STUDY IQ PUBLICATIONS

PSIR Pulse

August 2026





By- Shashank Tyagi
Ex Consultant, Office of Minister Social Welfare, GNCTD
Faculty - PSIR Optional, StudyIQ IAS

Table of Content

1. **Geopolitics at Glance** **3**
   - India - Bangladesh Relations 3
   - SHANTI Doctrine 8
   - India- Japan Relations 11

2. **Indian Government and Politics (IGP)** **14**
   - Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026. 14
   - FCRA Act 17
   - Fast track courts 21
   - One nation, One election 23
   - Delimitation exercise 27
   - Fiscal Federalism 29

3. **Mains Practice Questions** **33**

4. **Scholar Digest: Know Your Scholars** **35**
   - Joseph Stiglitz 35
   - Morgenthau 36
   - Thomas Hobbes 37

5. **Enrich Your Answers** **38**

6. **Prelims Practice Questions** **40**

Geopolitics at Glance

India - Bangladesh Relations

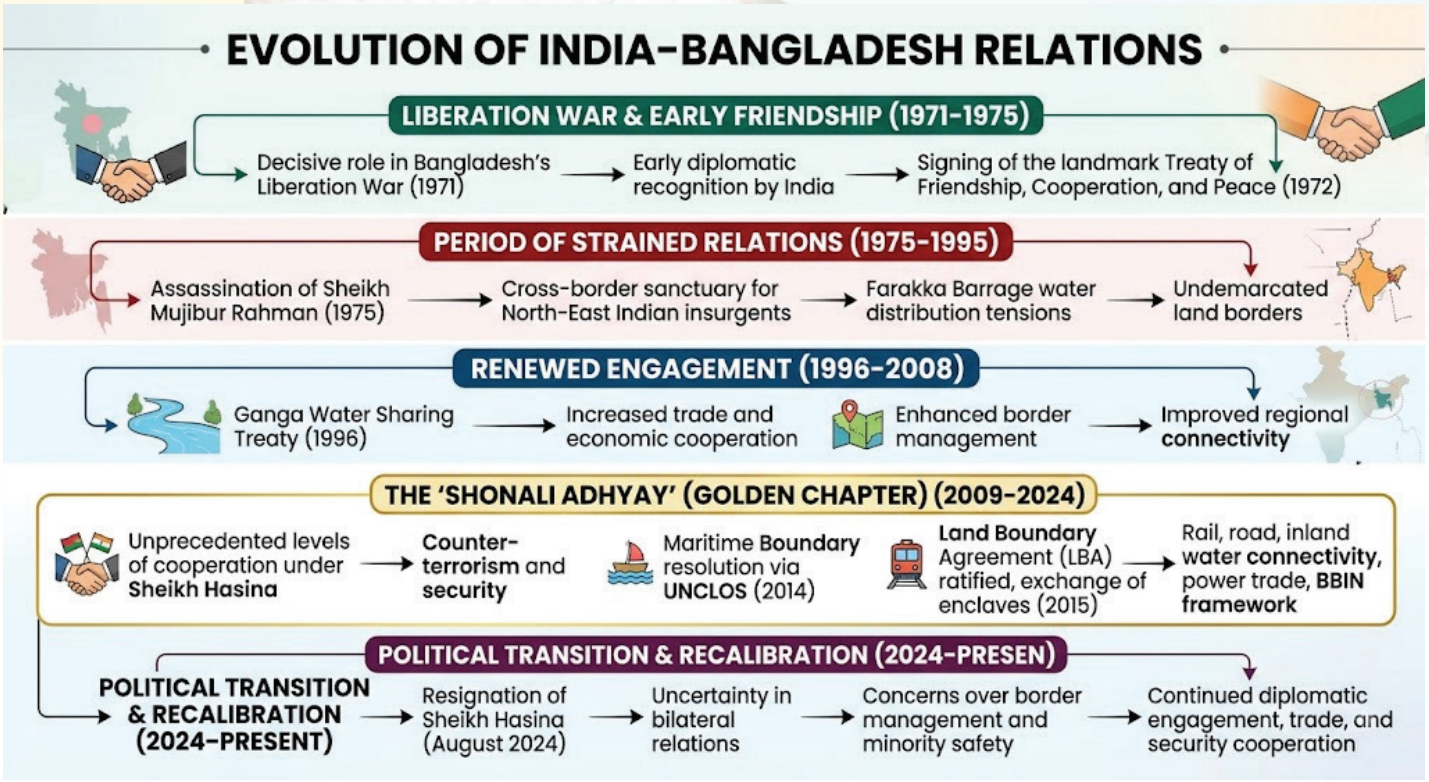
RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** India and South Asia
  - **GS2:** India and the Neighbourhood



Introduction

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently sat down for her first media interview from Indian soil since being ousted, reaffirming that she still intends to return to Bangladesh despite the legal cases pending against her. These remarks have introduced a fresh political dimension into India-Bangladesh relations, with Dhaka voicing concern over the platform being extended to the former leader.



What recent political developments in Bangladesh have affected India-Bangladesh relations?

Fall of the Sheikh Hasina Government: Protests led by students in 2024 culminated in Sheikh Hasina's departure and the formation of an interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus. While Yunus has stressed that he wants "fair and balanced" ties with India, certain remarks of his, such as calling Northeast India "landlocked," have touched a nerve.

Attacks on minorities: Ethnic violence targeting Bangla-speaking Hindus within Bangladesh has put a strain on relations between the two countries.

Resurfacing of security challenges: There's a real risk that anti-India groups could regain strength, echoing what happened during the earlier BNP-Jamaat years. Combined with ongoing border tensions with Pakistan and the Indian Army's prolonged standoff with the PLA in eastern Ladakh, this has created a genuinely difficult security picture for India.

Threat to India's connectivity with the North-east: Any further souring of India-Bangladesh ties limits India's access routes to its Northeast. That region would then depend entirely on the narrow "Chicken's Neck" corridor to stay connected to the mainland. Given how volatile the Myanmar border already is, this raises the odds of instability spreading further into India's Northeast.

Jeopardized the Bilateral trade and FTA: Hasina's exit has put the expanding trade relationship between India and Bangladesh at risk. Talks toward a potential free trade agreement (FTA) between the two nations have also stalled.

Deterioration of people-people ties: There's a genuine risk of backlash from ordinary Bangladeshis and the new power centers taking shape in Dhaka, some of whom carry old grievances against India.

Geopolitical challenges: Both Pakistan and China are likely to view this political shift in Bangladesh as a chance to chip away at India's standing there, potentially painting India as too closely tied to the Hasina era.

Recent Policy Shifts and Frictions:

Transshipment Facility Withdrawal: India pulled Bangladesh's right to route its exports through Indian ports, citing congestion issues. Dhaka viewed this move as harmful to its trade competitiveness.

Extradition Tension: The interim government has formally requested Hasina's extradition from India, creating a degree of diplomatic awkwardness.

Minority Concerns: Reports of violence against Hindus following the change in power have caused unease in New Delhi.

China's Outreach: Beijing has ramped up its diplomatic and infrastructure engagement with Bangladesh, something that has raised strategic concerns within India.

Summoning of Bangladesh High Commissioner: India recently called in the Bangladesh High Commissioner over the

worsening security situation in the country and the threats extremist elements pose to the safety of the Indian mission in Dhaka.

Reasons Behind Fall of Sheikh Hasina's Government

Peaceful Student demonstration evolving into a nationwide movement: What began as a peaceful student protest against a 30% reservation quota for freedom fighters in civil services grew into a countrywide movement once the government responded with a heavy hand. Matters escalated further when Awami League's student wing, the Bangladesh Chhatra League, attacked protesters, a strict curfew came with a 'shoot-on-sight' order, and demonstrators were branded 'Razakars' (a term tied to collaborators from the 1971 war).

Slowing down of economic Growth: Bangladesh saw swift economic gains under Sheikh Hasina, with per capita income tripling over a decade and the World Bank estimating that more than 25 million people were lifted out of poverty over the last 20 years. But the 2020 pandemic, followed by a slowing global economy, hit the garment sector hard. This pushed up unemployment and inflation, fueling discontent among the Bangladeshi population.

Allegations of Electoral Irregularities: The parliamentary elections held in 2014, 2018, and 2024 were all mired in controversy, marked by low voter turnout, violence, and boycotts from opposition parties. The 2024 general election, for instance, was boycotted entirely by the main opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Reliance on Hard Power to maintain control: Hasina's government leaned increasingly on hard power tactics to hold onto control, fostering an atmosphere of fear and repression. The Digital Security Act of 2018, for example, became a tool the government and ruling party activists used to silence critics and clamp down on online free speech.

Increasing economic inequality: A wave of banking scams, a growing list of loan defaulters, and widespread corruption fueled public anger even as the broader economy kept growing. Companies such as CLC Power, Western Marine Shipyard, and Remex Footwear topped the defaulters list, with bad loans ranging between 965 crore and 1,649 crore Bangladeshi Taka.

Weakening Political Legitimacy: Public trust in the government eroded as people increasingly felt it wasn't responding adequately to economic and governance problems.

What is the significance of Bangladesh for India?

Geo-strategic & Security Significance

Gateway to the North-East: India and Bangladesh share a 4,096 km land border, the longest India has with any neighboring country. Bangladesh sits right next to the narrow Siliguri Corridor, better known as the "Chicken's Neck," the 22 km-wide strip of land connecting mainland India to its Northeastern states. Maintaining friendly relations with Dhaka helps reduce the strategic vulnerability around this sensitive chokepoint.

Maritime Security: Bangladesh gives India an important maritime anchor point in the Bay of Bengal, fitting well with India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and helping balance the growing influence of outside powers like China in the Indian Ocean Region.

Counter-Insurgency & Border Security: Historically, insurgent groups hostile to India operating out of the Northeast have used Bangladeshi territory as a hideout. Strong security cooperation with Bangladesh remains essential to curbing cross-border militancy, arms trafficking, illegal immigration, and counterfeit currency networks.

Crux of 'Act East' Policy: Bangladesh functions as the physical link connecting South Asia to Southeast Asia, serving as a key node in sub-regional integration efforts like BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) motor vehicles framework.

Economic Significance

Largest Trade Partner in South Asia: Annual bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh sits at around $13 to 14 billion, making Bangladesh one of India's biggest trading partners in South Asia. India exports essential commodities, raw cotton, power, and industrial inputs, while importing ready-made garments, textiles, and processed foods in return.

Development Partnership: Bangladesh is the top recipient of Indian Lines of Credit (LoCs), having received over $7 to 8 billion for infrastructure projects covering rail restoration, port development, and road networks.

Cross-Border Energy Grid: India supplies electricity to Bangladesh through cross-border interconnections and energy pipelines, such as the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline used for diesel exports. Trilateral power arrangements also let Nepal export hydropower to Bangladesh by routing it through Indian transmission lines.

Shared Natural Resources

Transboundary Water Management: India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers. Managing these river basins jointly matters greatly for flood forecasting, irrigation, and broader water diplomacy, governed by key agreements like the Ganges Water Treaty.

Ecological Protection: The two countries share fragile ecosystems, most notably the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, which needs coordinated conservation work

to address climate change, rising sea levels, and biodiversity loss.

Cultural Significance

Civilizational Ties: Bangladesh shares deep cultural and civilizational bonds with India, including a sizeable Bengali Hindu population and several shared religious-cultural sites, such as Ranir Bunglow Temple and Bhoj Vihara, that reflect a common heritage.

What are the areas of Cooperation between India and Bangladesh?

Trade and Economic Cooperation:

Duty-Free Access: Under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), India has extended duty-free and quota-free access to Bangladeshi products across nearly all tariff lines, with alcohol and tobacco as exceptions.

CEPA Negotiations: Both countries are working toward a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) aimed at deepening trade integration, cutting down non-tariff barriers, and opening up investment opportunities.

Connectivity and Infrastructure:

Railway Grid: Five historic cross-border rail links are now operational, including Petrapole-Benapole, Gede-Darshana, and Radhikapur-Birol. The Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link directly connects India's Northeast to Bangladesh's rail network.

Port Access & Transit: Bangladesh allows Indian cargo to use its Chittagong and Mongla ports, cutting down transit times and logistics costs considerably between mainland India and the Northeastern states.

Inland Waterways (PIWTT): Under the Protocol on Inland Waterways Trade and Transit, cargo vessels and passenger cruise lines move through shared river systems.

Bus Routes: Several active bus routes connect major hubs such as Kolkata, Agartala, and Guwahati directly to Dhaka and Khulna.

Water and River Cooperation:

Joint Rivers Commission (JRC): Set up in 1972, the JRC oversees 54 transboundary rivers and shares hydrological data critical for flood forecasting during peak monsoon season.

Ganges Water Treaty (1996): This governs how Ganges river waters are shared at the Farakka Barrage.

Security and Border Management:

Joint Exercises: Regular military engagements include Exercise Sampriti (Army), BONGOSAGAR (Navy), and coordinated patrols along the maritime boundary.

Border Management: Both countries work through the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) to curb cross-border crimes, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and the circulation of counterfeit currency.

Land Boundary Agreement (LBA): The landmark 2015 LBA resolved decades-old disputes over enclaves, allowing for peaceful demarcation of the boundary.

Energy and Power Cooperation:

Electricity Exports: India supplies over 1,160 MW of electricity to Bangladesh's grid through high-capacity cross-border interconnections.

Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant: Jointly built at Rampal (Bagerhat), this 1,320 MW coal-fired power project adds to Bangladesh's baseline grid capacity.

Indo-Bangla Friendship Pipeline (IBFP): This 130 km high-speed diesel pipeline runs from Siliguri in West Bengal to Parbatipur in Bangladesh, delivering energy directly into northern Bangladesh.

Trilateral Energy Trade: India, Nepal, and Bangladesh carried out a historic trilateral power transaction, using the Indian grid to transmit Nepalese hydropower to Bangladesh.

Multilateral and Regional Cooperation: Both countries collaborate closely through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal Initiative (BBIN), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on matters of trade, connectivity, and development. They also work together on climate change and disaster resilience through global platforms like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Conference of Parties (COP) summits.

Cultural and People-to-People Ties:

Tourism and Education Cooperation: Bangladeshis make up the largest group of tourists visiting India, and both countries jointly promote cultural and Buddhist tourism circuits. Student exchanges and scholarships have further strengthened educational connections.

Health and Medical Cooperation: Bangladesh accounts for over 35% of India's medical tourists and contributes more than 50% of India's medical tourism revenue. Cooperation here includes medical visa facilitation, hospital partnerships, and telemedicine services.

Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Sharing: Bangladesh's crackdown on anti-India insurgents during Sheikh Hasina's tenure gave a boost to security cooperation between the two nations. Both countries continue to coordinate on intelligence

sharing, counter-terrorism operations, and cybersecurity initiatives to help maintain regional stability.

What are the Challenges in India-Bangladesh Relations?

Political Realignment

After Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and left the country in August 2024, Bangladesh went through a significant political transformation under an interim administration, eventually leading to an elected government headed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). This shift upended years of close ties that had largely been built with the Awami League, pushing India to rework its diplomatic approach across the full range of Bangladeshi political forces.

Sharing of Transboundary River Waters

India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers that cross their common border, yet only two water-sharing treaties covering these transboundary rivers have actually been signed: the Ganga Waters Treaty and the Kushiyara River Treaty. The Teesta River dispute remains a major sticking point, with Bangladesh pushing for a fair share of its waters, something India and the state of West Bengal have yet to agree to.

Deportation of Rohingyas

India and Bangladesh have interests that overlap but sometimes clash when it comes to sending Rohingyas back to Myanmar. India's approach is to first handle deportation from within its own territory before later helping facilitate deportation from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

Cross-Border Terrorism and Infiltration

Terrorism and infiltration through the Bangladesh border remain serious internal security concerns for India. Issues such as armed dacoity in border districts, the movement of fake currency, cattle smuggling, and prostitution have added to these security worries.

Stalled Economic Agreements

Efforts to finalize a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and simplify cross-border credit arrangements have been held up by political changes and demands for renegotiation.

Drug Smuggling and Trafficking

Per the International Narcotics Control Board's (INCB) 2007 report, India continues to serve as a key transit point for heroin trafficking moving from South Asia to Europe by way of Bangladesh.

Growing Chinese Influence in Bangladesh

China's expanding footprint in Bangladesh, including its role in Teesta river management projects and port infrastructure, is seen as a strategic concern for India. Bangladesh has also become an active partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with China having funded 12 highways, 21 bridges, and 27 power and energy projects in the country. This deepening involvement risks weakening India's regional standing and could get in the way of its strategic goals.

Rising Radicalization and Minority Persecution

The rise in religious extremism and the mistreatment of minorities within Bangladesh threatens both the country's internal stability and broader regional security, with the potential to destabilize Bangladesh and, in turn, affect India's own security environment.

Sports and People-to-People Fallout

Political friction has even spilled into sports, with Bangladesh earlier pulling out of the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup in India over security concerns. Uncertainty also hangs over the proposed bilateral cricket series, another sign of the strain in diplomatic ties.

What Should be the Way Forward?

Broadening Political Engagement

India needs to build strong, multi-partisan diplomatic channels in Dhaka, reaching out across the entire spectrum of Bangladeshi political parties, civil society groups, and youth leaders, rather than depending mainly on ties with any one political party.

Timely Renewal of the Ganges Water Treaty (2026 Expiration)

Priority should go to renegotiating and smoothly extending the 1996 Ganges Water Treaty before it lapses in December 2026, and to setting up a transparent, data driven framework for allocating water during the dry season.

Concluding the CEPA Negotiations

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) should be fast-tracked to put in place a stable trade framework, especially as Bangladesh prepares to move up from its Least Developed Country (LDC) status.

Establishment of Joint Task Forces and Smart Border Management

Joint task forces bringing together law enforcement from both countries should be set up to tackle cross-border drug smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal immigration more effectively.

Establishment of a Digital Connectivity Corridor

A digital connectivity corridor should be built, centered on high-speed internet, digital services, and e-commerce, opening up new avenues for trade, collaboration, and technological exchange.

Strategic Balancing Against China

India should push back against China's deepening presence by offering credible, competitive alternatives in trade, connectivity, and finance. Making use of BIMSTEC, BBIN, and the Act East policy can help structurally connect Bangladesh with India's Northeast and Southeast Asia, reducing Dhaka's incentive to lean toward Beijing.

Streamlining Visa & Medical Travel Services

The visa issuance process for Bangladeshi citizens traveling to India for healthcare, business, and higher education should be fully restored and digitized, helping rebuild goodwill at the grassroots level.

SHANTI Doctrine

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Indian foreign Policy
  - **GS2:** Foreign policy



Introduction

Recently, the External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar introduced SHANTI (Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity) during the launch of India's campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028-29 term. SHANTI lays out a normative framework for shared maritime spaces, and the Bay of Bengal stands out as the ideal region to put it into practice first, before extending it across the far larger Indo-Pacific region.

What is India's SHANTI Doctrine?

The SHANTI Doctrine is a foreign policy and global governance vision put forward by External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar as part of India's campaign launch for a non-

permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028 to 29 term.

It lays out India's approach to building a secure, peaceful, and equitable world grounded in rules, cooperation, and inclusive development.

SHANTI stands for: Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity.

SHANTI represents India's newest strategic framework, growing out of the earlier SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and MAHASAGAR frameworks.

How has India's maritime/foreign policy doctrine evolved in last 10 years?

The SAGAR, MAHASAGAR, and SHANTI doctrines mark three separate, sequential phases in how India's maritime strategy and foreign policy have developed over time.

SAGAR (2015)

Security And Growth for All in the Region

Centered on India's immediate maritime neighbours and island states, essentially the Indian Ocean Region (such as Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka).

Positioned India as the region's primary "Net Security Provider" and first responder in emergencies within the IOR.

Core objective: Inclusive regional development and freedom of navigation.

MAHASAGAR (2025)

Mutual and Aligned Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions

Widens the scope to include Southeast Asia, Pacific Island nations, Africa, and Latin America.

Aims to consolidate India's influence across the Global South as a counter to China's assertive rise (such as its Belt and Road Initiative).

Core objective: Strategic partnership and economic diversification for developing nations.

SHANTI (2026)

Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity

Starts with the Bay of Bengal (through BIMSTEC) as its anchor area, before extending to global platforms like the UNSC.

Sets up a rules-based, trust-driven operational framework centered on non-military, demand-driven cooperation.

Core objective: Rules-based governance, reforming multilateral institutions, and resolving disputes peacefully.

What is the significance of India's SHANTI Doctrine?

Strengthens India's Bid for UNSC Term: SHANTI gives India's candidature for the 2028 to 29 non-permanent seat a values-driven campaign platform, as it competes against Tajikistan for the single Asia-Pacific Group slot.

Supports India's UNSC Aspirations: By openly stating that reform confined only to the non-permanent category would amount to a "failure," SHANTI simultaneously advances India's ambitions for a permanent seat even while it pursues a non-permanent term.

Promotes Rules-Based Global Order: The SHANTI Doctrine reaffirms India's commitment to international law, the UN Charter, peaceful resolution of disputes, and multilateralism, helping foster a stable, predictable, and equitable global order built on shared norms and mutual trust.

Advances the Interests of the Global South: By pushing for equitable global governance, greater representation within international institutions, development cooperation, climate justice, and inclusive, sustainable growth, the SHANTI Doctrine reinforces India's position as a voice for the Global South.

Strengthens Maritime Security: The SHANTI Doctrine builds on SAGAR and MAHASAGAR by championing a free, open, secure, and rules-based maritime order, deepening maritime cooperation, safeguarding freedom of navigation, and boosting security across the Indo-Pacific.

Promotes Peace and Stability: By placing emphasis on peaceful dispute resolution and dialogue-driven conflict management, the SHANTI Doctrine contributes to peace, stability, and a rules-based order both regionally and globally.

Encourages Responsible Use of Technology: The SHANTI Doctrine calls for the ethical, secure, and inclusive use of emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, cyber technologies, and digital platforms, through international cooperation, sound governance, and global standards.

Strengthens India's Indo-Pacific Strategy: The SHANTI Doctrine works alongside the Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), promoting a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific through stronger maritime cooperation, connectivity, and regional partnerships.

How can the Bay of Bengal play an important role in implementing India's SHANTI Doctrine?

Strengthening Maritime Security: The SHANTI doctrine allows India to strengthen maritime security in the Bay of Bengal through coordinated naval exercises, Maritime Domain

Awareness (MDA), intelligence sharing, and joint action against piracy, terrorism, trafficking, and illegal fishing.

Promoting a Rules-Based Maritime Order: SHANTI lets India uphold UNCLOS, freedom of navigation, peaceful dispute resolution, and respect for international maritime law, building stability, trust, and secure maritime trade, first in the Bay of Bengal and then across the wider Indo-Pacific.

Enhancing Regional Connectivity: The SHANTI Doctrine will boost connectivity among Bay of Bengal littoral countries by strengthening multimodal links through projects like the Kaladan Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, along with ports and coastal shipping, which in turn supports trade, economic integration, and regional trust.

Advancing the Blue Economy: The SHANTI Doctrine encourages sustainable fisheries, marine resource management, offshore renewable energy, maritime tourism, and resilient port infrastructure across the Bay of Bengal, supporting inclusive growth, regional cooperation, and environmental sustainability.

Climate Resilience & Disaster Management: The Bay of Bengal ranks among the world's most cyclone-prone marine basins, putting millions of coastal residents directly at risk. Under SHANTI's broadened security scope, India takes the lead on joint HADR exercises and sharing early-warning data across littoral states.

Strengthening BIMSTEC: SHANTI will, over time, help strengthen and operationalize BIMSTEC by deepening regional cooperation on maritime security, trade, connectivity, disaster management, and capacity building, while building trust, inclusive development, and a rules-based order across the Bay of Bengal.

What are the major challenges in implementing India's SHANTI Doctrine?

Veto Power and Structural Stalemate: A core pillar of SHANTI calls for UNSC reform, but the five permanent members (P5) remain unwilling to loosen their grip on veto power or commit to text-based negotiations, making it hard for India to secure concrete reforms or expand the Security Council.

Regional Security Threats: Ongoing terrorism, piracy, illegal fishing, trafficking, maritime disputes, and transnational crime across the Indo-Pacific and Bay of Bengal can chip away at regional stability, complicating the effective rollout of the SHANTI Doctrine.

China's Expanding Maritime Presence: China's growing naval deployments, its port infrastructure built under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and its rising influence in the Indian Ocean all pose challenges to India's push for a secure, rules-based, and cooperative maritime order under SHANTI.

Weak Regional Cooperation: Differing strategic interests, political disagreements, and uneven institutional capacity among regional countries can make it harder to build consensus, limiting effective cooperation on maritime security, connectivity, climate action, and the broader implementation of SHANTI.

Climate Change and Natural Disasters: Recurring cyclones, rising sea levels, and coastal erosion across the Bay of Bengal put maritime infrastructure, connectivity, and livelihoods at risk, making climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and regional cooperation essential to implementing SHANTI effectively.

Resource Constraints: Rolling out the SHANTI Doctrine calls for sustained investment in maritime infrastructure, naval modernization, connectivity projects, technology, capacity building, and development partnerships. Limited financial and institutional resources could hold back its effective and long-term implementation.

Erosion of Strategic Autonomy: India's broader maritime challenges involve walking a tightrope, trying to counter China's growing influence without getting drawn into an arms race or locked into formal alliances, a balancing act that affects all of its maritime doctrines.

Conclusion: How successful the SHANTI Doctrine turns out to be will hinge on India's ability to strengthen regional institutions, build up maritime and technological capacity, and turn its vision of Norms, Trust, and Integrity into real, practical outcomes through sustained diplomacy and partnerships.

India- Japan Relations

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** India and the Major Powers
  - **GS2**: Bilateral Relations



India and Japan share what's known as a Special Strategic and Global Partnership, built on shared democratic values, deep economic ties, and a common vision for the Indo-Pacific. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's recent visit to India for the 16th Annual Summit pushed this collaboration further forward, covering ground in defence, artificial intelligence, critical minerals, semiconductors, energy security, and resilient supply chains.

How has the India-Japan Relationship evolved?

Ancient Period

India and Japan share a historical closeness that goes back to ancient times.

This exchange is said to have started in the 6th century, when Buddhism first made its way into Japan.

Through Buddhism's influence, Indian culture went on to leave a deep mark on Japanese culture.

Foundation Period (1950-1990)

Diplomatic relations were formally established in 1952.

In the aftermath of World War II, India took a distinct stance by choosing not to attend the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, opting instead to sign a separate bilateral peace treaty with Japan in 1952 that waived all claims to reparations.

Japan, in turn, backed India's post-independence development through Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Even so, the relationship stayed fairly limited given the broader Cold War alignments of the time.

Post-Cold War Realignment (1991-2000)

Japan stepped in to help India through the Balance of Payments crisis of 1991.

Ties cooled off briefly after India carried out its nuclear tests in 1998, prompting Japanese sanctions, but relations gradually returned to normal by 2000.

Strategic & Global Partnership (2000-2014)

The partnership was officially raised to the level of a "Global Partnership" in 2000, and then further elevated to a "Strategic and Global Partnership" in 2006.

In 2007, PM Shinzo Abe gave his now historic address to the Indian Parliament, where he introduced the idea of the "Indo-Pacific" and laid down the intellectual groundwork for what would become the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force in 2011.

Special Strategic & Global Partnership (2014-2020)

The relationship was upgraded once more in 2014, this time to a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership."

The two countries found deep alignment through Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) vision.

An agreement was signed to build the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (Bullet Train) using Japanese Shinkansen technology.

Indo-Pacific & Technology Partnership (2020-Present)

Cooperation has since broadened to cover the Quad, resilient supply chains, semiconductor collaboration, digital technologies, green energy, and defence interoperability.

Amid shifting regional geopolitics, Japan has become one of India's most trusted strategic partners.

Key Areas of Cooperation

Geopolitics & Maritime Security:

Strategic Convergence: Joint efforts are underway to link India's MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) and IPOI (Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative) with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) framework.

The Quad: Alongside the US and Australia, India and Japan help steer the Quad's agenda, which places priority on infrastructure, maritime domain awareness, and humanitarian assistance across the Indo-Pacific.

The "2+2" Dialogue: This highly formalized ministerial level exchange between Foreign and Defense Ministers provides regular strategic check-ins, with the 4th round set to take place in Tokyo later this year.

Defence Cooperation:

Defense Co-Development: Bilateral defense technology reached a major landmark with the finalization of technical designs for the UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) masts for the Indian Navy, marking the first time the two countries have jointly developed physical defense hardware.

Logistics & Maintenance: Under the Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services (RPSS) pact, both militaries pool logistics support. New agreements signed in 2026 are extending this into naval Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) cooperation across the Indian Ocean.

Tri-Service Exercises: Combat interoperability is kept sharp through annual joint exercises across all three services, including Dharma Guardian (Army), Shinyuu Maitri (Air Force), and JIMEX/Malabar (Navy).

Economic Cooperation:

Bilateral Trade: With global trade routes growing less predictable, the India-Japan Joint Declaration on Economic Security Cooperation puts heavy emphasis on cutting reliance on any single nation.

The Semiconductor Hub: Major Japanese firms have woven themselves into India's semiconductor sector. Renesas Electronics is set to begin mass production at its Gujarat plant this year, while Tokyo Electron (TEL) has teamed up with Tata Electronics to build front-end fabrication ecosystems.

Critical Minerals: Joint exploration and processing agreements are helping secure the rare earth minerals needed for green technology and electronic hardware manufacturing.

Industrial Competitiveness: Under the India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership (IJICP), 12 dedicated working groups oversee manufacturing standards spanning logistics, textiles, and automotive sectors.

Artificial Intelligence: The Japan-India AI Cooperation Initiative (JAI) received a boost at the 2026 summit, with an explicit framework now in place for trusted AI governance, open-source multilingual model training, and digital corridor infrastructure.

Space Frontier: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) are working together on the LUPEX (Lunar Polar Exploration) Mission, aimed at sending a rover to explore the Moon's south pole.

Urban Mass Transit: Beyond the flagship Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (Bullet Train), Japan is putting significant financing behind expanding the Mumbai Metro (Line 11) and Bengaluru Metro (Phase 3).

Human Resource Mobility: Talent exchange programs such as the Technical Intern Training Programme (TITP) and Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) scheme help bridge employment gaps between the two countries. Japan is also planning to bring 500 highly skilled Indian AI professionals to Tokyo by 2030 to build cross-border tech synergy.

What are the issues limiting India-Japan Relationship?

Trade Deficit: Total bilateral trade for FY2025 to 26 came in at a modest $27.48 billion, dwarfed by what both countries trade with China. What's more, the trade balance leans heavily

toward Japan, India exported just $6.04 billion while importing $21.44 billion, leaving a steep $15.39 billion trade deficit.

Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs): Even though the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has removed tariffs on more than 94% of items, some of India's strongest sectors, pharmaceuticals (generic drugs) and agriculture, still run into rigid Japanese phytosanitary standards and complicated regulatory processes. For instance, procedural and quarantine issues regularly disrupt exports of premium Indian mangoes.

Strategic & Diplomatic Divergence: India places a lot of value on "strategic autonomy" and has kept up its longstanding trade and defense relationship with Russia. Japan, by contrast, is closely tied into the US alliance system and enforces strict G7 sanctions against Russia, which occasionally puts the two countries' multilateral approaches out of step with each other.

Defense Co-production Hurdles: Military ties may be growing, but technology transfers and joint manufacturing continue to move slowly. Japan's historically strict defense export rules have held up major joint projects, including the procurement of the ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious aircraft.

Infrastructure Delays: Large scale projects built around Japanese technology, such as the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (bullet train), have run into significant timeline extensions due to land acquisition problems and complicated regulatory compliance.

Limited People-to-People and Cultural Ties: Compared to the strength of their economic and strategic frameworks, tourism, academic exchange, and cultural understanding between the two populations remain fairly modest. This shortage of deep grassroots connection can sometimes lead to gaps in mutual social and cultural understanding, something that's essential for keeping a "Special" partnership going over the long haul.

What steps can be taken to further deepen India-Japan Relationship?

Economic and Supply Chain Resilience: Speed up the pending review of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to lift bilateral trade and encourage over $67 billion in Japanese private investment into India over the coming decade. Resolving regulatory hurdles and non-tariff barriers alongside this review is essential.

Critical Tech & AI Initiatives: Formalize the UNICORN naval radio antenna system as the first true co-development project between the two countries. Japan's recent easing of its defense export rules opens up a significant window for industrial collaboration.

Defense and Security Co-development: Expand joint naval exercises and put the landmark defense co-development agreement into practice, jointly producing advanced military hardware under India's "Make in India" framework.

People-to-People Mobility: Follow through on the Action Plan aiming to exchange 500,000 personnel over 5 years, which includes sending 50,000 skilled Indian workers to Japan. Focus on Japanese language training and sector specific skilling to help improve integration and success rates.

Energy & Clean Tech: Work together on energy resilience, covering strategic stockpiling and clean energy projects. Launch the India-Japan Cooperative Biogas Initiative to build 1,000 plants across India. Look into cooperation on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) as a possible "game-changer" for clean energy.

Political Cooperation: Keep holding regular "2+2" dialogues between foreign and defense ministers. Activate the India-Japan Act East Forum to make sure there's strategic follow-through on projects, particularly in the Northeast.

Conclusion

India and Japan stand as two great democracies committed to the ideals of a value based order. Building this rules based order has become necessary to address China's growing assertiveness and expansionism across the Indo-Pacific region. Beyond that, the two countries are working to shape a new security architecture centered largely on maritime security and cooperation. Because of this, deepening the India-Japan relationship matters not just for the two nations themselves but for the wider Indo-Pacific region, helping to encourage peace, prosperity, and stability across the world. The time has come to build on this shared heritage and work together toward a better, more prosperous future, realizing the full potential of the "confluence of two seas."

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026.

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Principal organs of Union Government and state governments
  - **GS2:** Education



Introduction

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026. The Bill came in response to recurring paper leak controversies, including the NEET 2026 paper leak controversy, which exposed continuing gaps in the original Act's deterrence framework. In light of these gaps, the Amendment Bill brings in far stricter penalties.

What are the important provisions of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act 2024?

Definition of 'Unfair Means' under the Act

Section 3 of the Act spells out 15 specific actions that count as employing unfair means in public examinations "for monetary or wrongful gain":

Leaking a question paper or answer key, or colluding to bring about such a leak.

Taking part in collusion with others to make a question paper or answer key leak happen.

Getting hold of or possessing a question paper or an OMR sheet without proper authority.

Supplying answers to questions through any unauthorized person during a public exam.

Helping a candidate in any unauthorized way, whether directly or indirectly.

Interfering with answer sheets, including OMR sheets.

Changing an assessment for reasons other than correcting a genuine error, and without proper authority.

Knowingly breaching norms or standards the Central Government has set for running a public examination, whether directly or through an agency.

Interfering with any document needed to shortlist candidates or finalize merit or rank in a public examination.

Deliberately bypassing security measures to enable unfair means during a public examination.

Interfering with a computer network, computer resource, or computer system.

Manipulating seating arrangements or the allocation of dates and shifts for candidates in order to facilitate unfair means.

Threatening the life or liberty of, or wrongfully confining, individuals connected to the public examination authority, service provider, or any authorized government agency; or obstructing the conduct of a public examination.

Setting up a fake website to cheat or for financial gain.

Running a fake examination or issuing fake admit cards or offer letters to cheat or for financial gain.

Definition of 'Public Examinations' under the Act

Section 2(k) of the Act defines a "public examination" as any examination run by a "public examination authority" named in the Bill's Schedule.

Public Examination Authorities under the Act:

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

Staff Selection Commission (SSC)

Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs)

Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS)

National Testing Agency (NTA)

Ministries or Departments of the Central Government, along with their attached and subordinate offices, when recruiting staff.

Any other authority the Central Government may notify.

Punishments Under The Act

Section 9 of the Act addresses the nature of offences.

Nature of Offences: Offences under the new Bill have been classified as Cognizable, Non-bailable, and Non-compoundable.

Cognizable: Police can make an arrest without needing a warrant.

Non-bailable: Bail isn't automatic. A magistrate decides whether the accused qualifies for release on bail.

Non-compoundable: This means the complainant cannot withdraw the case even if the complainant and accused reach a compromise. The accused must go through a trial regardless.

Punishments under the Act:

Anyone, whether an individual or a group, using unfair means faces 3 to 5 years in prison plus a fine of up to Rs. 10 lakh. If they fail to pay the fine, additional punishment follows under the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023.

Organised paper leaks carry 5 to 10 years in prison and a fine exceeding Rs. 1 crore. Failure to pay the fine again triggers additional punishment under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023.

Service providers face a fine of Rs. 1 crore and get barred from conducting examinations for the next 4 years.

Liability of Service Providers

Service providers involved in running examinations, such as agencies managing logistics, printing, transport, IT systems, or security, can be held liable if they enable or take part in unfair practices.

Investigation

Only officers at or above the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) or Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), or their equivalent, are authorized to conduct investigations.

Protection of Genuine Candidates

The Act is aimed primarily at organized cheating networks, officials, and service providers, not at candidates who end up as victims of systemic failures. Students and candidates taking exams fall outside the Act's scope and remain governed by the existing rules of the conducting agency.

What are the major amendments proposed under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026?

Stricter Punishment for Individuals:

Raises the punishment for offences under the Act from 3 to 5 years imprisonment to 5 to 10 years.

Bumps up the maximum fine from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh.

Higher Penalties for Service Providers:

Increases the maximum fine on service providers caught in unfair practices from ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore.

Extends their ban from conducting public examinations from 4 years to 8 years.

Tougher Action against Officials of Service Providers:

Raises the minimum imprisonment term for complicit directors or senior management from 3 years to 5 years.

Increases the fine from ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore.

Stronger Punishment for Organised Crime:

Raises the minimum imprisonment for organised examination fraud from 5 years to 7 years.

Increases the minimum fine from ₹1 crore to ₹10 crore.

Constitution of Special Task Forces (STFs): Gives the Central Government the power to set up Special Task Forces to investigate paper leaks and other examination related offences.

Time-Bound Investigation: Requires investigations to wrap up within 2 months, whether conducted by the investigating agency, Central Investigating Agency, or Special Task Force.

Establishment of Special Fast Track Courts: Requires every State and Union Territory to designate Special Fast Track Courts for offences under the Act, done in consultation with the relevant High Court.

Time-Bound Trial: Mandates day-to-day trial proceedings, with trials required to conclude within 3 months of the charge sheet being filed.

Appointment of Special Public Prosecutors: Allows States and Union Territories to appoint Special Public Prosecutors to handle cases before the Special Fast Track Courts.

Appeal Mechanism: Sets out that appeals from Special Fast Track Courts go before a Division Bench (two judges) of the High Court, with appeals expected to be resolved within 3 months of being admitted, as far as possible.

What are the advantages of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026?

Stronger Deterrence: The amendment brings in considerably harsher penalties meant to strongly discourage organized crime syndicates and individuals from engaging in malpractices such as paper leaks. Longer prison terms and steeper fines serve as a stronger deterrent against paper leaks and examination fraud.

Protects the Integrity of Public Examinations: These stricter legal safeguards help restore trust among students, parents, and institutions in recruitment and entrance examinations (such as NEET, JEE, CUET, UPSC, and SSC) following high-profile leak controversies.

Ensures Speedy Justice:

By requiring designated Fast-Track Sessions Courts in every state and UT, cases will be tried on a day-to-day basis instead of getting stuck in the usual court backlog.

Setting a 2-month limit for investigation and a 3-month limit for trial, along with a 3-month window for appeals, ensures justice moves quickly, preventing evidence from going stale or witnesses from being influenced.

Enhances Accountability of Service Providers: Imposes tougher penalties and longer bans on agencies responsible for conducting public examinations, ensuring greater accountability on their part.

Strengthens Investigation Mechanisms: The Special Task Force provision lets the central government deploy dedicated, specialized investigative resources for complex, often interstate paper-leak networks, rather than relying solely on local police, who may lack the reach or resources to track organized rackets operating across state borders.

Improves Transparency: Builds a more transparent and secure examination process by discouraging unfair means and tightening oversight.

Protects Meritorious Candidates: By directing systemic penalties squarely at perpetrators, cartels, and complicit officials, the law shields genuine test-takers from having their hard work wiped out by blanket re-examinations.

Restores Public Confidence: Helps rebuild trust in public recruitment and entrance examinations following recent paper leak controversies and student protests.

What are the major concerns associated with the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026?

Focus on Punishment Rather than Prevention: The Bill mainly ramps up penalties but doesn't adequately tackle the root causes behind paper leaks, such as weak examination governance, poor security protocols, and administrative lapses.

Mandatory Timelines May Be Difficult to Achieve: Completing investigations within 2 months and trials within 3 months may prove impractical given how short-staffed the system is on investigators, prosecutors, and judges. The Bill also prescribes a 2-month investigation window but doesn't specify what happens or what procedure follows if that deadline isn't met.

Implementation Challenges: Setting up Special Fast Track Courts, appointing Special Public Prosecutors, and forming Special Task Forces will demand considerable financial and administrative resources.

Limited Coverage: The legislation mainly covers specified Central Government public examinations. Unless individual States pass similar laws or adopt comparable measures, many State-level examinations could remain outside its reach.

Ignoring Vulnerabilities: Harsh penalties alone don't fix the systemic weaknesses within the examination pipeline, such as decentralized question paper printing, unverified private test center operators, or weak cybersecurity during digital transmission.

Unemployment and Pressure: The Bill treats paper leaks mainly as a law-and-order problem, leaving untouched the deeper structural drivers behind them: extreme job scarcity, delayed recruitment cycles, and the enormous socio-economic

pressure facing millions of candidates competing for a limited number of government jobs.

Conclusion

The Public Examinations Amendment Bill marks a notable step by the Central Government toward protecting the interests of the student community, many of whom pour years of effort into preparing for public examinations. That said, stricter punishment on its own isn't enough, it needs to be paired with stronger administrative systems, secure technology, transparent examination processes, and institutional accountability to genuinely curb examination fraud.

FCRA Act

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Civil Society
  - **GS2:** Recent acts



Introduction

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010 governs how individuals, associations, and NGOs can accept and use funds coming in from abroad, with the aim of keeping this process transparent and protecting national interests. The government's newly notified FCRA Amendment Rules 2026 tighten compliance considerably. They require registration to be tied to specific purposes and geographic areas, make "key functionaries" personally accountable, widen the scope of social media disclosures, and mandate that 75% of existing funds be used up before any new installment is released.

What is the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)?

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) is legislation that governs how individuals, associations, and companies can accept and use foreign contributions or hospitality, with the goal of making sure this doesn't harm national security, public order, or national interest.

Administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs, it stops foreign entities from swaying India's internal politics, media, and public discourse.

What are some of the important provisions of the FCRA?

Mandatory Registration or Prior Permission: Organizations running cultural, educational, economic, or social programs need to be formally registered with the Central Government before they can receive foreign contributions. Alternatively, they can seek 'Prior Permission' for specific grants.

Prohibited Entities: Certain individuals and professionals are completely barred from accepting foreign contributions, including election candidates, journalists, owners of newspapers or media outlets, judges, government employees, political parties, and members of legislative bodies.

Registration and Renewal: Registration granted by the Central Government stays valid for five years and needs to be renewed within six months of expiry to remain in effect. Newer organizations can instead apply for 'prior permission' tied to a specific project and a specific donor.

Banking and Utilization Rules:

All foreign contributions must flow into a single, dedicated FCRA bank account at the State Bank of India's main branch in New Delhi.

Organizations are allowed to open additional accounts at scheduled banks purely to use these funds, but they must report doing so within 45 days.

The law limits how much of the foreign funds can go toward administrative expenses, capping it at 20%.

These funds cannot be put toward speculative business ventures and must be spent strictly within India, and only for the approved purpose.

Accounting and Reporting: Recipients are required to keep separate accounting records and submit an annual online return using Form FC-4 by December 31st each year. This return needs to be certified by a chartered accountant and include a balance sheet along with an income and expenditure statement. Records must be kept on file for six years.

Surrender and Cancellation of Registration: The Central Government has the power to suspend or cancel an organization's FCRA registration if it violates the Act. Organizations also have the option to voluntarily give up their registration, after which their foreign funds and related assets get transferred to a designated government authority.

What are the key objectives of the FCRA?

Regulating the Acceptance of Foreign Funds: The FCRA sets up a structured system for tracking who is bringing money into the country from overseas. It makes sure that any individual, association, or company receiving foreign hospitality or cash is properly registered, verified, and traceable.

Preventing Activities Detrimental to National Interest: One of the central goals is to stop foreign entities from bankrolling proxy agendas within India. The law aims to prevent foreign contributions from funding activities that could threaten:

The sovereignty and integrity of India.

Public interest or internal security.

The state's strategic, scientific, or economic interests.

Harmony between religious, racial, social, linguistic, or regional groups.

Insulating India's Democratic Institutions: By imposing a blanket ban covering political parties, candidates, judges, legislators, and mainstream journalists, the aim is to ensure that domestic policy and public opinion are shaped only by Indian citizens, not by foreign donors.

Enhancing Transparency & Accountability: The Act compels NGOs and social organizations to be fully transparent about how they spend foreign aid. It requires registered entities to file annual returns, submit audited accounts, and provide financial statements laying out exactly where foreign funds came from and how they were used.

What are the key changes introduced by the latest amendments to the FCRA Rules?

Activity & Geographic Restrictions: Registrations are now tightly bound to specific activities and specific geographic areas. Organizations must specify the exact states or union territories where they'll operate, use funds only for the purposes they've declared, and disclose their social media accounts.

No Proselytisation: Faith-based work such as maintaining places of worship, religious education, and community kitchens remains permitted, but proselytisation or religious conversion is strictly off-limits.

Reasonable Activity Clause: Organizations need to spend at least ₹10 lakh in foreign funds over two financial years to show they're genuinely operational.

Vesting of Assets: Should an organization's FCRA registration get cancelled, be surrendered, or lapse without renewal, its foreign contributions and physical assets provisionally transfer to a government-appointed Designated Authority.

Permanent Takeover: If the registration isn't restored, these assets pass permanently to the Authority, which can sell them or hand them over to government bodies, with the proceeds going into the Consolidated Fund of India.

Expanded Definitions: The definition of "key functionaries" has been broadened to include trustees, partners, members

of the governing body, and anyone with control over the organization.

Foreigner Restrictions: Organizations where foreign nationals (excluding OCI holders or Persons of Indian origin) serve as key functionaries generally cannot register, unless the central government specifically clears them.

Usage Caps & Staged Receipts: Any new installment of foreign funds can only be released once at least 75% of the previous installment has been spent and verified.

Restrictions on "News" Activities: Organizations have to disclose whether they publish any books or articles, since they're prohibited from producing or broadcasting "news or current affairs" under the Act.

What is the significance of the FCRA?

Sovereignty and National Security: The core purpose of the FCRA is safeguarding sovereignty and national security. It exists to ensure foreign money cannot be used to:

Finance political destabilisation or sway election results.

Back separatist or secessionist movements (for instance, concerns around foreign funding reaching organisations in Kashmir or Northeast India).

Push religious conversion activities that risk creating communal tension.

Undermine the country's strategic interests through NGO-led campaigns opposing defence, nuclear, or infrastructure projects.

Regulation of Civil Society and NGO Ecosystem: India is home to one of the largest NGO sectors in the world. The FCRA serves as the main regulatory tool overseeing the roughly 16,000 to 22,000 organisations registered to receive foreign funds.

Ensuring Transparency and Accountability: The Act establishes a strict compliance regime, requiring NGOs to register, report their foreign receipts and spending in detail, and use funds only for their declared purpose, making the flow and use of foreign money transparent.

Enforcing Compliance: In recent years, the government has stepped up scrutiny using the FCRA, reflected in the cancellation of over 20,000 FCRA registrations for non-compliance.

What are the major criticisms of the FCRA framework in India?

Vagueness of Key Provisions: The Act bars activities "detrimental to national interest" or those affecting "public order, security of State, harmony between religious, racial, linguistic or regional groups," yet none of these terms are actually defined within the Act itself.

Weaponisation Against Dissent: Critics have repeatedly pointed out that the FCRA gets selectively enforced to silence organisations that criticize government policy. Between 2014 and 2022, over 20,000 FCRA registrations were cancelled, a scale that critics say genuine security concerns alone cannot account for.

The Sub-Granting Ban: India's civil society sector has traditionally worked on a hub-and-spoke model, where larger, registered organisations received foreign funds and passed them on to smaller, specialised grassroots groups. The ban on sub-granting effectively cuts off this ecosystem, leaving smaller organisations, often the ones working with the most marginalised communities, without any funding.

The 20% Administrative Cost Cap: Cutting the administrative expense limit from 50% down to 20% of foreign contributions has drawn heavy criticism. This cap doesn't reflect the realities on the ground for non-profits operating in India, where compliance costs, rent, travel to remote regions, and staff training add up significantly. For many organisations, particularly those in advocacy, legal aid, and research where people are the main resource, staff salaries alone can exceed 20% of total spending.

SBI New Delhi Main Branch Requirement: The rule requiring every FCRA-registered organisation to hold its designated account solely at SBI's New Delhi Main Branch has drawn widespread criticism. Organisations based in Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, or rural areas end up having to manage a bank account over 1,000 kilometres from where they actually work, creating serious practical headaches around physical banking, cheque clearing, cash handling, and paying local vendors.

Due Process Deficits: The procedure for suspending and cancelling FCRA registration has been criticized for lacking adequate safeguards:

The MHA can suspend a registration for 180 days simply on the basis of a pending inquiry, effectively shutting an organisation down for half a year without any actual finding of wrongdoing.

The appeal route, going to the High Court, is costly and slow, meaning organisations may run out of money before they ever get judicial relief.

There's no independent body to adjudicate these matters, the MHA acts as regulator, prosecutor, and decision-maker all at once, which goes against basic principles of natural justice and institutional separation.

Chilling Effect on Legitimate Civil Society Activities: Organisations steer clear of taking up controversial causes, such as environmental litigation against state projects, minority rights cases, or anti-corruption campaigns, out of fear of facing FCRA action. This gradually strips Indian civil society

of its political edge, leaving behind mostly service-delivery organisations that pose less of a challenge to state power, while advocacy and rights-focused groups grow weaker.

Disproportionate Impact on Marginalised Communities: The combined weight of FCRA restrictions lands hardest on India's most vulnerable populations. Organisations that work with Adivasi communities on land and forest rights, issues that often put them at odds with state and corporate interests, face disproportionately heavy FCRA scrutiny.

International Law and Human Rights Concerns: The FCRA framework has been called out as inconsistent with India's international human rights commitments:

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) affirms civil society's right to seek and receive funding, including from foreign sources, for legitimate rights work.

The framework may also run afoul of Article 22 of the ICCPR (freedom of association), a treaty India has signed onto.

What reforms are needed to make the FCRA regime more effective and balanced?

Expedite Processing Times: Bring in strict, legally binding service-level agreements (SLAs) for processing FCRA registration, renewal, and prior permission applications, to prevent administrative bottlenecks and project delays.

Grievance Redressal Mechanisms: Set up an independent ombudsman or a dedicated grievance redressal cell within the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), giving NGOs a transparent way to appeal licensing delays or arbitrary cancellations.

Rationalize Administrative Caps: Reconsider the rule capping administrative expenses at 20% of foreign funds, since many specialized development and advocacy organizations genuinely need larger operational and administrative budgets to function well.

Re-permit Sub-Granting: Bring back sub-granting, but pair it with strict "chain-link responsibility." Under this, the primary recipient NGO would stay legally and financially accountable for confirming how the smaller partner organisation actually used the funds. This keeps things transparent without choking off funding to micro-level community organizations.

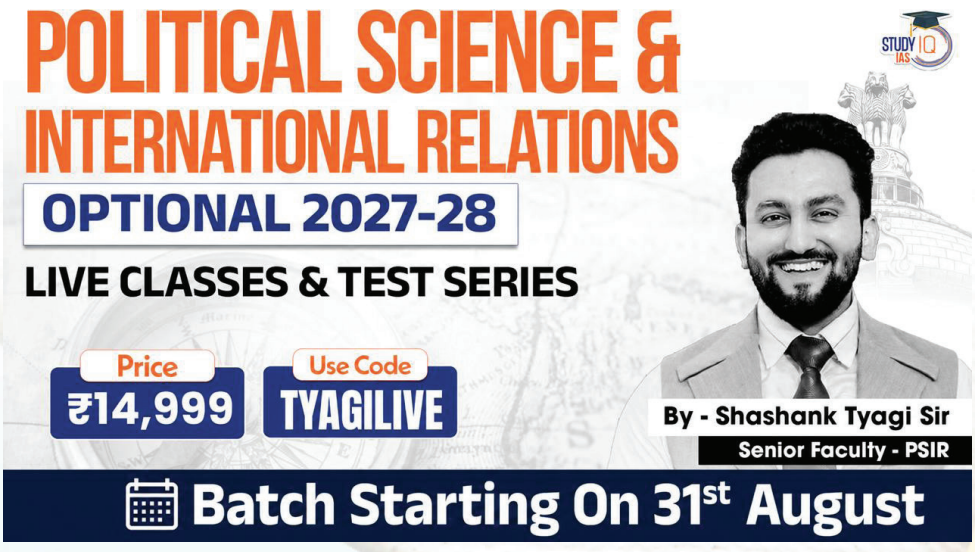
Standardize & Define Vague Terminology: Terms such as "national interest," "public order," and "harmonious relations" need precise, narrow definitions. Clear legal definitions remove ambiguity, giving NGOs a transparent sense of where the boundaries lie, instead of leaving them exposed to shifting political interpretations of what counts as "acceptable" work.

Rationalising the SBI New Delhi Main Branch Requirement: The mandatory SBI New Delhi Main Branch account requirement should be swapped out for a designated account at any scheduled commercial bank, paired with real-time reporting into a central FCRA monitoring system.

Adoption of the UN Framework on Civil Society Funding: India should bring the FCRA in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the recommendations put forward by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association, both of which affirm civil society's right to seek, receive, and use resources, including from foreign sources, for legitimate rights work.

Conclusion:

A reformed FCRA ought to be built on three core principles: Proportionality, Institutional independence, and Democratic legitimacy. A framework grounded in these principles would better serve India's dual interests, protecting national sovereignty from genuine foreign interference while keeping intact the civil society ecosystem that any functioning democracy needs.



Fast Track Courts

Relevance

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Principal organs of Union Government and state governments
  - **GS2:** Supreme Court



Introduction

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the government has decided to set up fast track courts aimed specifically at delivering swift and stringent punishment to those responsible for leaking public examination papers. The move is intended to protect students' interests and act as a deterrent against examination fraud.

What are Fast Track Courts?

Fast Track Courts (FTCs) are special courts set up to make sure certain categories of cases get disposed of quickly, particularly serious crimes, cases that have been pending for a long time, and matters that carry public significance.

Their broader purpose is to cut down judicial delays, make justice more accessible, and build greater public confidence in the justice delivery system.

Regular courts handle a broad mix of civil and criminal matters under a general roster, but FTCs work differently. They're built to move through relaxed procedural steps, holding hearings daily or at short intervals so that designated cases get resolved within strict deadlines.

These courts come into being through State enactments or High Court notifications rather than as a separate constitutional court. They sit within the existing judicial hierarchy, typically at the Sessions Court level, and are staffed by additional judges who are often appointed on a contractual or ad-hoc basis.

Setting up FTCs is a shared responsibility between the Union and State governments. The Centre handles policy direction and financial backing, while it falls to the states, in consultation with their respective High Courts, to actually establish the courts.

How has the Fast Track Court system evolved in India?

11th Finance Commission (2000): The idea of FTCs was first put forward by the 11th Finance Commission in 2000, as a

response to the pile up of long-pending cases in the lower judiciary, especially those involving undertrial prisoners stuck in jail for extended stretches.

14th Finance Commission (2015): The 14th Finance Commission went further, recommending 1,800 such courts be created to deal with heinous crimes, cases involving women, children, and the elderly, along with property disputes that had been pending for over five years.

Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs): After the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2018 came into effect, along with directives from the Supreme Court, the Centre rolled out a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in October 2019, financed through the Nirbhaya Fund.

This gave rise to dedicated Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), whose sole focus is handling rape cases under the Indian Penal Code as well as cases falling under the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act.

As a result, India now has two distinct types of FTCs:

General Fast Track Courts (FTCs): These trace back to the recommendations of the 11th and 14th Finance Commissions. By January 2026, 862 of these courts were up and running across 21 States and Union Territories.

Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs): These came out of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Funded entirely by the Centre, they deal exclusively with time bound trials of rape cases and offences under the POCSO Act. By mid-2026, 774 such courts were operational across 29 States and Union Territories.

What is the significance for Fast Track Courts in India?

Ensures Speedy Justice: Cases move through FTCs at a noticeably faster pace than in regular courts. Back in 2024, Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) were disposing of roughly 9.5 cases a month, compared to just around 3.3 in regular courts. That same year, these courts hit a disposal rate of 96.28%, closing out 85,595 of the 88,902 new cases that came in.

Reduces Case Pendency: Together, FTCs have cleared millions of cases, with general FTCs alone resolving over 4 million cases in just the last three years. This setup lets regular courts stay focused on their general caseload while these specialized courts take on the time sensitive categories, which directly chips away at the massive backlog weighing down the regular judicial system.

Victim-Centric Approach: These courts are built with survivors in mind. That includes setting up Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centers (VWDCs), which make the courtroom feel less intimidating for children and victims, and bringing in child psychologists to support them through the trial process.

Strengthens Public Confidence: When investigation to conviction timelines move quickly in rape and child sexual abuse cases, it reinforces the deterrent power of criminal law and pushes back against the public perception that delayed justice only emboldens offenders.

Helps Fulfil Constitutional Mandate: The Supreme Court of India treats the Right to a Speedy Trial as a core part of the Right to Life and Personal Liberty guaranteed under Article 21. Through continuous hearings with minimal adjournments, FTCs turn this constitutional promise into practice, offering a dedicated way to prevent prolonged undertrial detention and drawn out case delays.

What are the key challenges faced by Fast Track Courts in India?

Shortage of Judges: Vacancies within the subordinate judiciary weaken how effective Fast Track Courts can be. In Maharashtra, for example, only 58 out of the 138 sanctioned fast track courts are actually functional, largely because there simply aren't enough judges.

Inadequate Infrastructure: FTCs in remote and rural areas run into serious technological gaps, missing modern digital case management systems, video conferencing setups, and child friendly spaces that sensitive POCSO trials require.

Low Conviction Rate: Conviction rates in these courts were strikingly low across many states in 2024. West Bengal, for instance, recorded just 2%, Jammu & Kashmir came in at 4.5%, and Andhra Pradesh at 5.2%. Even Delhi, despite its lengthy trial process, managed only an 8.6% conviction rate.

Heavy Case Load: FTSCs clear cases at a healthy rate, roughly 9.5 per judge each month versus about 3.3 in regular courts, but the sheer number of new cases keeps piling up, keeping overall pendency high. Recent filings show more than 2.4 lakh cases still pending in FTSCs nationwide, driven by high rates of new case institution.

Poor Resource Allocation: Since funding and operational duties for these courts are split between central and state governments, some states find it difficult to allocate what's needed, resulting in wide gaps in performance across the country.

Delays in Investigation: Slow police charge-sheets, delayed execution of summons, and trouble ensuring witnesses actually show up often push judges into granting adjournments, which stalls the trial timeline.

Lack of Uniform Implementation: Even though funding and guidelines come from the Centre, the actual work of setting up courts and hiring staff depends on individual State Governments and High Courts. Differences in state budgets

end up producing uneven implementation from one region to another.

What measures can be adopted to improve the effectiveness of Fast Track Courts?

Fill Judicial Vacancies: Shift away from ad-hoc and contractual appointments and instead build a dedicated, permanent cadre of judges for FTCs. This would ensure continuity, let expertise build up over time (particularly for POCSO and rape trials), and cut down on disruptions caused by judges rotating out.

Strengthen Court Infrastructure: Every sanctioned FTC or FTSC should have its own dedicated courtroom instead of sharing time slots with regular courts. Integration with the e-Courts Mission (Phase III) should be sped up to bring in digital case management, e-filing, and virtual hearings that cut down procedural delays.

Increase Financial Support: Instead of depending on short-term extensions of centrally sponsored schemes, such as those financed through the Nirbhaya Fund, the central and state governments need to permanently fold FTSCs into the regular judicial budget.

Improve Inter-Agency Coordination: District level coordination committees should be set up, bringing together police, prosecution, forensic labs, and the judiciary to keep timelines aligned from the FIR stage right through to trial. Statutory time limits should be fixed for each stage, investigation, chargesheet filing, and trial completion, backed by accountability mechanisms for any delays.

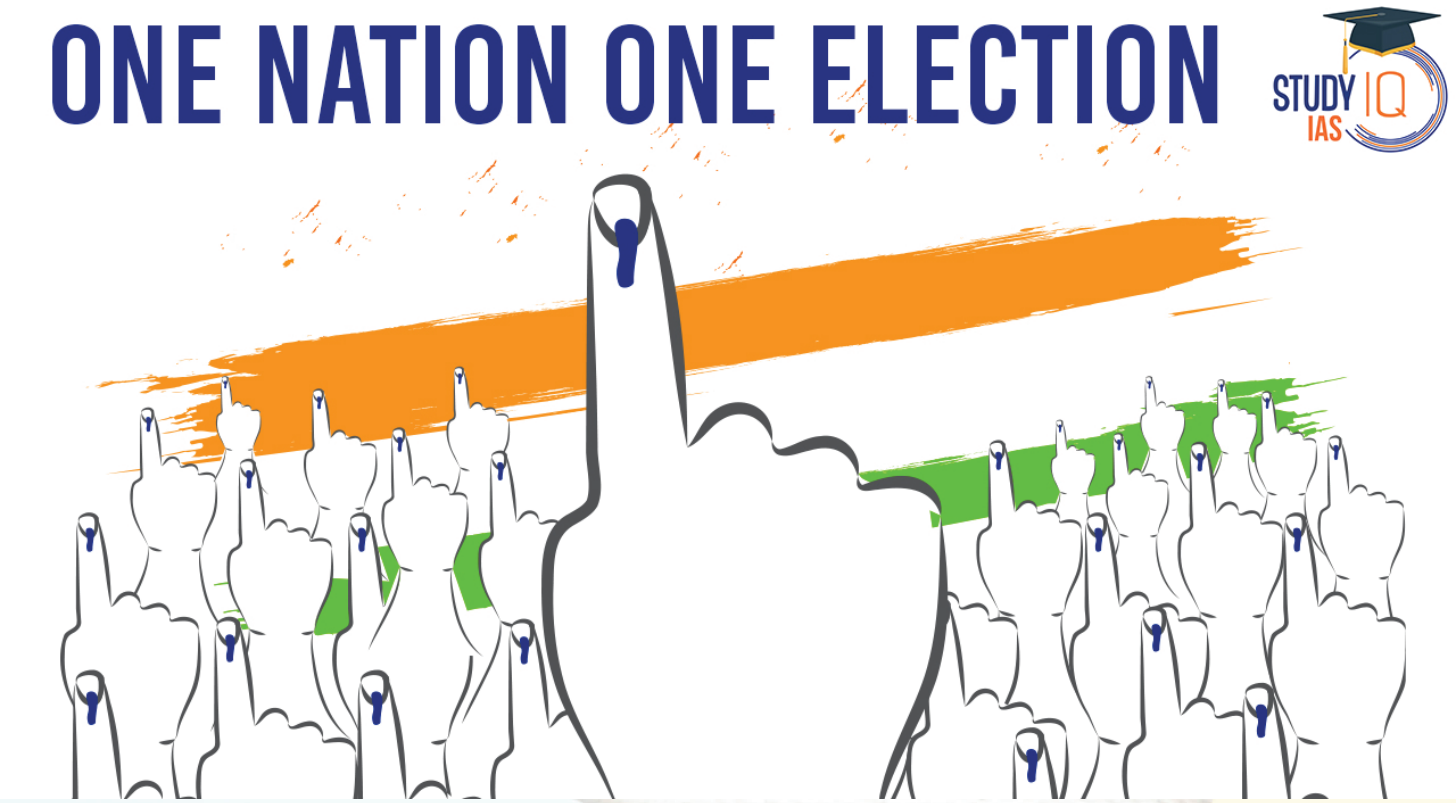
Expand the Scope Where Necessary: Based on lessons drawn from POCSO and rape FTSCs, it's worth considering whether the FTC model could be extended to other categories that are similarly backlog heavy and socially urgent, such as cyber crimes or crimes against senior citizens.

Strengthen Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Encourage mediation, arbitration, and Lok Adalats for suitable civil disputes, which would let Fast Track Courts concentrate on serious criminal matters instead.

One Nation, One Election

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Party system
  - **GS2:** Elections



Introduction

India's Parliament is gearing up to take up the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, aimed at bringing Lok Sabha and all State assembly elections onto a synchronized cycle. Passing this Bill will require a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament, plus ratification by at least half the States. This commitment to introduce the reform follows the work of a High Level Committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind.

India's democratic system draws its strength from the vibrancy of its electoral process, which lets citizens play an active role in shaping governance at every level. Since gaining independence, the country has held over 400 elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, a track record that reflects the Election Commission of India's dedication to fairness and transparency. That said, the fact that elections happen so frequently and in such a fragmented way has sparked conversations around whether a more efficient system is needed. This is what's brought renewed attention to the idea of "One Nation, One Election."

What are Simultaneous Elections (One Nation, One Election)?

Simultaneous elections, widely known as "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE), refers to the concept of conducting elections to the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies together, on the same day, for the same constituency. Under this system, voters would be able to cast ballots for both tiers of government on a single day within their constituency, though the actual voting process could still unfold in phases nationwide.

This isn't a fresh concept for India. It actually traces back to how India's electoral system originally functioned, before political instability disrupted it:

The Norm of Simultaneous Elections (1951-1967)

After the Constitution came into force, elections to the Lok Sabha and every State Legislative Assembly were held together from 1951 right through to 1967.

The very first general elections, covering both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, took place jointly in 1951-52, and this pattern held for three more rounds of general elections in 1957, 1962, and 1967.

Ahead of the 1957 elections, some State assemblies were even dissolved early just to keep everything synchronized.

Disruption of the Cycle (1968 onwards)

This synchronized pattern broke down in 1968 and 1969 when several State Legislative Assemblies were dissolved before their term was up.

The Fourth Lok Sabha met a similar fate, being dissolved early in 1970, with fresh elections following in 1971.

Whereas the First, Second, and Third Lok Sabhas each ran their full five year course, the Fifth Lok Sabha had its term stretched all the way to 1977 under Article 352, owing to the Emergency being declared.

Since then, very few Lok Sabhas have actually served out their complete five year terms, the Eighth, Tenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth being among the exceptions. Others, like the Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth, were all dissolved ahead of schedule.

State Assemblies haven't fared any differently, facing their own share of premature dissolutions and term extensions over the years.

Together, these events broke apart the earlier cycle of simultaneous elections for good, giving rise to the staggered election schedule the country follows today.

Over time, various committees and bodies have pushed for reviving ONOE, including:

Election Commission of India (1983): In its annual report, the Commission pointed to the benefits of going back to holding Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly elections together.

Law Commission of India (170th Report, 1999): Called for synchronizing Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections and put forward measures to help elected governments remain stable.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice (79th Report, 2015): Backed the idea of simultaneous elections and laid out a phased approach for implementing it.

NITI Aayog Working Paper (2017): Made the case for simultaneous elections as a way to cut election related spending and reduce the governance disruption caused by the Model Code of Conduct.

Law Commission of India (Draft Report, 2018): Looked closely at the constitutional, legal, and practical dimensions of simultaneous elections and proposed the amendments needed to make it happen.

High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections in India (Kovind Committee): Set up in September 2023 under the chairmanship of former President Ram Nath Kovind, this committee handed in its detailed report in March 2024, laying out a roadmap and recommendations for rolling out "One Nation, One Election." The Union Cabinet accepted these recommendations in September 2024.

What is the significance of Simultaneous Elections?

Prevents Policy Paralysis: Whenever elections roll around, the Model Code of Conduct kicks in and disrupts routine administrative work and development projects. This doesn't just slow down important welfare schemes, it also creates uncertainty in how the government functions. Holding elections simultaneously would cut down on how long the MCC stays in force, easing policy paralysis and letting governance carry on without constant interruption.

Mitigates Resource Diversion: Elections require pulling in a large number of personnel for election duty, which pulls them away from their regular responsibilities. ONOE would cut down how often this diversion happens, letting the administration stay focused on its core work.

Preserves Regional Party Relevance: Simultaneous elections don't sideline regional parties, if anything, they push for a more localized focus during campaigns, giving regional parties room to spotlight the issues and aspirations specific to their areas. This creates a political climate where local concerns aren't drowned out by national election narratives, keeping regional voices meaningful.

Enhances Political Opportunities: When elections happen together, political opportunities and responsibilities tend to get distributed more evenly within parties. Right now, it's fairly common for a handful of leaders within a party to dominate the electoral scene, contesting at multiple levels and cornering key positions. Under simultaneous elections, there's more room for diversity and inclusion among political workers from different parties, letting a broader set of leaders step up and take part in the democratic process.

Focus on Governance: The never-ending cycle of elections across the country pulls focus away from good governance. Political parties end up pouring their energy into election related activities to win, leaving less bandwidth for development and essential governance work. Synchronized elections would free up parties to concentrate on meeting the electorate's actual needs, cutting down on conflict and aggressive campaigning.

Reduced Financial Burden: Running simultaneous elections could substantially bring down the costs tied to holding multiple election cycles. The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) has estimated that ONOE could save the country close to ₹7 lakh crore, largely through lower logistical costs and more efficient use of manpower and security forces.

Mitigating Social Polarization: With elections happening back to back, political parties stay locked in an endless campaign mode. Chasing quick wins often pushes campaigns toward polarizing lines based on caste, community, or region. Confining campaigning to a single, focused window would ease the constant, exhausting social friction that repeated state elections tend to generate.

Boosting Voter Turnout: Having to vote separately for local bodies, state assemblies, and parliament at completely different times leads to what's called 'voter fatigue,' which drags down turnout. ONOE would turn this into one major national event, which typically drives up overall voter participation.

Positive Economic Impact: Certain studies referenced by the High Level Committee (HLC) point to simultaneous elections potentially lifting India's GDP growth by 1.5 to 1.6 percentage points, mainly by giving investors more certainty and cutting down economic disruption.

What are the key challenges associated with Simultaneous Elections?

Major Constitutional Overhaul: Rolling out ONOE would mean amending multiple articles of the Indian Constitution, including Article 83 (covering the duration of Parliament's Houses), Article 85 (dissolution of the Lok Sabha), Article 172 (duration of State Legislatures), Article 174 (sessions, prorogation, and dissolution of State Legislatures), and potentially Article 356 (President's Rule). This raises an important constitutional question: whether such changes would run afoul of the Basic Structure Doctrine.

Impact on Federalism: Critics point out that forcing State Assembly terms to match the Lok Sabha's schedule, whether by shortening or extending them, runs counter to the spirit of federalism and undermines State autonomy. Each State has its own distinct political rhythm and democratic mandate, and changing their terms without their complete and voluntary consent is viewed as overstepping into their powers.

Nationalization of Elections: When elections are held together, there's a real chance that national issues and the popularity of national leaders could overshadow local and regional concerns. Voters might end up picking the same party at both the central and state levels simply because they're swayed by the national narrative.

Disadvantage to Regional Parties: Regional parties, which typically build their strength around local issues and local leaders, could find themselves at a real disadvantage, struggling to match the resources and wide reach that larger national parties bring to a simultaneous election. This risks flattening political discourse into something more homogeneous.

Reduced Accountability at State Level: When State elections are always tied to the national ones, it can dilute how accountable State governments are to their own voters, since their performance risks getting overshadowed by whatever the Central government has or hasn't achieved.

Scenario of Hung Assemblies/No-Confidence Motions: One major sticking point is what happens if a government, whether at the Centre or in a State, collapses early because of a no-confidence motion, a hung assembly, or a split.

Questionable Claim on Economic Benefits: The claim that simultaneous elections naturally boost economic growth doesn't really hold up against historical evidence. During the years when elections were held simultaneously (1952-1967), India's average growth rate sat around 3.5%, often referred to as the 'Hindu Rate of Growth,' whereas between 2003 and 2011, when staggered elections had become the norm, growth ran at around 8 to 9%.

Massive Scale of Operations: Running elections for the whole country at once, covering the Lok Sabha, every State Assembly, and possibly local bodies too, would be a logistical undertaking on a scale never attempted before. It would demand:

Enormous Number of EVMs and VVPATs: Far beyond what's currently available, requiring massive procurement along with the storage and transport infrastructure to match.

Vast Deployment of Personnel: An enormous number of polling officials, security personnel, and administrative staff would be needed, pulling them away from their regular jobs on a scale never seen before.

What can be the way forward? (Kovind Committee's Recommendations)

Phased Approach for Synchronization:

Phase 1: Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies: The committee suggested that elections to the Lok Sabha and every State Legislative Assembly be held together.

Phase 2: Local Body Elections: Within 100 days of the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections, elections for Municipalities and Panchayats should also be brought into sync.

Constitutional Amendments Required: The committee flagged the need for major constitutional amendments to make simultaneous elections possible. The key proposed changes include:

New Article 82A: This would be added to the Constitution to lay out the process for shifting toward a system of simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections, giving Parliament the power to legislate on how such elections are conducted.

Amendments to Articles 83(4) and 172(4): These articles, which govern how long the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures last, would be changed so that any Lok Sabha or State Assembly elected to replace one that's been dissolved would only serve out the remaining time left on the previous full term, rather than starting a fresh five year term. This piece is essential to keeping everything synchronized.

New Article 324A: This would give Parliament the authority to legislate so that municipality and panchayat elections happen at the same time as Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections.

Amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1951: Changes would be needed here too, to bring electoral procedures in line with the simultaneous election setup.

"Appointed Date" and Synchronization Cycle: Once a new Lok Sabha holds its first sitting after a general election, the President would issue a notification fixing an "Appointed Date." Any State assembly elected after this date would have its term set to end alongside the Lok Sabha's full five year term, regardless of when its own five year period would otherwise have ended.

Handling Hung Houses/No-Confidence Motions: Should a hung House, a no-confidence motion, or some other event force an early dissolution, fresh elections would follow. But the newly formed Lok Sabha or State Assembly would only serve out the unexpired portion of the previous full term. This keeps the overall simultaneous election cycle from being thrown off track.

Constructive Vote of No-Confidence: The Kovind panel felt the current parliamentary rules on no-confidence motions were adequate as they stand, but the Law Commission of India and several parliamentary panels have pushed strongly for adopting the German Model of Constructive Vote of No-Confidence, where the opposition can't move a No-Confidence motion unless they simultaneously put forward a Confidence Motion proving they have the numbers to form an alternate government right away.

Logistical Preparedness: The ECI should work out and plan for all logistical needs well in advance, in consultation with the SECs. This covers procuring the large volume of EVMs and VVPATs needed, along with deploying sufficient manpower, polling staff, and security personnel.

Single Electoral Roll: The committee proposed building a single, unified electoral roll and voter ID system to be used across all elections, to be developed in consultation with State Election Commissions.

Conclusion

The High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, has set the stage for a major shift in how India conducts its elections. By bringing the election cycles of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies into alignment, the committee's recommendations aim to tackle the long standing problems that come with holding elections so frequently. The phased rollout it has proposed, paired with the necessary constitutional amendments, could open the door to a more efficient and stable electoral system for India.

Delimitation Exercise

Relevance

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Federalism
  - **GS2:** Federal Structure of India



Introduction

Every democracy needs to periodically redraw its electoral map so it keeps pace with population change. In India, this exercise is called delimitation. The last time it happened was in 1975, after which Indira Gandhi froze the process until 2000. A year later, Parliament extended the freeze on the number of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats through 2026. Going forward, the delimitation of constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies is meant to be based on the first Census conducted after 2026. This long delay has left several questions tied to democracy, demography, and federalism hanging, waiting to be addressed by the fifth delimitation exercise.

What is Delimitation? What is the constitutional status behind Delimitation in India?

Delimitation: Delimitation is the process through which the boundaries of electoral constituencies get redrawn to make sure representation stays fair as population changes.

This process is carried out by the Delimitation Commission, acting under Articles 82 and 170 of the Indian Constitution.

The underlying goal is to give every region equitable representation by correcting imbalances that arise from population shifts (driven by births, deaths, and migration), upholding the democratic principle of "one vote, one value."

Delimitation Commission: The Delimitation Commission is a statutory body tasked with determining constituency boundaries across the country for election purposes.

It's appointed by the President and operates under the Delimitation Commission Act.

The most recent Delimitation Commission (2002-08) only redrew constituency boundaries within states, without reallocating seats between States.

The upcoming Commission is expected to reallocate seats among States for the first time since 1976, redraw every constituency, and set up reserved constituencies to fulfil the 33% quota for women.

What is the significance of the Delimitation Exercise in India?

Political Representation and Electoral Fairness: Delimitation ensures democratic legitimacy by distributing seats fairly across the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. For example, the 2002 Delimitation Commission improved the voter-per-MP ratio in both urban and rural areas, preventing malapportionment and ensuring each MP represents roughly the same number of citizens.

Upholding Democracy: It curbs gerrymandering, that is, the political manipulation of electoral boundaries to benefit a particular party, group, or socioeconomic class, keeping electoral contests fair. For instance, the Supreme Court in Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006) affirmed how essential delimitation is for a fair democracy.

Socio-Economic Equity: The delimitation process strengthens representation for marginalized communities and Scheduled Tribes. The J&K Delimitation Commission, for example, allotted more seats to Jammu to correct historical disparities.

Strengthening of Federalism: Delimitation helps maintain equitable representation across States, balancing national unity against regional autonomy. The population freeze introduced under the 42nd Amendment, for instance, kept southern states with slower population growth from losing representation, upholding the spirit of cooperative federalism that's vital to India's unity.

Administrative Efficiency: Delimitation keeps the voter-to-representative ratio manageable, which supports better governance. Both Mumbai and Bengaluru, for example, saw improved electoral administration following the 2002 exercise.

Electoral Integrity and Governance: The delimitation process brings representation in line with new demographic realities, mirroring global examples such as the UK Boundary Commission.

What are the concerns associated with the Delimitation Exercise?

Population vs. Development: Southern states contend that basing delimitation purely on population would penalize them for their success with family planning and economic development. Tamil Nadu's fertility rate, for instance, sits at 1.6, compared to Bihar's 3.0. Delimitation projections suggest that if seats were allocated strictly by population in an expanded Lok Sabha of roughly 888 members, UP's seats would jump from 80 to 151, and Bihar's from 40 to 82, whereas Tamil Nadu would only rise from 39 to 53, and Kerala from 20 to just 23.

Federalism at Risk: States with slower population growth may end up feeling politically sidelined, raising concerns about a North-South divide. There's worry that delimitation could create federal imbalance, with states that governed well feeling penalized for controlling their population. The Sarkaria Commission (1983), for example, warned against letting power become overly centralized.

Reduced Legislative Efficiency: The new delimitation will expand the number of Lok Sabha seats to reflect population changes. A much larger House could mean less speaking time for each MP and could make parliamentary proceedings less efficient overall.

Disincentive to Population Control: If states that successfully brought down population growth end up losing parliamentary seats after delimitation, it could discourage future investment in family planning and public health, working against the broader goal of population stabilisation.

Impact on Reservation: Delimitation could change both the number and boundaries of constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), affecting political representation, electoral dynamics, and the interests of local communities.

Manipulation: There's concern that political parties could try to influence constituency boundaries for electoral advantage, as seen in allegations of bias surrounding the J&K delimitation process in 2022.

Delays and Political Resistance: Delimitation exercises have historically faced political pushback, as seen with the Justice Kuldip Singh-led Commission (2002), which encountered resistance from political parties unwilling to give up seats.

Economic Disparities: Southern states argue that factors like higher revenue generation, including GST collections and per capita income, should also be factored into how representation is decided.

What Should be the Way Forward?

Implement Expert Recommendations: Several commissions have put forward reforms to help balance federalism with delimitation needs:

Sarkaria Commission (1983): Recommended a balanced approach that weighs federalism alongside national unity.

Punchhi Commission (2010): Suggested giving equal weight to population and governance needs.

Ensure Transparency and Independent Oversight: The Election Commission's independence should be reinforced to guarantee a fair delimitation process.

In Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006), the Supreme Court stressed the need to balance fair representation with federal concerns.

In TN Seshan v. Union of India (1995), the Supreme Court underscored how important an independent delimitation body is.

Constitutional and Legislative Reforms: Articles 81 and 82 should be amended to ensure balanced regional representation, drawing on proportional representation models used in countries like Germany and Canada.

Weighted Representation Model: A weighted formula could be adopted, giving 80% weight to population and 20% to development indicators such as literacy, health, or sustained fertility control, similar to how the Finance Commission uses composite indicators when deciding tax devolution.

Implement a Uniform Expansion: Instead of shifting each state's proportional share based purely on raw population changes, the total strength of the Lok Sabha could be expanded uniformly (for example, by 50%, going from 543 to 816 seats) on a pro-rata basis. Under this approach, a state like Uttar Pradesh would scale up (from 80 to 120 seats), but Tamil Nadu would scale up proportionately too (from 39 to 59 seats), keeping the relative political weight of Southern states steady.

Conclusion: Delimitation is a delicate balancing act between democracy and federalism. While it guarantees equal representation, the challenges tied to regional disparities, population dynamics, and governance concerns need to be worked through. The Supreme Court and Election Commission need to take an active role in keeping the process transparent and fair. A balanced approach, one grounded in constitutional values, expert recommendations, and global best practices, remains essential to upholding India's democratic and federal character.

Fiscal Federalism

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Federalism
  - **GS2:** Federalism



Introduction

Fiscal federalism in India strikes a balance in how resources get distributed between the Union and the states, keeping governance cooperative. The 16th Finance Commission, headed by Dr. Arvind Panagariya, kept vertical tax devolution steady at 41% while bringing in performance-driven criteria such as GDP contribution. This framework is designed to bring together regional equity, fiscal discipline, and sub-national autonomy for the 2026-31 period.

What is Fiscal Federalism? What are the constitutional provisions which provide for Fiscal Federalism in India?

Fiscal Federalism: Fiscal federalism describes how financial powers and responsibilities get divided between the central government and state governments in India.

Constitutional Provisions: The Indian Constitution lays out the taxation and expenditure powers of both the central and state governments through several provisions:

Seventh Schedule: The Constitution assigns particular tax bases to the central and state governments, spelled out in the Union List and State List respectively.

Article 270: This article provides for how the net proceeds of taxes collected by the Union government get distributed between the Centre and the States.

Article 280: The Finance Commission, a constitutional body set up under Article 280, recommends how tax revenues and grants-in-aid should be shared with the states.

Article 275: This provides for a grants-in-aid system, involving discretionary transfers from the Centre to states for specific purposes.

Examples of Cooperative Fiscal Federalism:

Introduction of GST: Bringing in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) through the 101st Constitutional Amendment stands as a landmark example of cooperative fiscal federalism in India. The GST Act reshaped India's indirect tax system and strengthened Centre-State cooperation.

Passage of FRBM Act: The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003 aims to encourage fiscal discipline at both the central and state levels. 21 states went on to pass their own FRBM Acts, encouraged by the debt and interest rate relief the 12th Finance Commission offered. This stands as a notable instance of Centre-state cooperation in maintaining fiscal prudence.

Introduction of performance based grants: Performance-based grants are being used to motivate states toward hitting developmental targets, fostering both competitive and cooperative federalism between the Centre and States in the realm of finances and public spending.

What are the Challenges to Fiscal Federalism in India?

Vertical Fiscal Imbalance: States carry a disproportionately heavy load of expenditure responsibilities, covering agriculture, health, education, law and order, and rural development, relative to their capacity to raise revenue. The Centre collects a larger share of overall revenue but bears comparatively fewer expenditure obligations, leaving states dependent on transfers.

Reduced Financial Transfers to the States: States' share in gross tax revenue (the total tax revenue collected, including cess and surcharges) has fallen from 35% in 2015-16 to 30% in 2023-24.

Disproportionate Growth between Union Govt's & State Govt's Revenue: Between 2015-16 and 2023-24, the Union government's tax revenue grew 2.3 times, from ₹14.6 lakh crore to ₹33.6 lakh crore, while states' share of tax revenue only doubled, from ₹5.1 lakh crore to ₹10.2 lakh crore, highlighting an uneven pace of growth between Union and State government revenues.

Decrease in Grants-in-Aid to the states: Direct financial support to states through grants-in-aid has dropped from ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹1.65 lakh crore in 2023-24.

Increase in the share of non-devolvable cess and surcharge: Growing reliance on cesses and surcharges, which aren't shareable with States under Article 270, has shrunk the effective divisible pool. The share of cesses and surcharges within the Union's gross tax revenue has climbed from around 10% in 2011-12 to about 20% in recent years, cutting into the States' share.

Centralisation of Public Expenditure: Out of the combined ₹19.4 lakh crore allocated for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and Central Sector Schemes (CSec Schemes) in 2023-24, only ₹4.25 lakh crore actually reached the States. These come as tied grants, leaving states with no autonomy over how they plan their spending.

Interstate Inequality in public Finances through CSS schemes: The Union government requires States to commit roughly an equivalent amount of financial resources when implementing CSS schemes. Wealthier states can afford to match these funds and pull in Union financing through CSS implementation. Poorer states, on the other hand, end up committing borrowed funds toward these schemes, adding to their own liabilities, which widens inter-state inequality in public finances.

Increase in Conditional Transfers: Many grants to states come tied to certain conditions, including specific labelling requirements, which end up imposing the Union government's preferences over what states themselves might prioritize.

Erosion of State Taxation Autonomy on account of implementation of GST: States' ability to independently set tax rates on their own revenue sources has been significantly curtailed since GST came into force. State VAT, for example, has been absorbed into GST.

Issues with GST: States gave up their power to independently set rates for major indirect taxes, such as VAT, sales tax, and entry tax, in favor of a unified GST system. The GST Compensation Cess, which guaranteed states 14% annual revenue growth, expired in 2022, and its extension has largely gone toward servicing repayments on compensation loans, leaving states more exposed to GST revenue volatility.

What is the Significance of Fiscal Federalism?

Ensures Balanced Distribution of Resources: Fiscal federalism lets the central and state governments tackle regional imbalances through mechanisms like tax sharing, grants-in-aid, and performance-based incentives, allowing states with lower revenue capacity to still deliver comparable public services through equalizing transfers.

Strengthens Cooperative Federalism: Fiscal federalism encourages the Centre and states to cooperate and coordinate as they negotiate how resources and responsibilities get shared. The GST Council, for instance, brings the Centre and states together to jointly administer the Goods and Services Tax.

Promotes Equitable Regional Development: Devolution formulas, which factor in income distance, area, population, forest cover, and demographic performance, aim to channel more resources toward less-developed states, helping close regional gaps. Special provisions for hill states, the North-East, and island territories address their unique geographic and historical disadvantages.

Ensuring Fiscal Discipline: Frameworks like the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act encourage fiscal discipline at both central and state levels, helping maintain macroeconomic stability and sustainability.

Enabling Decentralized Governance: Fiscal federalism supports decentralization by giving state and local governments financial autonomy and resources, strengthening grassroots democracy and governance that responds more directly to people's needs. Local bodies with adequate finances can address local needs, such as sanitation, primary education, and local infrastructure, faster than a distant central authority could.

Undertaking Economic Reforms: Fiscal federalism has helped India adapt to shifts like the move toward a market-oriented economy following the 1991 reforms, and has supported taxation reforms such as the rollout of GST.

What are the Finance Commission Recommendations for Fiscal Federalism?

Over the years, Finance Commissions have put forward several important recommendations to advance fiscal federalism in India:

Vertical Tax Devolution: The 14th Finance Commission dramatically raised the states' share in the central divisible pool of taxes from 32% to 42%, the largest jump in vertical tax devolution ever seen, boosting the fiscal autonomy and resources available to state governments. The 15th Finance Commission brought this down to 41%, and the 16th Finance Commission kept it there.

Horizontal Distribution Formula: The 16th FC recommended distributing funds among States based on the following criteria: Income Distance (42.5%), Population 2011 (17.5%), Demographic Performance (10%), Area (10%), Forest & Ecology (10%), and Contribution to GSDP (10%), balancing equity against incentives for strong economic performance.

Grants-in-Aid: Finance Commissions extend grants-in-aid to particular states or sectors that need assistance or reform, nurturing a spirit of both competitive and cooperative fiscal federalism.

Fiscal Consolidation: Finance Commissions have consistently called for states to maintain fiscal prudence. The 12th FC proposed a multi-dimensional restructuring addressing both the qualitative and quantitative sides of managing government finances. The 16th FC set out a medium-term fiscal path targeting a Union fiscal deficit of 3.5% of GDP and a State fiscal deficit of 3% of GSDP by 2030-31, aimed at ensuring debt sustainability.

Strengthening State Finance Commissions (SFCs): Various Finance Commissions have, over time, called for tighter integration between Central Finance Commission transfers and timely SFC recommendations, along with constitutional changes to improve how SFCs function.

What should be the way Forward to strengthen Fiscal Federalism in India?

Reform Horizontal Devolution Criteria: Shift toward a more balanced formula that doesn't penalize states for demographic and developmental success, for instance, by using a rolling or updated population base instead of freezing it at 1971 or

2011 figures, or by placing greater weight on "demographic performance" alongside "need-based" criteria.

Rationalisation of Public Expenditure by Central Govt: A mechanism needs to be put in place for a thorough financial rationalisation of Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored schemes, done in collaboration with state governments. Centrally Sponsored Schemes should be consolidated and trimmed down to cover only core national priorities, such as primary health, basic education, and rural employment.

Addressing the GST related Concerns: Anomalies within GST, such as Integrated GST favouring consuming states like UP and Bihar over producing states like TN and Gujarat, need to be fixed. Efforts should also go into opening up more revenue avenues by widening GST's scope to include items like petrol and diesel.

Revisiting Article 246 and the Seventh Schedule: The taxation powers laid out in the seventh schedule need to be reexamined through the lens of fiscal federalism.

List of Taxation for Third Tier of Govt: Specific taxation powers should be devolved to local self governments, helping them generate their own resources and reducing their reliance on grants-in-aid. This would move fiscal federalism closer to its true intent.

Reduction of Borrowing Constraints on States: The Union government should reconsider the borrowing limits placed on state investment funds, as Kerala has suggested.

Address the Issue of Cesses and Surcharges: Cesses and surcharges should be brought into the divisible pool, or at the very least, their share of gross tax revenue should be capped, since their growing share currently bypasses the Finance Commission's constitutional mandate under Article 270.

Minimisation of the discretionary aspect of transfers to states: Some transfers could be made automatic. For the rest, clear, non-discriminatory methods should be followed.

Mandatory State Finance Commission (SFC) Implementation: State governments should be required to accept and act on SFC recommendations within a strict statutory timeframe, or a portion of central transfers should be tied to SFC compliance.



Mains Practice Questions

Q. Salig S. Harrison termed the first two decades following the Independence as the "most dangerous decades" referring to the linguistic or communal conflicts which took place in the country at that time. Explain the above statement with reference to the ethnic challenges of India.

The challenges to nation-building and nation-state building in India related to ethnic identity have had significant implications for the country's social fabric and governance. Here is a more detailed elaboration on each of the forms mentioned:

1. Autonomy movements: Autonomy movements typically arise from a desire for greater self-governance and decision-making powers within a specific region or community. Various ethnic groups in India, such as the Kashmiris, Nagas, and Mizos, have demanded autonomy or regional self-rule. These movements often seek to address historical grievances, preserve cultural identity, protect economic interests, and secure political representation. Autonomy movements challenge the centralized authority of the state and call for decentralized governance structures that recognize the distinct needs and aspirations of specific regions or communities.
2. Demands for secession: Some ethnic groups have gone beyond autonomy movements and called for outright secession from India. These demands for separate nationhood are often rooted in historical, cultural, linguistic, or religious differences. The most notable example is the demand for an independent Khalistan by some sections of the Sikh community in Punjab during the 1980s. While secessionist demands have not gained widespread support, they reflect the deep-seated frustrations and grievances of certain ethnic communities that feel marginalized within the Indian state.
3. Insurgency: Insurgency refers to armed rebellions or uprisings by ethnic groups seeking political, social, or economic change through forceful means. Insurgencies often arise when peaceful means of redress are perceived as inadequate or ignored. For instance, the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir has been a long-standing challenge for the Indian state, with various militant groups seeking independence or merger with Pakistan. Insurgency movements involve armed confrontations with state security forces and have resulted in significant human rights abuses and disruptions in affected regions.
4. Conflicts and riots on the basis of identity markers: India has experienced numerous conflicts and riots based on identity markers such as language, religion, caste, and tribal identity. These conflicts often arise from perceived or real social, economic, or political inequalities between different communities. Examples include the communal violence between Hindus and Muslims during the partition of India, caste-based conflicts in various regions, and clashes between tribal communities and non-tribal settlers in resource-rich areas. These conflicts can lead to loss of life, displacement of communities, and deepening social divisions.

It is important to note that these forms of challenges to nation-building do not occur in isolation but are often interconnected. Ethnic identity-based movements and conflicts can stem from historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, cultural differences, and political marginalization. Addressing these challenges requires inclusive governance, equitable development, respect for cultural diversity, and mechanisms for meaningful participation and dialogue among various ethnic groups.

Q. Explain the role of political parties in a parliamentary democracy

In the framework of parliamentary democracy, competitive political parties play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, nominating candidates, and participating in elections with the aim of securing a substantial number of seats in the legislative body, thereby positioning themselves to establish governments. Those parties that do not achieve an outright majority of seats in the parliament assume the role of the opposition, engaging in constructive critique of the ruling party's policies and actions.

In the context of political systems, the two-party system emerges as an optimal configuration for facilitating the effective functioning of parliamentary democracy. This arrangement fosters clear and streamlined decision-making processes, enhancing governance through the focused policy agendas of the two primary competing parties.

Conversely, in a multi-party system, the prospect of any single party securing an absolute majority often remains elusive. As a result, several parties forge coalitions to collectively form a government, pooling their mandates to reach the required majority.

The remaining parties, not involved in the coalition, assume the role of the opposition, providing alternative perspectives and critical analyses.

A contrasting model, the one-party system, is typically associated with totalitarian states. This structure involves the dominance of a single political party that is frequently synonymous with the state itself. The absence of competitive opposition hinders the checks and balances intrinsic to democratic systems, potentially enabling rulers to wield authoritarian power without meaningful dissent.

Thus, the dynamics of parliamentary democracy are intricately linked to the roles and interactions of political parties. While the two-party system promotes streamlined governance, multi-party systems often necessitate coalition building for effective governance. On the other hand, the one-party system, prevalent in totalitarian contexts, centralizes power and suppresses pluralistic political engagement.

Q. Comment on: Post-colonial theory of the State (2020, 10 Marks)

The post-colonial theory of the state provides a critical framework for understanding the nature and function of states that emerged from colonial rule, emphasizing the lasting impact of colonialism on their political, economic, and social structures. This theory primarily critiques the power dynamics and legacies of colonialism, focusing on how former colonies interact with global structures and their internal governance challenges.

One key aspect of the post-colonial theory is the analysis of how newly independent states often find themselves constrained by the economic and political systems established during colonial rule. Modernization theory, often advocated by Western institutions like the World Bank, suggests that by integrating into the global capitalist economy, Third-World nations can achieve development and prosperity. This approach assumes that development follows a linear path similar to that of Western industrialized nations, implying that the global market offers equal opportunities for growth.

However, Marxist scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, and Immanuel Wallerstein offer a counter-perspective through dependency theory. They argue that the international economic system is inherently exploitative, benefiting developed nations at the expense of underdeveloped ones. According to them, post-colonial states are trapped in a structure of economic dependence, where the wealth of core nations (primarily in the Global North) grows by exploiting the peripheral nations (largely in the Global South). This dynamic reinforces underdevelopment and poverty in post-colonial states, maintaining their subordination within the global economy.

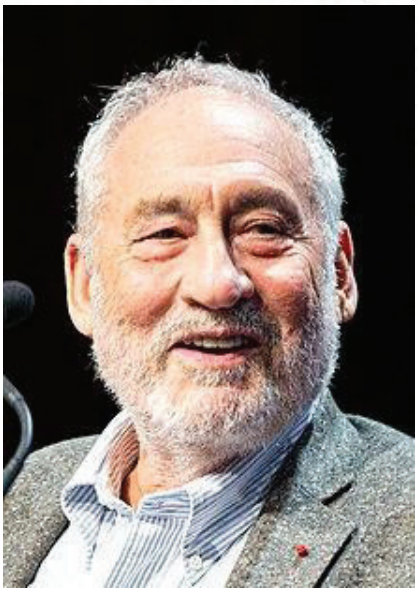
Hamza Alavi's concept of the "overdeveloped state" provides further insight into the nature of post-colonial governance. Alavi suggests that states in post-colonial societies, particularly in regions like South Asia, inherited bureaucratic and military institutions that were disproportionately large and powerful in comparison to the weak socio-economic structures of their societies. These states, having been shaped to serve colonial interests, were ill-suited to fostering genuine development and democracy. They became "overdeveloped" in terms of state apparatus but "underdeveloped" in their ability to meet the needs of their populations, resulting in political instability and authoritarian governance.

The post-colonial theory of the state critiques the notion that newly independent nations can seamlessly transition into modern, democratic states. Instead, it highlights how colonial legacies continue to shape the political and economic realities of these states. Post-colonial states often face challenges such as weak institutions, economic dependency, and internal divisions that reflect the socio-political fragmentation fostered by colonialism. The theory underscores the importance of understanding these states within the context of both their colonial past and their ongoing entanglement in global structures of power.

Post-colonial theory provides valuable insights into the structural inequalities that persist in the global system, which post-colonial states must navigate in their pursuit of sovereignty and development.

Scholar Digest: Know Your Scholars

Joseph Stiglitz



Introduction

Joseph Eugene Stiglitz, born on February 9, 1943, in Gary, Indiana, USA, is an American economist renowned for his pioneering work on the theory of markets characterized by unequal access to information. Alongside A. Michael Spence and George A. Akerlof, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001 for his contributions to this field.

Concept of Information Asymmetry

Joseph Stiglitz is renowned for his significant contributions to the field of information economics, a sub-discipline of microeconomics that explores the impact of information and information systems on economic dynamics and decision-making. His groundbreaking work on information asymmetry played a pivotal role in securing him the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001.

Information asymmetry refers to an unequal distribution of information between participants in an economic exchange. In such situations, one party involved in the transaction may possess more comprehensive information compared to the other party. For instance, a buyer might be better informed than a seller, or a borrower could have greater insights into their ability to repay a loan compared to the lender.

One of Joseph Stiglitz's notable contributions is the development of the screening technique, a method designed to bridge the information gap necessary for optimizing economic transactions in markets. Stiglitz's screening technique has found widespread application, particularly in industries such as insurance and lending.



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).

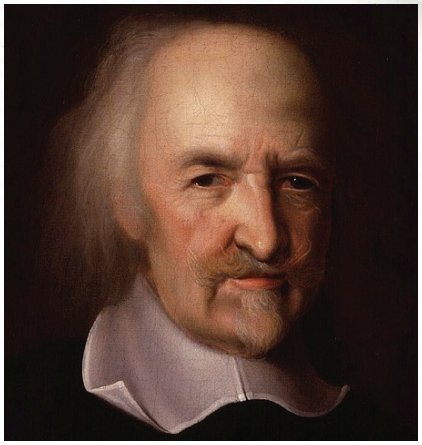
Major Works

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.

Thomas Hobbes



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

State of nature

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

Social contract

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

Absolute sovereignty

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

Relevance to modern politics

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

Conclusion

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

Enrich Your Answers

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

A) Mention the differences between views of Gandhi & Ambedkar

1. Ambedkar was critic of Manusmriti (Manuvaad) while Gandhi believed in Varna system.
2. Ambedkar held Vedas and Manusmriti responsible for social injustice while Gandhi didn't believed 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.

B) 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 exploining the concept of Power

Body

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

↳ Elitist theory accepts broad division of society into dominant and dependent groups.

↳ 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

Prelims Practice Questions

1. **Which concept in international relations refers to the use of nuclear weapons as a means of preventing an adversary from taking aggressive actions?**
   (a) Non-proliferation
   (b) Deterrence
   (c) Containment
   (d) Disarmament

2. **The term "nuclear taboo" refers to:**
   (a) A legal framework for regulating nuclear weapons
   (b) A collective norm opposing the use of nuclear weapons
   (c) A doctrine encouraging nuclear proliferation
   (d) A strategy for nuclear disarmament

3. **Which country is considered a "P5" member under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?**
   (a) India
   (b) Iran
   (c) North Korea
   (d) China

4. **The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) aims to:**
   (a) Encourage the spread of nuclear technology
   (b) Promote disarmament among non-nuclear states
   (c) Establish a global ban on nuclear energy
   (d) Limit the use of conventional weapons

Answers

1. **(b)** Deterrence
2. **(b)** A collective norm opposing the use of nuclear weapons
3. **(d)** China
4. **(b)** Promote disarmament among non-nuclear states



UPSC IAS (Mains)

LIVE PSIR OPTIONAL

STUDY IQ PUBLICATIONS

FEATURES OF THE COURSE -

1. 400+ hours of live lectures spread over 5 months
2. Comprehensive coverage through high quality lecture notes
3. Hand written notes and hand written model answers
4. Live answer writing program under the guidance of faculty
5. Previous Year Questions discussions
6. PSIR Current affairs to keep the aspirant updated
7. Doubt clearing sessions by the faculty
8. Static Session

Contributor:
Sajal Tiwari

For any feedback, Kindly reach out on:
psirsupport@studyiq.com



@SHASHANKTYAGI4U

SHASHANKTYAGI4U



Shashank Tyagi

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