, fair employment conditions, timely wage payments, and legal protection remains an ongoing priority for Indian diplomacy.

BANGLADESH CRISIS



Bangladesh has once again entered a phase of serious political instability following the death of July Revolution leader Sharif Osman Hadi due to gunshot injuries. His death acted as a catalytic event, converting underlying political dissatisfaction into open mass mobilisation across Dhaka. What began as grief quickly transformed into protests targeting state institutions and media houses, reflecting anger not just at the incident but at the broader political order.

The unrest soon acquired a regional and diplomatic dimension. Demonstrations were reported near the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and Assistant High Commissions in Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi.

India & Bangladesh: Shared History & Culture

Shared Bengali Culture
(Language, Literature, Music, Traditions)



1952 Language Movement



1971 Liberation War
(India's Support)



Emotional Memory
(Gratitude & Trust)

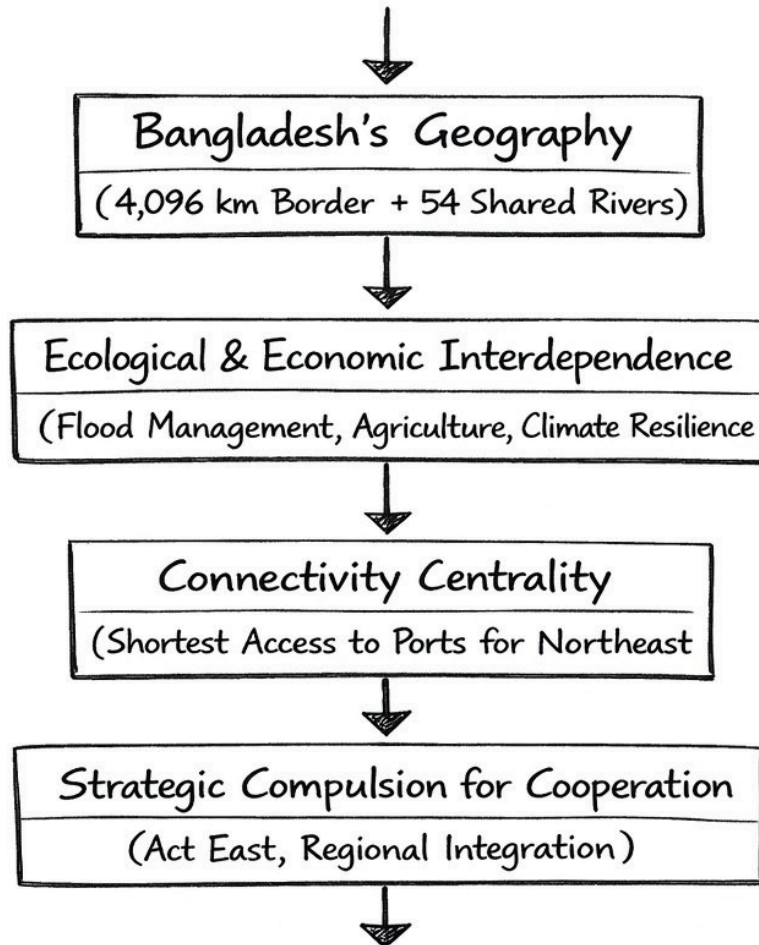


Political Goodwill
(Resilient Diplomatic Ties)



Shared Suffering → Shared Memory → Political Goodwill

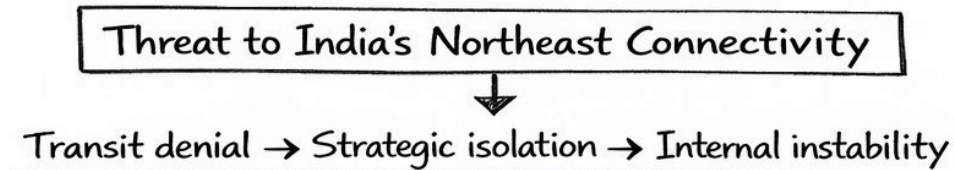
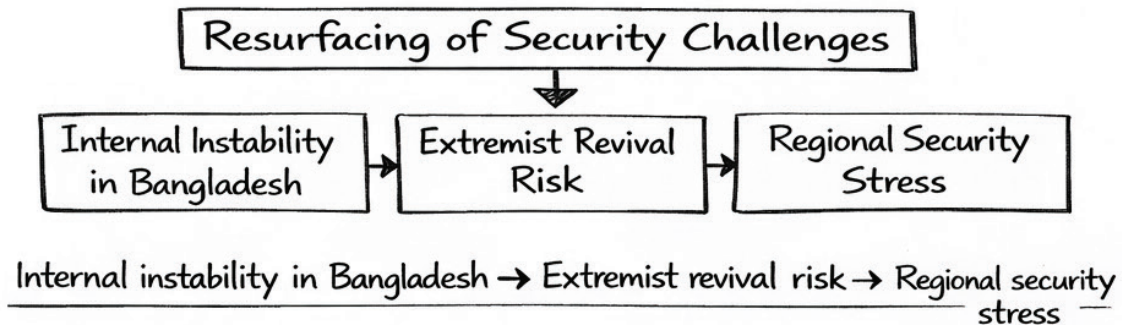
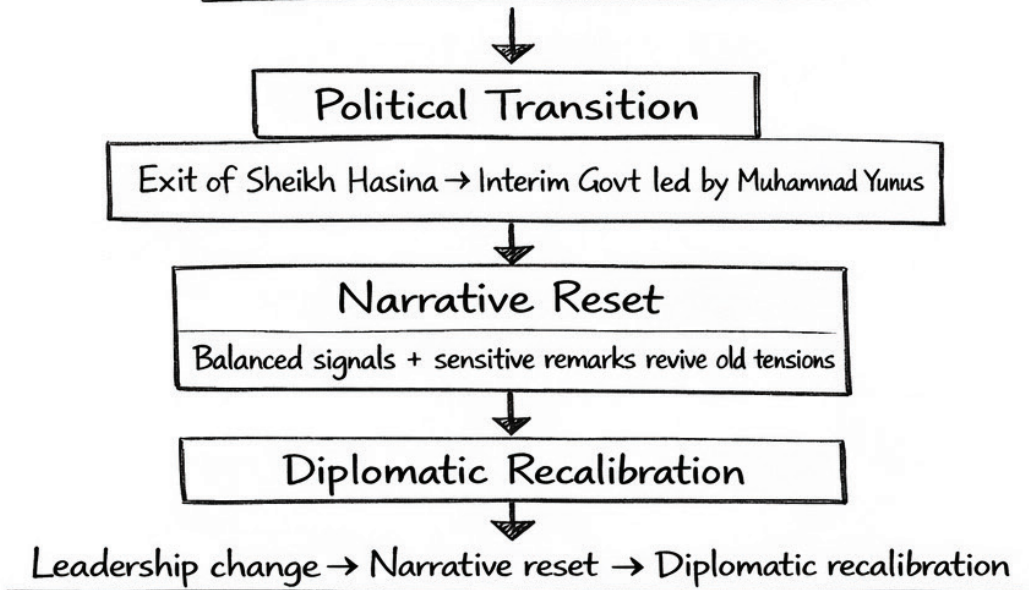
India & Bangladesh: Geography and Connectivity



Geography → Connectivity Dependence → Strategic Compulsion

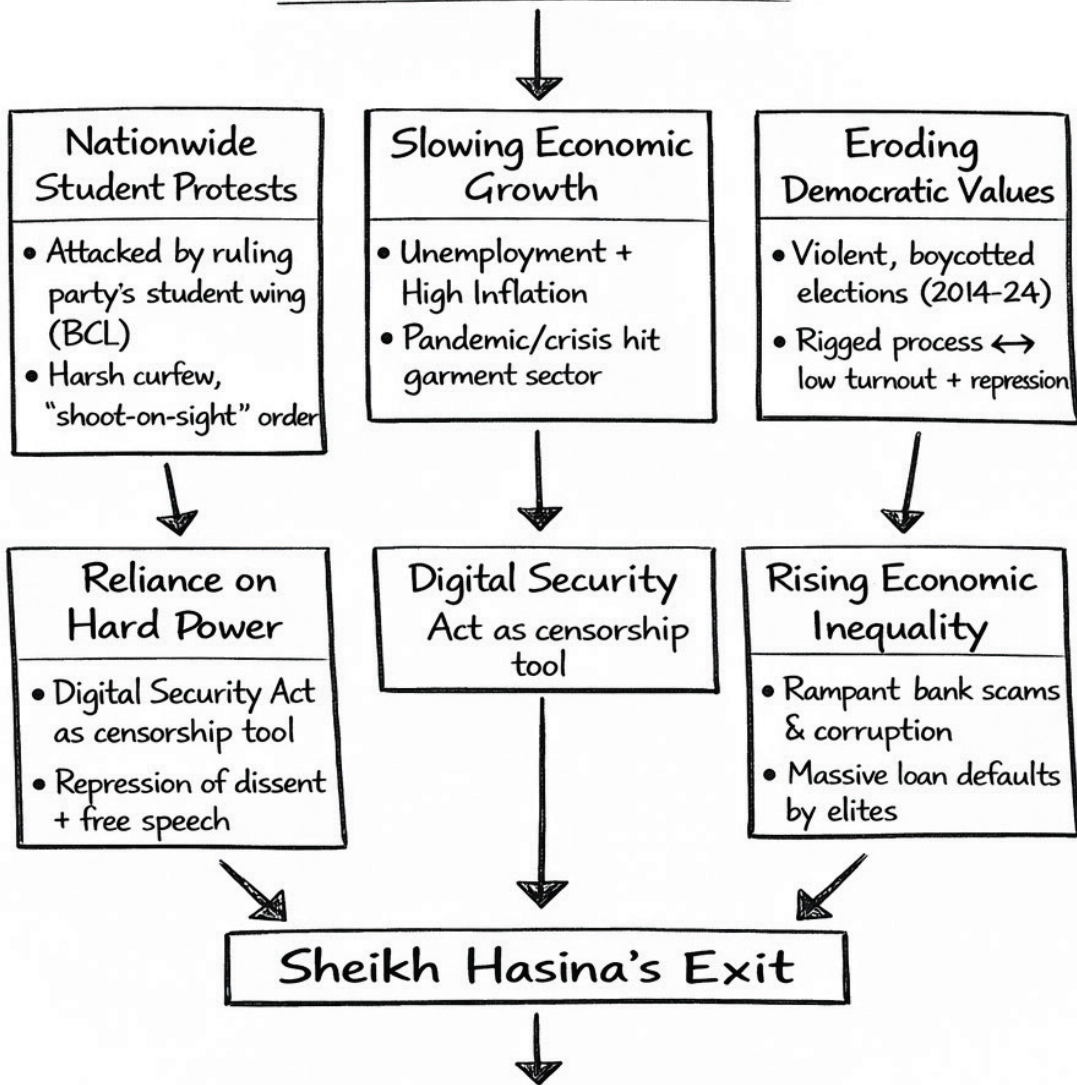
Any deterioration in relations directly raises India's logistical costs and security risks in the region.

Political Evolution and Recent Developments 2024-25



This makes stable ties with Dhaka a strategic necessity rather than a diplomatic preference.

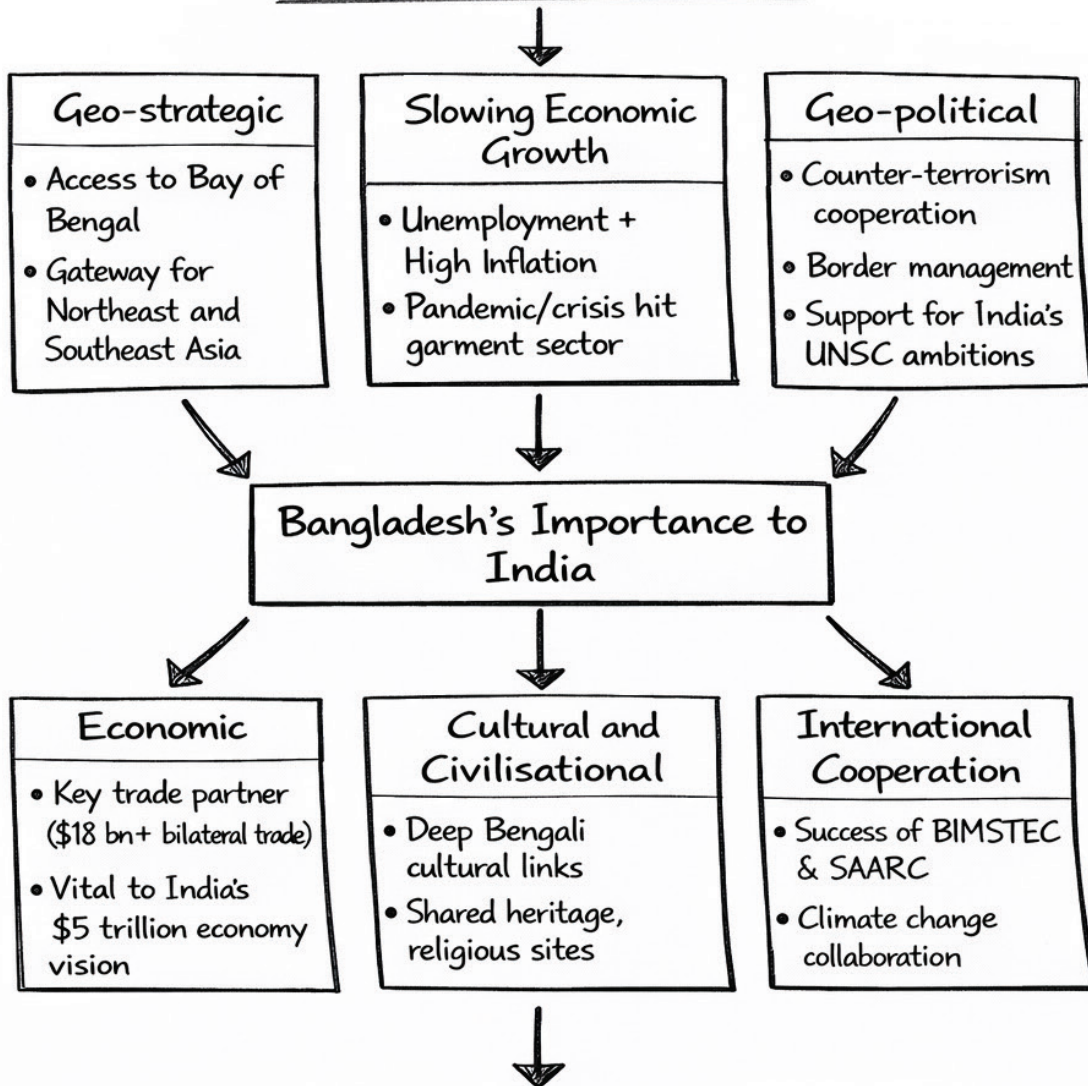
Reasons Behind Sheikh Hasina's Exit



Internal instability in Bangladesh → Repression of dissent + free speech

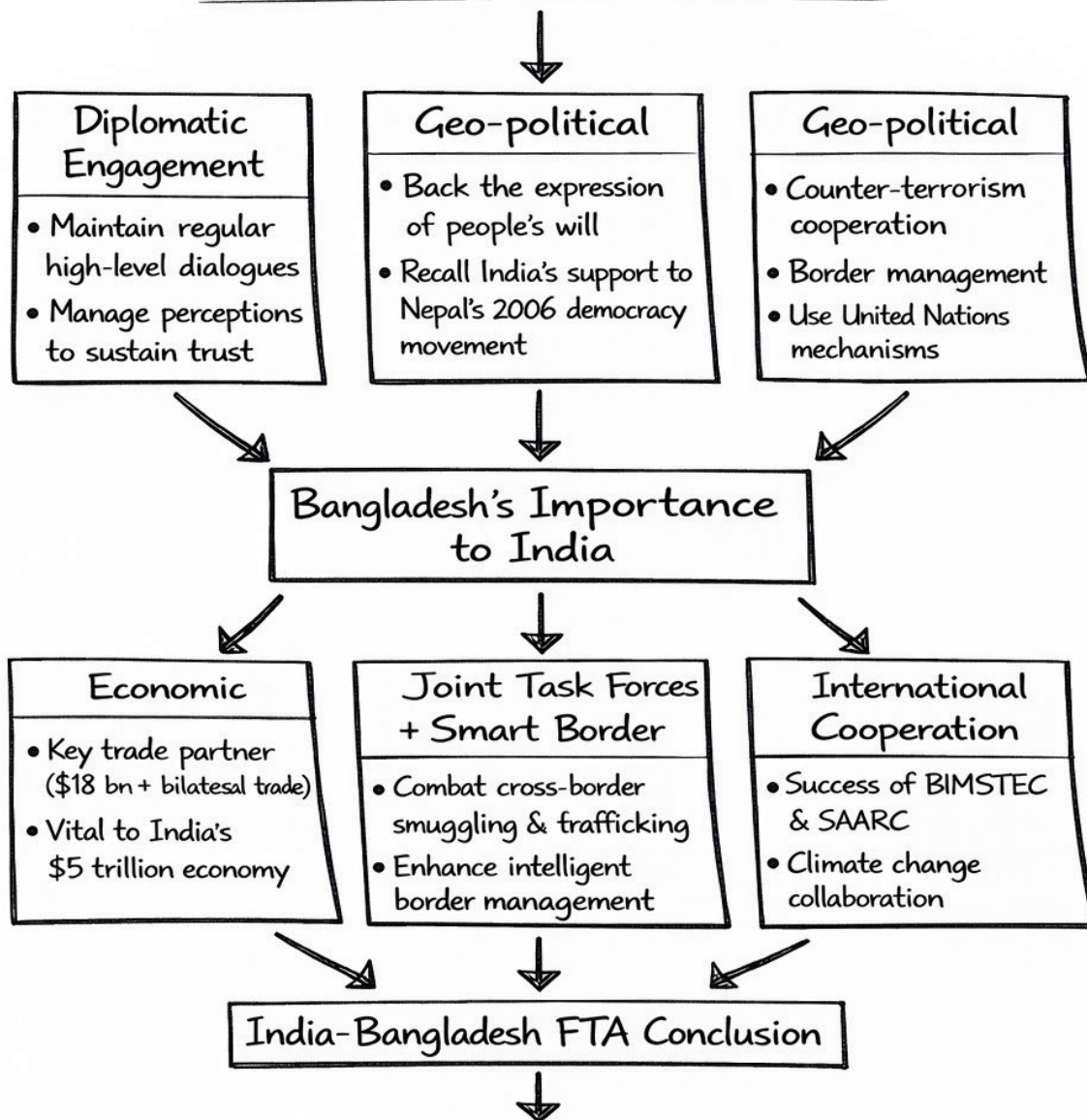
Thus, Bangladesh's internal politics are no longer separable from India's national security calculus.

Significance of Bangladesh for India



Bangladesh's stability and goodwill are key to India's regional and global ambitions.

India's Approach to Managing the Bangladesh Crisis



Balance principles with pragmatism: Prioritize stability while preparing for future opportunities.

SCHOLARLY OPINIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMENTARIES ON INDIA–BANGLADESH RELATIONS

- **Riva Ganguly Das**, former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, argues that India–Bangladesh relations are best understood as a case of “functional interdependence,” where cooperation on connectivity, energy, and security has historically insulated bilateral ties from periodic political churn in Dhaka. She cautions, however, that over-identification with a single political leadership risks weakening India’s leverage during regime transitions.
- **Harsh V. Pant** observes that Bangladesh represents one of India’s most successful neighbourhood relationships, largely because New Delhi moved beyond a security-only lens to embrace trade, transit, and developmental partnerships. He notes that political instability in Dhaka tests this model, but abandoning engagement would only create strategic space for China and Pakistan.
- **Sreeradha Datta** highlights that domestic political changes in Bangladesh have repeatedly altered the tone, but not the structural importance, of India–Bangladesh relations. She argues that issues such as river water sharing, minority protection, and border management resurface during transitions, making sustained institutional dialogue more important than leader-centric diplomacy.
- **C. Raja Mohan** points out that Bangladesh’s geography makes it “indispensable” for India’s eastern strategy. According to him, any instability in Dhaka directly affects India’s Northeast connectivity and Bay of Bengal strategy, forcing India to prioritise pragmatic engagement over normative posturing during political crises.
- **Amitabh Mattoo** stresses that India’s credibility in Bangladesh depends on its ability to balance democratic values with strategic restraint. He argues that overt political signalling during internal crises can backfire, reinforcing perceptions of Indian interference and strengthening nationalist or anti-India narratives within Bangladesh.
- **Constantino Xavier** notes that China’s expanding footprint in Bangladesh must be seen less as ideological alignment and more as infrastructure-driven opportunism. He argues that political instability in Dhaka lowers bargaining capacity, allowing Beijing to expand influence unless India responds with patient, long-term economic engagement rather than reactive diplomacy.
- **Veena Sikri**, former Indian diplomat, emphasises that people-to-people ties and historical memory of 1971 continue to act as stabilisers in India–Bangladesh relations. However, she warns that generational change and new political actors in Bangladesh may not share the same emotional connect, requiring India to recalibrate its narrative outreach.
- **Bangladeshi scholar Imtiaz Ahmed** argues that India’s biggest challenge in Bangladesh is perception management. He notes that while India views itself as a benign partner, segments of Bangladeshi society interpret Indian actions through a prism of asymmetry and dominance, especially during periods of internal political stress.

HOW TO USE THESE SCHOLARLY VIEWS IN ANSWERS

- Use **Riva Ganguly Das** or **Harsh Pant** while discussing continuity and resilience in India–Bangladesh relations
- Use **C. Raja Mohan** or **Constantino Xavier** when analysing strategic geography, China factor, and connectivity
- Use **Amitabh Mattoo** to balance democracy versus realism in India’s response
- Use **Imtiaz Ahmed** to add a rare Bangladeshi perspective and score differentiation marks

You can write lines like: “Scholars such as C. Raja Mohan argue that Bangladesh’s geography makes stability in Dhaka a strategic compulsion for India rather than a diplomatic choice.”

WHERE TO USE IN UPSC

- **PSIR Paper II**
 - India–Bangladesh relations
 - Domestic politics and foreign policy linkage
 - China’s role in South Asia
- **GS Paper II**
 - India and its neighbourhood
 - Foreign policy challenges
 - Protection of minorities abroad

- **Essay**
 - India’s neighbourhood diplomacy
 - Stability versus democracy in South Asia

WHERE TO USE IN UPSC

GS Paper II

Use in questions related to:

- India and its Neighbourhood
- Role of Diaspora and People-to-People Ties
- Protection of Minorities and India’s Constitutional Values

Best fit for questions like: “Discuss how political instability in neighbouring countries impacts India’s internal security and foreign policy.”

GS Paper III

Use selectively under:

- Internal Security
- Border Management
- Role of External State and Non-State Actors
- Especially relevant while linking: **Bangladesh instability → Northeast security → border crime → radicalisation**

Essay Paper

Highly suitable for essays on:

- “India’s neighbourhood policy in a changing regional order”
- “Democracy and stability in South Asia”
- “Soft power as a tool of foreign policy”
- You can use: **1971 legacy → current instability → need for mature neighbourhood diplomacy**

PSIR Optional Paper II

Direct application in sections on:

- India’s Foreign Policy
- India and its Neighbours
- Regional Security in South Asia
- Ideal for 15 or 20 marker answers asking about: India–Bangladesh relations
- Impact of regime change on bilateral ties
- Neighbourhood First policy challenges

PSIR Optional Paper I (Selective Use)

Use conceptually under:

- State behaviour and legitimacy
- Democracy, protest movements, and political authority
- Relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy

Indian Government and Politics (IGP)

CENTRAL-STATE TRANSFERS



INTRODUCTION

Understanding Central Transfers in India

Central Transfers refer to the financial resources allocated by the central government to state governments in India to address fiscal imbalances and support public expenditure. These transfers primarily occur through tax devolution and grants recommended by the Finance Commission. They ensure equitable resource distribution across states with varying revenue capacities. Finance Commissions determine both the overall share to States & the formula for tax devolution.

Reasons for Transfers:

- **Vertical Equity:** Ensuring that states have enough money to perform the duties assigned to them by the Constitution.
- **Horizontal Equity:** Reducing the gap between rich and poor states. For example, a state with less industrial activity needs extra help to provide the same level of education or infrastructure as a wealthy state.

Types of Central Transfers

Tax Devolution	Grants-in-Aid	Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fixed percentage of the total taxes collected by the Centre is shared with states. This is currently around 41%.• e.g. Sharing of GST or Corporation Tax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific sums of money given to states. These can be "untied" (spend on anything)", "tied" (must be used for a specific project), e.g. Disaster relief funds or revenue deficit grants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funds provided for specific national priorities where the Centre and State share the cost.• e.g. National Health Mission or PM Awas Yojana.

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WHY ARE CENTRAL TRANSFERS IMPORTANT?

- **Addressing Vertical Fiscal Imbalance:** India's constitutional design deliberately assigns the Union government the most elastic and high-growth tax instruments such as income tax, customs duties, and corporation tax. In contrast, states are responsible for expenditure-heavy functions including healthcare delivery, school education, law and order, and social welfare. This asymmetry would leave states fiscally constrained if they relied solely on their own revenues. Central transfers bridge this gap by ensuring that states possess adequate financial capacity to perform the functions entrusted to them.
- **Advancing Horizontal Equity Across States:** Economic capacities vary sharply across Indian states due to differences in geography, industrialisation, and historical development. While states like Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu can mobilise large revenues through industry and services, others such as Bihar or hill states face structural limitations. Central transfers follow the principle of fiscal equalisation, deliberately reallocating resources to weaker states so that basic public services such as primary healthcare, schooling, and infrastructure do not depend entirely on a state's inherent revenue base.
- **Ensuring Fiscal Stability and Shock Absorption:** The Union government enjoys superior borrowing capacity and macroeconomic credibility compared to individual states. This enables it to function as a fiscal stabiliser during crises. In the event of natural disasters, pandemics, or regional economic downturns, central assistance prevents sudden fiscal collapse at the state level. Transfers thus operate as a risk-pooling mechanism, insulating state finances from asymmetric economic shocks.
- **Enabling Implementation of National Developmental Goals:** Certain policy objectives require nationwide coordination, such as universal immunisation, rural housing, or electrification. Through Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the Centre channels earmarked funds that encourage states to align with common developmental priorities. This mechanism allows the Union to steer national outcomes while formally preserving state-level administrative autonomy.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICISMS OF CENTRAL TRANSFERS?

- **Perceived North–South Fiscal Imbalance:** Economically advanced southern and western states argue that they contribute a disproportionately high share to central tax collections but receive relatively limited returns through devolution. They particularly contest the use of population-based criteria, claiming that states which achieved demographic stabilisation are effectively penalised, while those with poorer outcomes gain larger allocations.
- **Excessive Conditionality and Loss of State Autonomy:** A substantial portion of transfers is routed through tied grants under centrally designed schemes. States contend that this undermines federal autonomy by compelling them to prioritise centrally defined agendas over region-specific developmental needs, reducing flexibility in budgetary decision-making.
- **Uniform Programme Design Across Diverse Regions:** Central schemes often apply standardised templates across vastly different socio-economic contexts. Programmes suitable for tribal or mountainous regions may prove inefficient in urbanised or coastal states, yet compliance becomes necessary to access funds, leading to misallocation and inefficiency.
- **Scope for Political Manipulation:** Discretionary transfers outside formula-based devolution are frequently accused of being influenced by political considerations. Opposition-ruled states often allege that such grants are used selectively to reward aligned governments or exert pressure on rivals.
- **Dilution of Fiscal Discipline:** Guaranteed transfers may weaken incentives for states to enhance their own tax mobilisation or improve compliance. This creates a moral hazard, where dependence on central support discourages innovation in revenue generation at the state level.
- **Encouragement of Fiscal Indiscipline:** When transfers routinely compensate for state-level deficits, they can incentivise overspending. States may adopt expansionary fiscal behaviour in anticipation of eventual central intervention to preserve macroeconomic stability.
- **Long-Term Dependency Risks:** Over time, repeated reliance on transfers can trap states in a cycle of fiscal dependence, where development planning becomes contingent on central allocations rather than endogenous growth strategies.
- **Efficiency Losses in Resource Allocation:** Critics argue that diverting resources from high-productivity states to low-productivity regions may sometimes reduce overall economic efficiency, as capital is shifted away from areas where returns are higher.

- **Shrinking Divisible Pool Through Cesses and Surcharges:** The increasing use of cesses and surcharges, which bypass revenue-sharing arrangements, has effectively reduced the pool of taxes available for devolution. States view this as a dilution of cooperative federalism and an erosion of their constitutionally envisaged fiscal share.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE WAY FORWARD?

- **Revising the Devolution Formula:** Assigning greater weight to Gross State Domestic Product would better capture states' contributions to national income and improve perceptions of distributive fairness within the transfer system.
- **Broadening the Divisible Pool:** Including cesses and surcharges within the divisible pool would restore transparency and ensure that states receive their intended share of national tax revenues.
- **Increasing Vertical Devolution:** Given the expanding responsibilities of states in social sectors and climate adaptation, revisiting the current 41 percent devolution ceiling is increasingly being advocated.
- **Incentivising Performance:** Future Finance Commissions are expected to prioritise indicators such as tax effort and demographic outcomes, rewarding states that demonstrate fiscal responsibility and population stabilisation.
- **Balancing Equity with Growth Incentives:** While redistribution toward poorer states remains essential, the formula must avoid discouraging growth-oriented states by excessively flattening returns on performance.
- **Strengthening Local Governments:** Expanding transfers to urban and rural local bodies recognises cities and panchayats as primary drivers of service delivery and economic expansion, requiring predictable and adequate funding.
- **Rationalising Centrally Sponsored Schemes:** Greater flexibility should be provided to states to customise centrally funded programmes according to local conditions rather than adhering to rigid funding ratios.
- **Creating a Permanent Fiscal Coordination Mechanism:** A standing institutional body could oversee borrowing limits and fiscal discipline for both Centre and states, replacing episodic and ad-hoc interventions.
- **Leveraging Technology for Fairer Transfers:** Advanced data analytics can help distinguish where economic value is generated versus where taxes are booked, enabling more evidence-based and equitable fiscal transfers.

UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT (UAPA): CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION





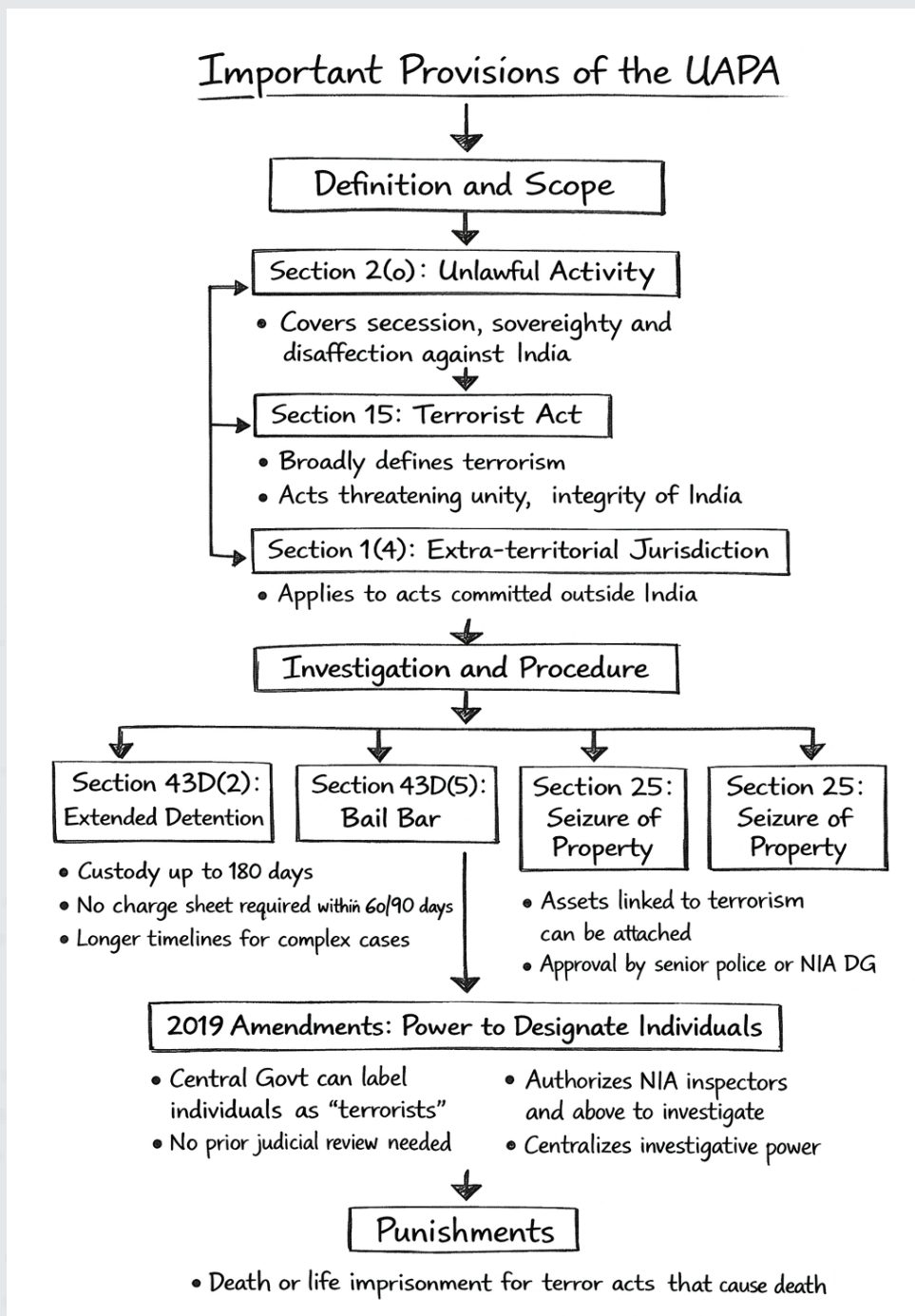
UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT, 1967

INTRODUCTION

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is India's principal counter-terrorism legislation, first enacted in 1967 in the aftermath of the 16th Constitutional Amendment, which empowered the state to impose reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India.

- Over time, the law has undergone major amendments in 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2019, each expanding its scope, investigative powers, and punitive reach.
- 1967 focus on secession
 - post-2004 shift to terrorism
 - post-2019 expansion to individuals
- This evolution reflects India's changing security environment, from secessionist movements to transnational terrorism and network-based radicalisation.

IMPORTANT PROVISIONS OF THE UAPA



SIGNIFICANCE AND RATIONALE OF THE UAPA

- **Preventing Secession** was the original rationale of the Act, targeting movements challenging India's territorial integrity, such as insurgencies in the Northeast and separatist campaigns.
- **Pre-emptive Security Logic** distinguishes UAPA from ordinary criminal law.
 - IPC addresses completed crimes
 - UAPA targets ideological, organisational, and preparatory stages
- **Modern Terror Definition** enables the law to address economic terrorism, counterfeit currency networks, and cyber-enabled terror activities.
- **Network Disruption** through banning organisations and designating individuals helps dismantle leadership structures and prevent lone-wolf attacks.
- **International Obligations** are met through alignment with FATF standards and implementation of UNSC Resolution 1373 on terror financing and asset freezing.
- **Extended Investigation Periods** recognise that terror cases involve cross-border coordination, digital footprints, and clandestine financing channels.

MAJOR CRITICISMS OF THE UAPA

Low Conviction Rates

- Parliamentary data (2025) indicates conviction rates hovering around 3 percent.
- **2019–2023**
 - 10,000+ arrests
 - 335 convictions

This raises concerns about overuse versus effective prosecution.

Prolonged Incarceration Without Trial

- In cases such as Bhima Koregaon and the Delhi Riots conspiracy, accused persons have remained incarcerated for four to five years without trial commencement.
- This creates a punishment-through-process scenario.
- **Arrest**
 - bail denial
 - trial delay
 - liberty erosion

Bail Bar and Prima Facie Standard

- Courts must rely almost exclusively on prosecution material at the bail stage, without cross-examination or defence evidence.
- This undermines the presumption of innocence and converts judicial scrutiny into a largely procedural exercise.

Overbroad Definition of “Unlawful Activity”

- The inclusion of “disaffection against India” raises fears of criminalising dissent, protest, and critical speech, particularly in politically sensitive contexts.

Absence of Sunset Clause

- Unlike TADA and POTA, UAPA has no mandatory parliamentary renewal or periodic review, entrenching extraordinary powers permanently.

Weaponisation Against Dissent

- Human rights organisations and UN Special Rapporteurs have flagged use of UAPA against journalists, human rights defenders, and student activists, including cases like Khurram Parvez.

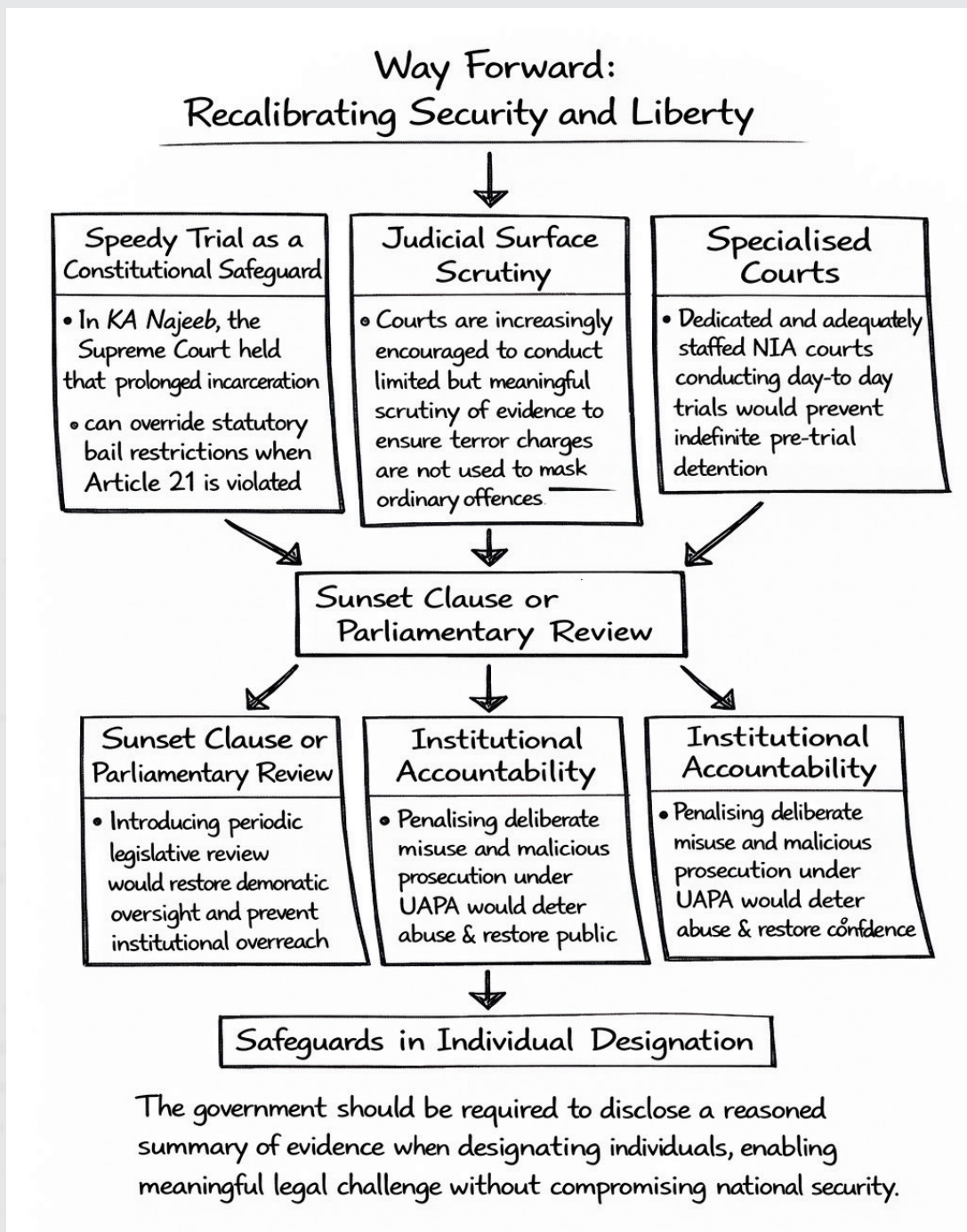
Federalism Concerns

- Policing and public order are state subjects, yet UAPA allows the NIA to take over investigations without state consent.
- **Centralisation**
 - erosion of cooperative federalism

Critique of the 2019 Amendment

- Designating individuals as terrorists without prior judicial determination raises due process concerns and weakens procedural safeguards.

WAY FORWARD



QUOTES YOU CAN USE

- **Justice D. Y. Chandrachud:** “Liberty cannot be sacrificed at the altar of procedure.”
- **Justice Rohinton Nariman:** “A statute which confers draconian powers must be narrowly construed.”
- **Granville Austin:** “The Indian Constitution balances national security with individual freedom, not one against the other.”
- **Supreme Court in KA Najeeb:** “Statutory restrictions do not eclipse constitutional guarantees.”

SCHOLARLY AND EXPERT COMMENTARIES ON UAPA

- **Gautam Bhatia** argues that UAPA represents a shift from criminal justice to preventive national security law, where the process itself becomes punitive due to prolonged incarceration and restricted bail.
- **Faizan Mustafa** highlights that anti-terror laws must meet a higher threshold of procedural fairness, warning that vague definitions and executive discretion risk chilling democratic dissent.
- **Pratap Bhanu Mehta** views UAPA’s expansion as symptomatic of a broader trend where the state prioritises order over deliberative democracy, potentially weakening constitutional culture.
- **Harsh Mander** emphasises that the moral legitimacy of counter-terror laws depends on their sparing and proportionate use, especially against non-violent actors.
- **Supreme Court jurisprudence** increasingly reflects unease with the mechanical application of the bail bar, signalling a constitutional pushback against executive overreach.

WHERE TO USE IN UPSC (PAPER-WISE)

GS Paper II

- Fundamental Rights vs National Security
- Rule of Law and Due Process
- Role of Judiciary in Protecting Liberty

GS Paper III

- Internal Security
- Terrorism and Counter-Terror Frameworks
- Role of NIA and Central Agencies

Essay Paper

- “Liberty and security in a constitutional democracy”
- “When laws meant to protect the state weaken the Constitution”

PSIR Optional Paper II

- Internal security laws and democratic accountability
- National security policy and civil liberties
- Judicial responses to executive power

PSIR Optional Paper I

- State power, coercion, and legitimacy
- Rights, justice, and constitutionalism



RIGHT TO HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Every winter, the national capital and several Indian cities are engulfed in severe smog, resulting in hazardous air quality that disrupts daily life and poses serious public health risks. The recurrence of this crisis has exposed the limitations of policy-based environmental governance and has pushed citizens to seek judicial enforcement of environmental protections.

As environmental degradation increasingly threatens human survival, courts and citizens have begun linking environmental rights directly to the Right to Life under Article 21.

– Environmental harm → Direct impact on health and dignity → Constitutional enforcement

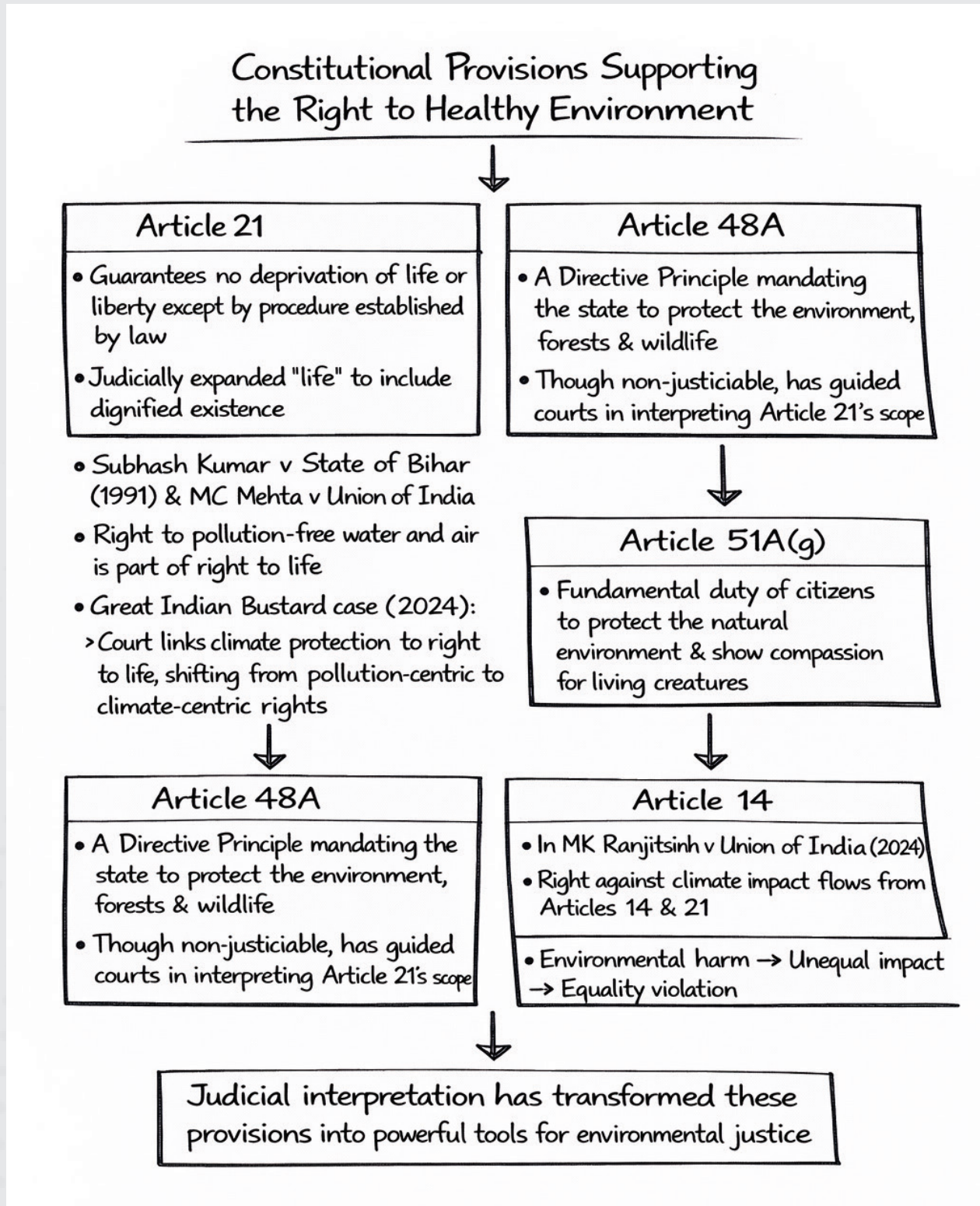
This shift transforms environmental protection from administrative discretion into a constitutional obligation of the state.

CORE ELEMENTS OF THE RIGHT TO HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

- **Clean Air** implies the right to breathe air free from pollutants that cause disease, disability, or premature death, making air quality regulation a life-protecting obligation rather than a regulatory choice.
- **Safe Climate** recognises protection from the life-threatening effects of anthropogenic climate change, including heat waves, floods, droughts, and sea-level rise.
- **Safe and Sufficient Water** ensures access to clean drinking water and sanitation, which courts have repeatedly linked to public health and dignity.
- **Healthy Food** encompasses access to nutritious and sustainably produced food, free from toxic contamination and ecological degradation.
- **Non-Toxic Environment** demands protection from hazardous chemicals, industrial waste, and unsafe disposal practices that undermine long-term health.

- **Healthy Ecosystems and Biodiversity** acknowledge that forests, wetlands, rivers, and wildlife are not merely resources but life-support systems for human existence.
- RHE is primarily implemented through the “greening” of existing rights, especially Article 21, rather than through the creation of new standalone rights.
- Right to Life
 - Expanded interpretation
 - Environmental protection duty on the state

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT



CORE PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN INDIA

Absolute and Strict Liability

- **Absolute Liability**, evolved in the Oleum Gas Leak case, imposes unconditional liability on enterprises engaged in hazardous activities, with no exceptions. This reflects a zero-tolerance approach to industrial environmental harm.
- **Strict Liability**, borrowed from common law, allows limited exceptions but still holds entities liable for dangerous escapes, even without negligence.
- The shift from strict to absolute liability reflects India's recognition of industrial risk in densely populated contexts.

Precautionary Principle

- The Precautionary Principle mandates preventive action even in the absence of complete scientific certainty where environmental harm may be serious or irreversible.
- It shifts the burden of proof to the project proponent to demonstrate environmental safety.
- Scientific uncertainty
 - Potential harm
 - Preventive restraint
- This principle has been applied in cases involving coastal aquaculture, large dams, and restrictions on polluting activities such as firecrackers.

Polluter Pays Principle

- The Polluter Pays Principle requires polluters to bear the full cost of preventing, controlling, and remedying pollution, including compensating affected communities.
- This principle underpins compensation and cleanup orders issued by bodies like the National Green Tribunal for rivers such as the Ganga and Yamuna.

Public Trust Doctrine

- The Public Trust Doctrine holds that natural resources like air, water, forests, and wildlife are held by the state in trust for the public and cannot be privatised or exploited for narrow interests.
- This doctrine aligns with Article 39(b) and (c), which mandate equitable distribution of material resources and prevent concentration of economic power.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

- **Infrastructure Pressures** arise from large-scale development projects that require forest clearance or ecosystem displacement, creating a persistent development–environment tension.
- **Ease of Doing Business Push** often leads to dilution of Environmental Impact Assessment norms, weakening prior scrutiny of ecological risks.
- **Weak Pollution Control Boards** suffer from understaffing, limited expertise, and inadequate funding, resulting in poor monitoring and enforcement.
- **Water Federalism Conflicts** between states delay river conservation efforts, as water remains a state subject requiring high coordination.
- **Fragmented Governance** across departments handling air, water, waste, and forests leads to policy incoherence.
- **Solid Waste Crisis** is visible in massive legacy landfills, with insufficient processing capacity for daily waste generation.
- **Marginalised Communities** such as tribals and forest dwellers face displacement and lack legal capacity to challenge powerful corporate actors.
- **Tragedy of the Commons** in urban areas results in neglect of public spaces, wetlands, and shared resources due to lack of collective responsibility.

WAY FORWARD: STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTITUTIONALISM

- **Professionalising Pollution Control Boards** by staffing them with technical experts and ensuring independent funding would improve regulatory effectiveness.
- **National Environmental Authority** on the lines of the Election Commission could reduce conflicts of interest in environmental clearances.
- **Empowering ULBs and Gram Sabhas** would decentralise environmental governance, especially for waste and water management, while effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act would protect indigenous ecosystems.
- **Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems** using IoT sensors would enable real-time pollution tracking and public accountability.
- **Satellite Surveillance** using ISRO data can detect illegal mining, deforestation, and encroachments early.
- **Green GDP Accounting** would internalise environmental costs into economic planning.
- **Circular Economy Incentives** such as tax benefits for zero liquid discharge and recycling-based industries would reduce waste generation.
- **Airshed and Watershed Management** through regional authorities would overcome state-boundary limitations in pollution control.

QUOTES YOU CAN USE

- **Justice P N Bhagwati:** “The right to life means the right to live with human dignity.”
- **Justice D Y Chandrachud:** “Environmental protection is a facet of the right to life, not a matter of state charity.”
- **UN Secretary-General António Guterres:** “Humanity is waging a war on nature, and nature is striking back.”
- **Supreme Court (MK Ranjitsinh, 2024):** “Climate change impacts the most vulnerable first, implicating equality and dignity.”

SCHOLARLY AND EXPERT COMMENTARIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

- **Upendra Baxi** argues that the expansion of Article 21 into environmental domains reflects India’s unique form of social action constitutionalism, where courts act as guardians of collective survival.
- **Lavanya Rajamani** notes that Indian courts have played a pioneering role in constitutionalising environmental protection, often moving ahead of legislative frameworks.
- **Shyam Divan** emphasises that environmental rights jurisprudence represents a shift from resource management to rights-based environmental governance.
- **Leelakrishnan** highlights that environmental principles such as precaution and public trust have transformed Indian environmental law into a constitutional discipline rather than a regulatory one.

WHERE TO USE IN UPSC (PAPER-WISE)

GS Paper II

- Fundamental Rights and DPSPs
- Judicial activism and environmental governance
- State responsibility under Article 21

GS Paper III

- Environmental pollution and climate change
- Sustainable development and regulatory institutions

Essay Paper

- “Development without environmental justice is unsustainable”
- “Right to life in the age of climate crisis”

PSIR Paper I

- Rights, justice, and constitutional interpretation

PSIR Paper II

- Public policy, environmental governance, and judicial intervention

DELIMITATION EXERCISE IN INDIA



INTRODUCTION

Every representative democracy must periodically revise its electoral boundaries in line with population changes. In India, this process is called delimitation. The last delimitation exercise was conducted in 1975, after which a freeze was imposed by the Indira Gandhi government. Subsequently, Parliament extended the freeze on the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies until 2026. As per constitutional provisions, the next delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies will be undertaken on the basis of the first Census conducted after 2026. Due to this prolonged postponement, multiple unresolved issues relating to democracy, demographic representation, and federal balance are expected to surface during the forthcoming fifth delimitation exercise.

WHAT IS DELIMITATION? CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS IN INDIA

Delimitation refers to the exercise of redefining electoral constituency boundaries to ensure equitable representation in accordance with changes in population.

The task is carried out by the Delimitation Commission, a statutory authority constituted under the Delimitation Act, 2002. The constitutional mandate for delimitation flows from Articles 82 and 170 of the Indian Constitution, which provide for the readjustment of parliamentary and state assembly constituencies. The primary objective is to secure fair representation across regions while upholding the principle of one person, one vote.

The most recent Delimitation Commission (2002–2008) was restricted to redrawing internal constituency boundaries within States and did not alter the allocation of seats among States. In contrast, the upcoming Commission is likely to undertake seat reallocation among States for the first time since 1976, comprehensively redraw constituencies, and create reserved constituencies in accordance with the proposed thirty three percent reservation for women.

What is the SIGNIFICANCE of Delimitation Exercise in India?

— Political Representation and Electoral Fairness —

- Ensures democratic legitimacy through equitable distribution of seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- E.g. The 2002 Delimitation Commission led to a better voter-per-MP ratio in urban and rural areas and prevented malapportionment, ensuring each MP represents roughly the same number of citizens.

— Upholding Democracy —

- Reduces gerrymandering (political manipulation of electoral district boundaries to advantage a party).
- E.g. Supreme Court in *Kuldep Nayar v. Union of India* (2006) upheld the importance of delimitation for fair democracy.

— Socio-Economic Equity —

- The Delimitation Exercise enhances representation for marginalized communities and Scheduled Tribes.
- E.g. The J&K Delimitation Commission allocated more seats to Jammu to address past disparities.

— Strengthening of Federalism —

- The Delimitation process ensures equitable representation among states, balancing national unity with regional autonomy.
- E.g. The 42nd Amendment's population freeze prevented southern states with lower population growth from losing representation, thereby upholding the spirit of cooperative federalism, crucial for India's unity.

— Administrative Efficiency —

- The Delimitation exercise ensures a manageable voter-to-representative ratio, aiding governance.
- E.g. Mumbai and Bengaluru saw improved electoral administration post 2002 exercise.

What are the concerns associated with Delimitation Exercise?

— Population vs. Development —

- Southern states argue that delimitation based solely on population would penalize them for successful family planning and economic development.
- E.g. Tamil Nadu's fertility rate is 1.6, while Bihar's is 3.0. According to delimitation projections, if seats were allocated purely by population in an expanded Lok Sabha of approx. 888 members, UP would rise from 80 to 151 seats & Bihar from 40 to 82, while for TN it would increase from 39 to 53 & Kerala from 20 to just 23.

— Federalism at Risk —

- States with low population growth may feel politically marginalized, leading to North-South divide concerns.
- E.g. Sarkaria Commission (1983) warned against excessive centralization of power.

— Manipulation —

- There are concerns that political parties may influence constituency boundaries for electoral gains.
- E.g. Sarkaria Commission (1983) warned against excessive centralization of power.

— Delays and Political Resistance —

- There are instances of increased political resistance as seen in the case of Justice Kuldeep Singh-led Commission (2002) facing pushback from political parties unwilling to lose seats.

— Economic Disparities —

- Southern states argue that higher revenue generation (GST collections, per capita income) should be factored into representation.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE WAY FORWARD?

• Implementing Expert Recommendations

- Various expert bodies have proposed reforms to balance federal principles with the requirements of delimitation.
- The Sarkaria Commission (1983) recommended adopting a calibrated approach that preserves national unity while respecting federal autonomy.
- The Punchhi Commission (2010) argued for assigning equal importance to population figures and governance related needs while determining representation.

• Ensuring Transparency and Independent Oversight

- The autonomy of the Election Commission must be further reinforced to guarantee a transparent and impartial delimitation exercise.
- In *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006), the Supreme Court stressed the necessity of ensuring fair representation while accommodating federal sensitivities.
- Similarly, in *TN Seshan v. Union of India* (1995), the Court underlined the critical role of an independent institutional mechanism in maintaining the integrity of electoral processes, including delimitation.

• Constitutional and Legislative Reforms: There is a need to amend Articles 81 and 82 of the Constitution to secure regionally balanced representation. Additionally, alternative electoral models such as proportional representation systems followed in countries like Germany and Canada can be explored to address representational imbalances.

• Policy Suggestions

- A weighted representation framework may be adopted, wherein population is assigned a dominant weight of 80 percent, while 20 percent weight is given to development related indicators such as literacy levels, health outcomes, and sustained population control, similar to the composite criteria used by the Finance Commission for tax devolution.
- The Delimitation Commission should function as a fully independent body, insulated from political influence.
- Implementation of delimitation reforms should be carried out in a phased manner to minimise political disruption and institutional instability.

CONCLUSION

Delimitation involves managing a sensitive equilibrium between democratic equality and federal fairness. While it aims to uphold the principle of equal representation, it must also address concerns arising from regional disparities, demographic variations, and governance challenges. The Supreme Court and the Election Commission have a crucial role in safeguarding transparency and procedural fairness. A carefully balanced approach rooted in constitutional principles, expert guidance, and comparative global practices is essential to preserve India's democratic and federal character.

Mains Practice Question

Q. FASCISM IS BY NO MEANS A SYSTEMATIC DOCTRINE. IT IS A QUEER MIXTURE OF INCONGRUOUS ELEMENTS. IN THE LIGHT OF THE ABOVE STATEMENT THROW LIGHT ON THE LIBERAL AND MARXIST CRITIQUE OF FASCISM

Fascism is a complex ideology that incorporates various elements and has been subject to criticism from both liberals and Marxists.

From a liberal perspective, fascism is criticized for its totalitarian nature and rejection of democratic principles and human rights. Liberals argue that fascism undermines individual liberty by subordinating individuals to the absolute authority of the state and reducing them to mere instruments to serve the state's goals. Fascism also emphasizes irrationality, in contrast to liberalism's focus on individual freedom and rationality. Additionally, fascism rejects the idea of natural and social equality, instead promoting hero-worship, elitism, and racist doctrines. Moreover, fascism undermines the pluralistic nature of society by establishing a monopoly of power through a single political party, eliminating free and open competition for political power. Lastly, fascism demolishes constitutional government, which is seen as essential for human freedom, progress, and the functioning of liberal democracy.

From a Marxist perspective, fascism is seen as an attempt to preserve capitalism, particularly during its decadent phase. Marxists argue that fascism creates a nationalistic myth to suppress class conflict and prevent international movements towards communism. Figures like Leon Trotsky have argued that the mass support for fascism comes from desperate and rootless middle-class individuals. Critics suggest that the widespread fear and uncertainty during times of crisis provide fertile ground for the rise of authoritarianism in fascist countries.

Thus, both liberals and Marxists criticize fascism for its rejection of democratic principles, human rights, and individual liberties.

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.

Q. WHAT ROLE DOES THE NATIONAL MINORITY COMMISSION PLAY IN ENSURING FULL PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS AS WELL AS HARMONY IN INDIA'S MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

The Indian constitution represents a multicultural approach towards minority rights, aiming to provide a life of dignity to all individuals living in India. It embraces a non-hegemonic, non-coercive approach of civic nationalism. In line with the

commitment to protect minority rights, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was established in 1992 by the Government of India.

The commission consists of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and members nominated by the union government, all from minority communities. Its primary purpose is to monitor the functioning of constitutional and legal protections for minorities and offer suggestions to effectively safeguard their interests.

The functions of the NCM include:

- Monitoring the implementation of constitutional and legal protections for minorities.
- Providing recommendations to the central and state governments on safeguarding minority interests.
- Assessing the progress made by the central and state governments in the development of minorities.
- Investigating complaints regarding violations of minority rights and taking them up with relevant authorities.
- Conducting research and proposing solutions to address issues related to prejudice against minorities.
- Submitting reports to the government on minority-related challenges and issues.

The NCM has taken certain steps to address minority issues, such as investigating communal disturbances and working with the administration to secure peace and protect minority rights. It has also undertaken activities like organizing Hunar Haat, providing scholarships, training, and affordable credit facilities.

However, there have been concerns regarding the effectiveness of the NCM. It is seen as having limited power and impact. To strengthen the commission, there have been demands to provide it with constitutional status, the power to summon officials, and the ability to take action against non compliance.

Conclusion:

The National Commission for Minorities plays a crucial role in protecting and promoting minority rights in India, particularly during times of majority-minority conflicts. Concrete steps are necessary to strengthen the commission and enhance its effectiveness in safeguarding the rights of minorities. This would ensure that minority communities are not neglected or oppressed, and their rights are upheld in the diverse and multicultural fabric of India.

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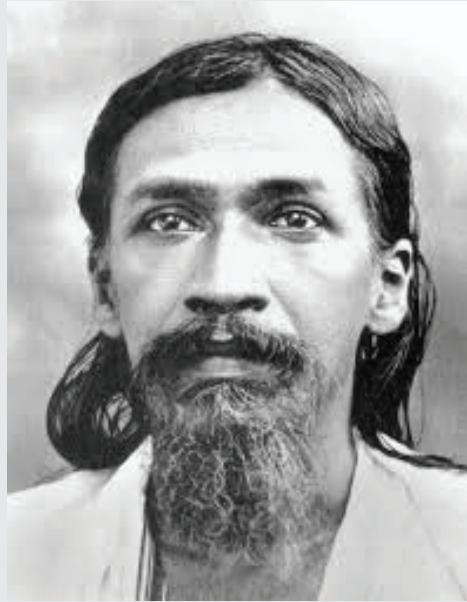
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The advertisement features a background image of the Indian Parliament building. On the right side, there is a portrait of Shashank Tyagi, a man with a beard wearing a suit and tie. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts, including white, blue, and red. The 'STUDY IQ IAS' logo is in the top right corner.

Scholar Digest: Know Your Scholars

AUROBINDO GHOSH: POLITICAL THOUGHT AND CONTRIBUTIONS



INTRODUCTION

Aurobindo Ghosh (1872–1950) was a freedom fighter, nationalist thinker, and spiritual philosopher who played a key role in India’s independence movement before turning to spiritual pursuits. His political thought combined nationalism, cultural revivalism, and spiritual idealism, making him a unique figure in India’s intellectual history.

KEY POLITICAL IDEAS:

Militant Nationalism – Aurobindo initially supported radical and revolutionary methods to achieve independence, advocating for complete Swaraj (self-rule) rather than mere reforms under British rule. He promoted passive resistance, boycott of British goods, and national education.

Spiritual Nationalism – He believed that India’s freedom struggle was not just political but also spiritual. He viewed the nation as a living spiritual entity (Bharat Mata) and saw independence as essential for India’s spiritual resurgence.

Critique of Moderate Politics – He rejected the moderate approach of the Indian National Congress, arguing that petitions and negotiations with the British were ineffective. Instead, he encouraged self-reliance, unity, and defiance.

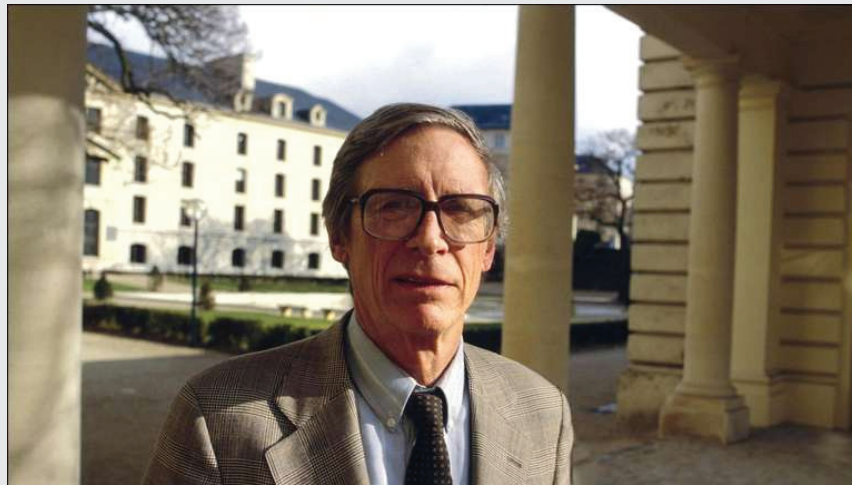
Emphasis on Cultural Revival – Aurobindo saw Indian culture, philosophy, and spirituality as the foundation of national strength. He believed that political freedom must be accompanied by cultural and spiritual awakening.

Later Political Withdrawal – In 1910, he withdrew from active politics and settled in Pondicherry, where he developed his Integral Yoga philosophy, focusing on the spiritual evolution of humanity.

LEGACY:

Aurobindo’s political ideas influenced later nationalist movements, and his concept of spiritual nationalism inspired leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose. His blend of political radicalism and spiritual philosophy remains significant in Indian political thought.

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

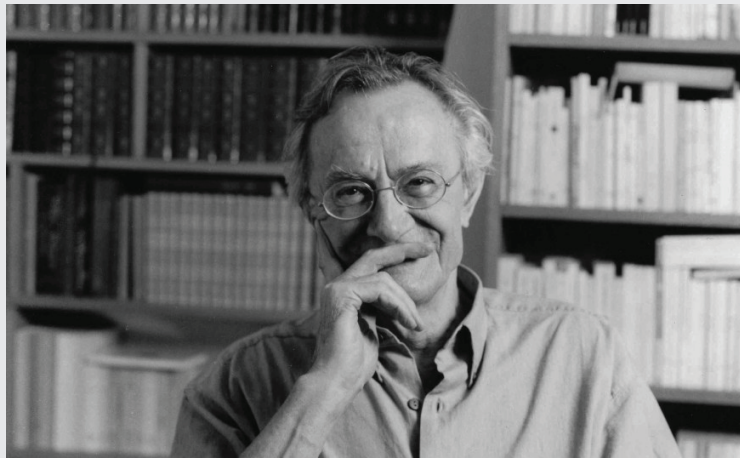
In his later works, particularly in "Political Liberalism" (1993), Rawls adapted his theory to be more inclusive, recognizing the diversity of comprehensive doctrines in a pluralistic society. He aimed to provide a framework for political cooperation that people from different moral, religious, and philosophical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

LYOTARD



INTRODUCTION

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

INCRECULITY TOWARDS METANARRATIVES

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

CRITIQUE OF GRAND NARRATIVES

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

LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE

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

THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

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

IMPLICATIONS AND CRITICISMS

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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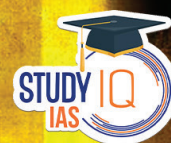
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ENRICH YOUR ANSWER

Q. DISCUSS THE FEATURES OF ASYMMETRICAL FEDERALISM.

Q: Discuss the features of Asymmetrical federalism

Approach

(Intro): Define federalism and Asymmetrical federalism.

(Body) Give features of Asymmetrical federalism

→ Article 371 to 371J in Part XXI of Constitution contain special provisions for eleven states.

→ Special responsibility of Governor for the development of certain areas of particular states.

→ Presence of Union Territories in India.

→ Unequal representation of States in Rajya Sabha (eg UP 31 seats, Goa-1 seat)

→ Presence of 5th and 6th schedule to accommodate scheduled and tribal areas.

(Conclusion): Give justification of Asymmetrical federalism.

eg: to protect diversity without sacrificing unity or imposing uniformity.

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 Jayadevan)

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.

Enrich Your Answer

Q. ANALYSE THE ROLE OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION TOWARDS ELECTORAL REFORMS.

Q → Analyse the role of Election Commission towards electoral reforms.

Approach of Answer

(Intro). Briefly write about Election Commission

(Body)

Write about positive role played by ECI towards electoral reforms.

eg → Introduction of EVM's.

→ Launch of website for information sharing

→ Computerisation of Electoral rolls 1998

→ Introduction of VVPAT.

→ Introduction of NOTA in 2014

→ Recently launched SVEEP for voter's education.

What more can be done

→ ECI be given rule making power under RPA

→ ECI be given more powers in Model Code of Conduct.

Conclusion

Election reforms are mother of all reforms and should be given prime importance.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. **In the federation established by The Government of India Act of 1935. Residuary Power were given to the**
 - (a) Federal Legislature
 - (b) Governor General
 - (c) Provincial Legislature
 - (d) Provincial Governors
2. **With reference to the “G20 Common Framework”, consider the following statements**
 1. **It is an initiative endorsed by the G20 together with the Paris Club.**
 2. **It is an initiative to support Low Income Countries with unsustainable debt.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

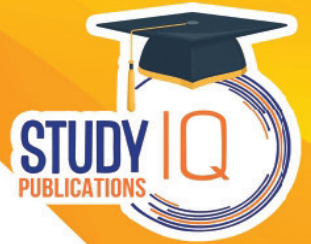
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. **In which one of the following groups are all four countries members of G20?**
 - (a) Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey
 - (b) Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand
 - (c) Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam
 - (d) Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea
4. **The Parliament of India acquires the power to legislate on any item in the State List in the national interest if a resolution to that effect is passed by the**
 - (a) Lok Sabha by a simple majority of its total membership
 - (b) Lok Sabha by a majority of not less than two-thirds of its total membership
 - (c) Rajya Sabha by a simple majority of its total membership

Answers

1. (b) Residuary powers were in the hands of the Governor General.
2. (c)
3. (a)
4. (d) If the Rajya Sabha declares that it is necessary in the national interest that Parliament should make laws on a matter in the State List, then the Parliament becomes competent to make laws on that matter. Such a resolution must be passed by the Rajya Sabha by a majority of not less than two-third of its members present and voting.

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