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GEOPOLITICS AT GLANCE

UN's 'Correct the Map' Resolution - Global Representation & Geopolitical Implications

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** India and the UN System
  - **GS2**: Developing versus developed nations



Introduction

Recently, the UN General Assembly adopted the "Correct the Map: Rebalancing Global Cartographic Representation" resolution. The resolution encourages governments, educational institutions, international organisations, and technology companies to consider equal-area map projections, such as Equal Earth, when accurately representing the relative size of continents matters. Being non-binding, it doesn't prohibit the use of the Mercator projection. It was adopted through a recorded vote, with 164 countries in favour, 1 against (the United States), and 6 abstentions (Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine).

What is the Mercator projection?

The Mercator projection is a cylindrical map projection that Gerardus Mercator developed back in 1569. It keeps direction and angles accurate, which makes it particularly useful for navigation, but it substantially distorts the size and shape of landmasses, particularly near the poles.

On a Mercator map:

- North-south distances get stretched more and more as you move further from the equator.
- East-west distances stretch by that same factor at each latitude, which is how local shapes and compass bearings end up preserved.
- Lines representing a constant compass bearing (rhumb lines) show up as straight lines, and this is exactly why the projection became the go-to navigational map for centuries.

The core mathematical principle at play is that the vertical scale is adjusted to match the horizontal scale at every latitude. Since the horizontal scale keeps expanding as you head toward the poles (because lines of longitude converge on an actual globe but get drawn parallel on the map), the vertical scale has to expand right along with it.

Implications of the Mercator projection's distortion of the relative size of continents and countries

Distorted perception of size: The Mercator projection inflates areas near the poles while shrinking regions closer to the equator. Greenland, for example, looks roughly comparable to Africa, even though Africa is nearly 14 times larger. Alaska appears similar in size to Brazil, despite Brazil being almost 5 times bigger. Antarctica, which is actually smaller than South America, shows up as a massive band stretching across the bottom of the map.

Reinforcement of Eurocentric perceptions: By visually enlarging Europe and North America while shrinking equatorial regions, the Mercator projection risks reinforcing the idea that Western regions are geographically dominant and more significant on a global scale.

Under-representation of the Global South: Because of how Mercator distorts area, many equatorial countries across Africa, Asia, and South America end up looking smaller than they really are, which can create a misleading sense of their geographical importance relative to regions at higher latitudes. Africa, for instance, is commonly perceived as roughly the size of North America, even though it's actually larger than North America and China put together.

Colonial legacy: The Mercator projection's widespread use during the era of European colonialism helped entrench a Eurocentric view of the world. By visually inflating Europe and other high-latitude regions while shrinking equatorial ones, it has drawn criticism for reinforcing perceptions of Western geographical and political dominance.

Inaccurate Geographical Literacy: Decades of classrooms relying on standard wall maps have left generations carrying persistent false beliefs. Common misconceptions include thinking Greenland is roughly as large as Africa (Africa is actually 14 times bigger) or that Europe outsizes South America (South America is nearly twice Europe's size).

Distorted Scale of Global Issues: Issues such as tropical deforestation, the spread of disease, or resource allocation end up mapped onto shrunken spatial footprints, making equatorial land areas look less extensive than they truly are.

Influence on geopolitical perceptions: Mercator's distortion can make high-latitude regions look disproportionately large, which may shape how people perceive their geographical importance and reinforce Eurocentric worldviews. Maps, in this way, can quietly influence how global power and regional significance get perceived.

Significance of the UN's recent "Correct the Map" resolution

Corrects geographical distortions: The resolution encourages the use of equal-area projections that more accurately reflect the relative size of continents and countries, cutting down the exaggerated appearance of high-latitude regions and giving landmasses like Africa, South America, and India a more realistic representation.

Improves representation of Africa: By promoting equal-area maps that show Africa closer to its true geographical size, the resolution pushes back against the significant underrepresentation the Mercator projection has created, helping improve global awareness of Africa's actual place in the world.

Challenges Eurocentric perceptions: The resolution aims to reduce the historical influence of cartographic depictions that may have reinforced the perception of Western regions as disproportionately large or important.

Promotes Global South perspectives: This initiative gives greater visibility to the actual geographical scale of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, regions whose true size Mercator maps have often understated. It encourages a more balanced global understanding and pushes against historically dominant Eurocentric representations.

Educational significance: The "Correct the Map" initiative can boost geographical literacy by helping students grasp that different map projections carry different kinds of distortions. It encourages critical thinking about how maps shape our perceptions of size, location, and global importance, while offering a more accurate picture of continents like Africa and South America.

Links cartography with power: Maps aren't purely neutral geographical tools, they can shape how people perceive territory, size, importance, and global power. Cartographic choices, in other words, can reflect and at times reinforce historical power structures and dominant worldviews. The UN's "Correct the Map" initiative underscores just how important more balanced and accurate geographical representation is, particularly for the Global South.

Promotes informed use of maps: The resolution encourages users to understand that every map projection comes with trade-offs. It advocates choosing the right projection for the purpose at hand (equal-area maps for comparing geographical size, Mercator for navigation), helping prevent misleading interpretations of geography.

India's position on the UN's "Correct the Map" initiative and its concerns regarding territorial representation

India voted in favour of the UN General Assembly's "Correct the Map" resolution, backing the broader principle of equal-area cartographic representation. That said, India made clear that its vote doesn't amount to an endorsement of any particular map projection or any specific map depicting national boundaries.

India's position:

Supports accurate representation: India backs the goal of reducing distortions in how continents appear relative to one another and promoting more equitable cartographic representation.

No endorsement of a specific projection: India clarified that the resolution doesn't specifically endorse the Equal Earth projection. Different projections serve different purposes, and no single one works for every application.

India's concerns:

Objects to misleading representations: India stated that any inaccurate or misleading depiction of its own territory is unacceptable.

Territorial integrity remains non-negotiable: India emphasized that its sovereign territory, including the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, must be shown in line with India's official map.

Conclusion

This resolution carries significance well beyond cartography. It aims to promote greater geographical accuracy, inclusiveness, and awareness of how maps can shape the way people perceive the world.

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR**: Recent developments in Indian Foreign Policy
  - GS2: International institutions



INTRODUCTION

The SCO Summit 2026, held recently in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, brought together leaders of its 10 member states to address regional security, terrorism, connectivity and economic cooperation, reaffirming the organisation's growing geopolitical significance

WHAT IS SCO?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, international security, and defense organization, established on June 15, 2001, in Shanghai, China.

The SCO's origins trace back to the "Shanghai Five," formed in 1996 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This group was originally set up to tackle security concerns and manage border issues following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Once Uzbekistan joined in 2001, the "Shanghai Five" was formally reconstituted as the SCO.

Today, the SCO has 10 members: the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan (both admitted in 2017), Iran (joined in 2023), and Belarus (joined in 2024).

Secretariat: Based in Beijing, China, it handles administrative and diplomatic matters.

RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure): Based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, this body focuses on intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism, and security coordination.

Head of State Council: The top decision-making body, which convenes annually at the SCO Summit.

Guiding Principle: The "Shanghai Spirit," which centers on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, and respect for cultural diversity.

26th SCO Summit (2026): This summit took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and wrapped up with the adoption of the Bishkek Declaration.

BISHKEK DECLARATION (2026)

Zero "Double Standards": The declaration explicitly denounces terrorism in every form, stating that applying "double standards" in the fight against terrorism is unacceptable.

Cross-Border Terrorism: It calls on the global community to dismantle the cross-border movement of terrorists, terror financing, radicalization, and safe havens.

Institutional Security Upgrade: Leaders signed off on regulations to set up the Universal Center for Countering Challenges and Threats to the Security of SCO Member States, aimed at coordinating action against cybercrime, organized crime, and drug trafficking.

Condemnation of Strikes on Iran: The joint statement voiced deep concern over the escalation in West Asia and explicitly condemned military strikes on Iranian territory, calling for resolution purely through diplomatic channels.

Position on Afghanistan: The declaration called for an independent, peaceful, and neutral Afghanistan governed by an inclusive administration representing all ethno-political groups.

Multipolar World Order: Members reaffirmed their commitment to an equitable multipolar international order, while making clear that the SCO isn't a military-political alliance aimed at any third nations.

Anti-Narcotics Cooperation: Regulations for the SCO Anti-Narcotics Centre were approved, with members agreeing to deepen cooperation against drug trafficking, narco-terrorism, and synthetic drugs.

English Added as an SCO Official Language: English was made an official and working language of the SCO, joining the existing languages.

AI governance: The declaration also called for the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCO?

Geopolitical and Strategic Influence:

The SCO stands as the world's largest regional organization by geographic reach and population, covering roughly 80% of the Eurasian landmass and about 40% of the global population.

Its membership spans nuclear powers (Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and now Iran) to resource-rich Central Asian states. This mix of political systems, economies, and cultures makes it a distinctive platform for dialogue.

Economic and Connectivity Potential:

SCO member states together account for around 30% of global GDP, and the inclusion of major economies like India and resource-rich nations like Iran adds further economic weight.

With Iran now a member, the SCO collectively controls a substantial share of the world's oil (20%) and natural gas (44%) reserves. The SCO Energy Club fosters cooperation between major energy producers and consumers within the bloc.

The SCO also places emphasis on connectivity and infrastructure development across Eurasia, aligning closely with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), though India has reservations about BRI. This includes projects meant to strengthen trade networks and transport routes, such as the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline.

Counter-Terrorism and Security: One of the SCO's core and most successful focus areas is combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), based in Tashkent, supports intelligence sharing and coordinated action against these threats, making it the leading security organization in Central Asia.

Regional Stability in Eurasia: The SCO plays a key role in preserving peace, security, and stability across the vast Eurasian region, especially in Central Asia, which holds significant strategic importance. While it doesn't always intervene directly, the SCO gives its members a platform to discuss and coordinate their approaches to regional issues, including the instability in Afghanistan.

Platform for Dialogue: The SCO offers a vital space for high-level political and security dialogue among its varied members, including those with bilateral friction, such as India-China and India-Pakistan. This can help ease tensions and build mutual understanding.

Consensus-Based Decision Making: Even though China and Russia dominate the organization, the SCO's consensus-based approach to decision-making ensures every member, India included, has a say, even if this sometimes slows down action.

Quad v/s SCO: While India's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) alongside the US, Japan, and Australia is often seen as a way to balance China's growing influence, India also engages with China and Russia through the SCO at the same time. This reflects India's broader policy of multi-alignment, letting it work with both Western and non-Western groupings while holding onto its strategic autonomy.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF SCO?

Internal Conflicts and Bilateral Tensions:

India-China Border Disputes: Ongoing border disputes and geopolitical tension between India and China, such as the Ladakh standoff, often spill into SCO discussions, making it harder for the two major powers to cooperate fully on wider issues.

India-Pakistan Animosity: The long-standing animosity and unresolved issues between India and Pakistan make consensus-building difficult. India frequently raises concerns about cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan, which Pakistan tends to deflect or downplay within the SCO forum.

Central Asian Border Disputes: Disputes and border conflicts among Central Asian member states, such as between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, can also disrupt regional stability and pull focus away from the SCO's broader goals.

Lack of Conflict Resolution Mechanism: The SCO doesn't have a formal, effective mechanism for resolving disputes between member states, meaning bilateral tensions often simmer unresolved and can obstruct collective action.

Dominance of China and Russia: There's an inherent power imbalance within the organization, with China and Russia as the dominant players. This raises concerns among other members about disproportionate influence, particularly given China's growing economic clout, for instance, the SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.

Selective Definitions of Terrorism: Although security against the "Three Evils" (terrorism, separatism, extremism) is a founding principle, members don't always apply it consistently. India often criticizes state-sponsored cross-border terrorism, while other members shield regional proxies or disagree over how specific terror groups should be designated.

"Anti-Western" Perception: Despite presenting itself as an open, non-aligned organization, the SCO is frequently viewed by Western countries as a bloc aimed at challenging the US-led global order and potentially countering NATO. This perception can restrict its ability to engage with Western partners on global matters.

BRI Concerns: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which runs through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), remains a major sovereignty concern for India. While every other SCO member endorses the BRI, India stands alone in opposing it, which limits its involvement in certain economic connectivity efforts within the SCO framework.

Lack of a Free Trade Area: Despite ongoing discussions, the SCO still lacks a comprehensive free trade agreement among its members, limiting its potential for deep economic integration compared to blocs like ASEAN or the EU.

Limited Mandate: Even as it expands, the SCO's central focus remains security, particularly the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. This strong emphasis sometimes overshadows other important areas like economic and cultural cooperation, which could deliver broader benefits.

Weak Security Structure: Unlike a military alliance such as NATO, the SCO has no binding security treaty. It hasn't been able to meaningfully mediate or halt conflicts involving its own members, a significant shortfall given that preventing conflict was part of its founding purpose.

Gap Between Declarations and Implementation: The SCO regularly adopts ambitious declarations on counter-terrorism, connectivity, and economic cooperation. However, weak institutional mechanisms, differing interests among members, and limited enforcement capacity often get in the way of effective implementation, leaving a persistent gap between what's promised and what's actually delivered.

What can be the way forward?

Strengthening Trust and Dialogue: While the SCO functions as a multilateral forum, its most immediate value for managing internal tensions often comes from the high-level bilateral meetings it enables on its sidelines, such as India-China or India-Pakistan talks. These informal channels can prove crucial for de-escalation and addressing specific grievances.

Unified Stance on Terrorism, Zero Tolerance, No Double Standards: The SCO needs to condemn terrorism unequivocally in all its forms, without justification or any distinction between "good" and "bad" terrorists.

Actionable intelligence sharing: The SCO needs to make active use of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) for intelligence sharing, capacity building, and joint exercises, while also pushing to make RATS more effective and less vulnerable to political maneuvering by individual members. India should press for cross-border terrorism to be addressed without political cover for state sponsors.

Strengthen Institutional Mechanisms: The SCO should bolster its Secretariat, put in place effective monitoring and implementation mechanisms, set measurable targets, and improve coordination among member states to ensure decisions and commitments get implemented on time.

Deepening Economic and Connectivity Initiatives:

Establishing the SCO Development Bank: Setting up an SCO Development Bank is frequently cited as a crucial step toward financial independence and infrastructure financing. It would help members reduce their reliance on Western financial systems and fund regional projects in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure.

Focus on Regional Connectivity: Respect territorial sovereignty when it comes to infrastructure initiatives, addressing concerns like India's objection to CPEC. Fully utilize and expand existing

and emerging corridors like INSTC and Chahbahar Port, integrating them with wider regional transport networks.

Digital Connectivity: Prioritize digital infrastructure development, cross-border e-commerce, and digital payment systems to enable smoother economic interaction, for example, by sharing India's UPI success and digital public infrastructure models.

Local Currency Trade Settlement: Build a workable financial settlement system based on local currencies for trade within the bloc, reducing exposure to external economic shocks and currency volatility.

Identify specific sectors for deeper cooperation, such as energy (including renewables), agriculture (food security), pharmaceuticals, and digital technology, where members bring complementary strengths.

Non-Traditional Security Threats:

Counter-Narcotics: Strengthen cooperation through RATS to combat illicit drug trafficking, which frequently funds terrorism and organized crime across the region.

Cyber Security: Push for joint initiatives and capacity building in cybersecurity, a growing threat facing all member states.

Disaster Management: Encourage cooperation in disaster response and humanitarian assistance, drawing on India's expertise and resources.

Climate Change: Advocate for stronger cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation, particularly given shared environmental challenges like water scarcity and desertification across the region.

Balance Major-Power Influence: The SCO should maintain an inclusive, balanced framework by preventing any single power from dominating, ensuring equal participation, mutual respect, consensus-based decision-making, and consideration of smaller members' interests.

Conclusion

For India, the SCO remains a platform offering both opportunities and constraints. India therefore needs a strategy that stays firm on core national interests (like terrorism and sovereignty), stays pragmatic in economic engagement, and stays diplomatically agile in balancing competing geopolitical currents.

BRICS

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Changing International Political Order
  - **GS2**: Global and regional groupings



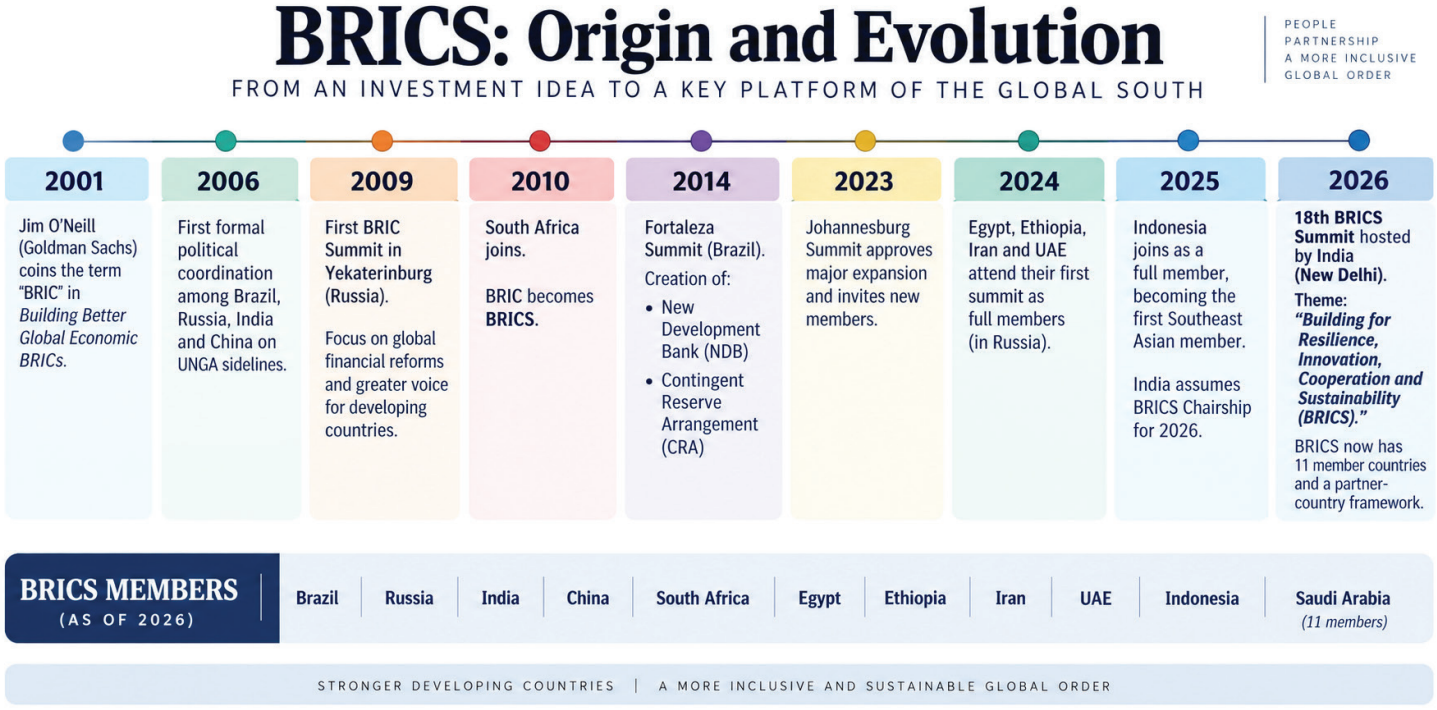
Introduction

The 18th BRICS Summit, hosted by India in New Delhi, brings the enlarged BRICS grouping together at a time of mounting geopolitical and economic flux. Under India's theme **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability,"** the summit aims to deepen Global South solidarity and push for a more inclusive world order.

For India, BRICS functions as a key vehicle for inclusive multilateralism, particularly at a moment when global institutions are grappling with a legitimacy and representation deficit — a concern that resonates with the Realist critique of institutions built around a narrow set of dominant powers.

What is BRICS?

- BRICS is an intergovernmental grouping of 11 nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- The term BRIC was first used by Jim O'Neill in 2001 to label a cluster of rising emerging economies.
- The inaugural summit was held in 2009 with founding members Brazil, Russia, India and China, who adopted the BRIC acronym and set up an informal diplomatic forum for annual summit-level engagement and policy coordination. South Africa joined in 2010, after which the grouping took the name BRICS.
- The label BRICS+ has been used informally since 2024 to capture the expanded membership.
- The bloc was originally conceived to offset the dominance of Western-anchored institutions such as the G7, IMF and World Bank, and it continues to champion a multipolar order with stronger representation for the Global South.



Objectives of BRICS

Deepening Economic Cooperation: BRICS works to expand intra-member trade and investment, encourage business linkages, support infrastructure and development finance, and align positions on global economic questions. It also pushes for wider use of local currencies and alternate payment channels to cut transaction costs and insulate members from external financial shocks.

Reforming Global Governance: The grouping functions as a pressure bloc demanding a more inclusive and representative multipolar system, calling for reform of institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and UN Security Council so they better reflect the standing of emerging and developing economies.

Consolidating Global South Solidarity: BRICS gives emerging and developing nations a shared platform to project influence internationally and jointly tackle concerns such as climate finance, sustainable development and technology access.

Cutting Dependence on Western Institutions and Currencies: Members are exploring alternate trade and financial arrangements, including local-currency settlement and

indigenous financial institutions, to reduce reliance on the US dollar and Western-led financial architecture.

Backing Infrastructure and Development: Through the New Development Bank (NDB), BRICS channels infrastructure financing into developing countries across transport, renewable energy, water and sanitation, urban infrastructure and digital connectivity, narrowing infrastructure gaps and supporting inclusive growth.

Coordinating on Global Challenges: BRICS offers member states a shared platform to align positions and act jointly on issues like climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and food and energy security.

Key Initiatives of BRICS

Alternative financial systems:

New Development Bank (NDB): Funds infrastructure and sustainable development projects across member and other developing nations, offering a parallel financing route alongside bodies like the World Bank.

Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA): A $100 billion liquidity-support mechanism to help members cope with balance-of-payments stress and short-term external financial strain.

Local Currency Settlement and De-dollarization: The proposed BRICS-PAY platform seeks to link national fast-payment systems and potentially accommodate central bank digital currencies, enabling cross-border transactions that bypass the dollar.

BRICS Business Council: Set up in 2013 to foster business-to-business ties, trade, investment and private-sector partnerships among members.

Global Value Chains (GVC) Action Plan: A framework to simplify customs processes, lower intra-bloc tariffs, and map critical mineral and industrial supply chains to buffer against disruptions from Western markets.

BRICS Anti-Terrorism Strategy: Cooperation on intelligence sharing, capacity building and cutting off terror financing.

BRICS Initiative on Denial of Safe Haven to Corruption: Strengthens anti-corruption cooperation through training and capacity building.

BRICS Partnership for the Elimination of Socially Determined Diseases: A newer initiative targeting health burdens that disproportionately affect vulnerable groups.

Unilateral Economic Sanctions: BRICS has collectively spoken out against such measures.

Significance of BRICS

Economic Weight:

Share of Global GDP: On a PPP basis, BRICS economies made up nearly 40% of global GDP in 2024, against roughly 29% for the G7.

Demographic and Trade Footprint: The expanded bloc accounts for 49.5% of the world's population and 26% of global trade, with its share of merchandise exports doubling from 12% to 24% between 2003 and 2024.

Intra-BRICS Trade: Trade among members jumped more than 13-fold, from $84 billion in 2003 to $1.17 trillion in 2024.

Reforming Global Governance: BRICS backs permanent UNSC seats for India and Brazil, alongside IMF and World Bank reforms to mirror present-day economic realities — a stance that fits the Systems-theory reading of BRICS as a subsystem pressing for rebalancing within the wider international system.

Platform for the Global South: With its expansion into Africa, the Middle East and Asia, BRICS amplifies developing-nation voices on issues like inequality and under-representation in bodies such as the UNSC.

Alternative Financial Institutions: The NDB and CRA offer development and stability financing outside Western-led channels, cutting reliance on the dollar.

De-dollarization Push: BRICS is building interoperable digital payment systems and promoting national-currency trade to give members greater financial autonomy.

Tackling Global Challenges: The grouping lets members coordinate on critical security matters, including counter-terrorism and cyber issues. For instance, the 2025 BRICS Summit condemned the Pahalgam terror attack as well as the US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Challenges faced by BRICS

Divergent Political Systems: The bloc mixes democracies (India, Brazil, South Africa, and potentially Indonesia, Egypt) with authoritarian states (China, Russia, Iran), making a unified stance on human rights, governance and international norms difficult to achieve.

China's Outsized Weight: China's economy dwarfs the combined size of the other members, fuelling unease, particularly in India, over Beijing's dominance and its debt-diplomacy practices.

Differing Economic Structures: Commodity exporters (Russia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, UAE), manufacturing powerhouses (China) and services/IT-driven economies (India) often pull in different trade directions.

Underdeveloped Intra-BRICS Trade: Gaps in tariffs, regulatory standards, logistics and payment systems, along with geographic distance, keep intra-bloc trade below potential; India-China trade, though sizeable, carries a notable imbalance.

Bilateral Frictions: The India-China border dispute remains a core tension, and expansion has imported fresh rivalries, such as Saudi Arabia-Iran and Egypt-Ethiopia over Nile waters.

"Asian NATO" Perception: Western powers, especially the US, often read BRICS expansion as an anti-Western bloc in the making, stoking further friction.

Russia-West Standoff: The Ukraine conflict has introduced internal divisions, with Western sanctions on Russia complicating trade, banking and payments across the bloc, and members holding varied positions on the war.

Tariff Threats: US President Trump has warned of tariffs and sanctions against BRICS states seen as working against Western interests or the dollar's dominance.

Loose Institutional Structure: Absent a binding treaty or permanent secretariat (beyond the NDB), BRICS retains flexibility but risks inconsistent follow-through on decisions.

Expansion Strains: A larger, more diverse membership complicates consensus-building and coordinated decision-making.

Way forward

Anchor on Shared Development Goals: Despite ideological differences, members broadly converge on economic development and poverty reduction; prioritizing tangible cooperation (green infrastructure, digital transformation, food security) can build trust.

Balancing Intra-BRICS Trade: Address imbalances, especially with China, by diversifying trade flows, encouraging joint ventures, and channeling investment toward less-developed members.

Expanding the NDB's Role: The NDB should widen local-currency lending and prioritize projects benefiting smaller and newer members, spreading economic gains more evenly across the bloc.

Streamlining Decision-Making: Without giving up its informal character, BRICS could adopt lighter coordination mechanisms, perhaps a small dedicated secretariat, to ensure commitments are actually implemented.

Managing Expansion: Clear membership criteria and institutional processes will be needed to keep the enlarged bloc cohesive and functional.

Pragmatism over Confrontation: BRICS should steer clear of an overtly anti-Western posture and instead pursue issue-based cooperation, since members hold varied relationships with the US and EU that a confrontational line could strain — a course closer to Functionalist cooperation on shared technical goals than to ideological bloc politics.

Calibrated De-dollarization: A phased approach could include expanding bilateral local-currency trade, accelerating BRICS PAY, deepening NDB lending in local currencies, and exploring a basket-currency unit such as the proposed R5 as a step toward broader currency internationalization.

Conclusion

BRICS stands as a significant counterweight to Western-dominated forums and offers an alternative vision of global governance. By steadily working through its internal challenges via cooperation, institutional deepening and strategic positioning, it can cement its place as a constructive force shaping a more inclusive, multipolar international order.

Graham Act of USA

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR:** Changing International Political Order
  - **GS2**: Effects of Policies of Developed countries



Introduction

The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026, recently signed into law by the United States, seeks to intensify economic pressure on Russia by targeting its energy revenues, defence sector and sanctions-evasion networks. The Act is significant for India given its dependence on Russian crude and the possibility of higher U.S. tariffs on major buyers of Russian energy. Therefore, it is important to examine the rationale behind the Act, its wider geopolitical and economic implications, particularly for India.

What is the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026? What are its major provisions?

The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026 is a U.S. law aimed primarily at increasing economic pressure on Russia over the Ukraine war, while also extending and strengthening certain sanctions against Iran. The Act establishes a comprehensive sanctions framework targeting the political, financial, energy and commercial networks sustaining Russia's war in Ukraine. While the legislation does not name individual nations directly, the criteria place major buyers like India and China squarely within its regulatory scope.

Major Provisions of the Act:

Sanctions against Russian officials and entities: The Act provides for sanctions against Russian officials, oligarchs, their family members and other persons supporting the Russian government.

Targeting Russia's "Shadow Fleet": Sanctions can be imposed on vessels and foreign persons involved in helping Russia evade existing sanctions, particularly through the transportation of Russian oil.

Up to 100% tariffs on major buyers of Russian energy: The President is empowered to impose tariffs of up to 100% on imports from the five largest purchasers of Russian crude oil or natural gas.

Conditional treatment of natural gas imports: Countries whose Russian natural gas imports constitute less than 15% of Russia's total natural gas exports, and which are taking significant steps to reduce those imports, can qualify for an exemption.

Tariffs on Russian-origin goods: The legislation authorizes tariffs of up to 500% on Russian-origin goods, subject to specified exceptions.

Why has the United States introduced the Graham Act?

To pressure Russia over the Ukraine war: The primary objective is to increase the economic cost for Russia of continuing its war in Ukraine by targeting its energy and defence sectors and entities involved in sanctions evasion. This is a Realist use of economic coercion to alter an adversary's cost-benefit calculus.

To reduce Russia's energy revenues: Russia's oil and gas exports provide an important source of government revenue. The Act therefore targets Russia's energy trade and gives the U.S. President authority to impose tariffs on major purchasers of Russian energy.

To discourage third countries from purchasing Russian energy: By allowing tariffs of up to 100% on imports from major buyers of Russian oil or gas, the legislation seeks to make continued purchases of Russian energy more costly for third countries. This provision potentially affects major buyers such as India and China.

To target sanctions-evasion networks: The Graham Act seeks to target Russia's "shadow fleet" and other networks that help circumvent Western sanctions. By imposing sanctions on shadow fleets, the U.S. aims to close loopholes, restrict Russia's energy revenues and strengthen the effectiveness of existing sanctions.

To increase the leverage of U.S. foreign policy: The legislation combines financial sanctions, energy restrictions and tariff threats, giving the U.S. administration additional economic instruments to influence the behaviour of Russia and countries maintaining significant economic links with it.

What are the major implications of the Graham Act, particularly for India?

Threat to energy security: India imports over 88% of its crude oil requirements, with Russia accounting for a large share (45% of India's crude imports). Any significant disruption to Russian supplies could increase India's dependence on alternative suppliers and expose it to higher international oil prices.

Higher import costs and inflationary pressure: If India has to rapidly substitute Russian crude with more expensive supplies, the resulting increase in energy costs could affect transport, manufacturing, logistics and consumer prices, creating broader inflationary pressures.

Impact on Indian exports to the US: A U.S. tariff of up to 100% could make Indian products substantially more expensive in the American market, potentially affecting sectors such as electronics, engineering goods, textiles and other export oriented industries.

India-US trade relations may face additional strain: The legislation introduces another potential source of friction at a time when India and the U.S. are seeking to expand bilateral trade. India has already warned that the measure could have implications for the bilateral relationship.

Challenge to India's strategic autonomy: The Act puts pressure on India to align its energy purchases with U.S. geopolitical preferences. This could create a dilemma between maintaining strategic autonomy and preserving relations with a major strategic partner, the USA, illustrating the classic Realist predicament of a middle power balancing between competing major powers.

Impact on India-Russia relations: Pressure to reduce Russian energy purchases could affect India's broader relationship with Russia, including cooperation in defence, nuclear energy, space and other strategic sectors.

Global energy-market implications: Removing a major buyer such as India from the Russian oil market could disrupt global supply chains and potentially push up crude prices. India has specifically highlighted the possible implications for the international energy market.

What should be the way forward?

Pursue diplomatic engagement: India should engage proactively with the USA to seek exemptions or a calibrated application of the Graham Act, highlighting its energy security concerns and the broader impact of sanctions on global energy markets. Simultaneously, India should maintain dialogue with Russia to ensure stable and predictable energy supplies.

Diversify energy sources: India should reduce excessive dependence on any single country for crude oil by diversifying imports across the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Strengthen strategic petroleum reserves: India should expand its Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs) to cushion the economy against geopolitical disruptions, sanctions and sudden spikes in global crude prices. Greater storage capacity would provide short-term energy security while allowing India time to diversify suppliers and manage supply shocks.

Accelerate clean-energy transition: India should accelerate the shift towards renewable energy, nuclear power, green hydrogen and electric mobility, while improving energy efficiency. This

would reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels, strengthen energy security and limit India's vulnerability to geopolitical disruptions and external sanctions.

Diversify export markets: India should expand exports to Europe, ASEAN, Africa, West Asia and Latin America to reduce excessive dependence on the US market. Greater geographical diversification would enhance export resilience, protect domestic industries and reduce vulnerability to unilateral trade restrictions.

Use multilateral platforms: India should use forums such as the G20, BRICS, WTO and SCO to highlight the wider economic and energy security implications of unilateral sanctions, advocate predictable trade rules and promote dialogue based solutions to geopolitical disputes.

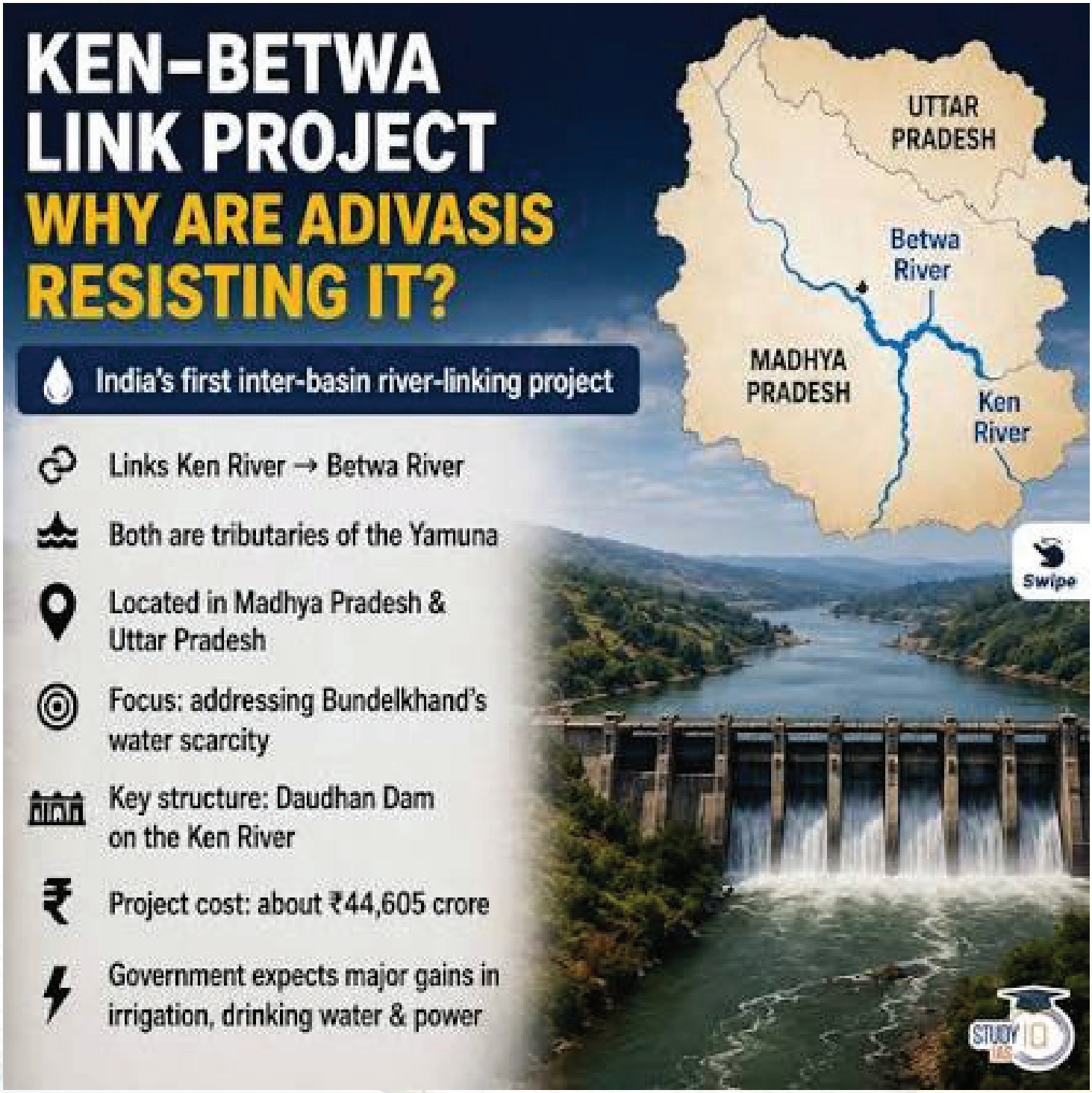
Maintain strategic autonomy: India should pursue an independent, interest-based foreign policy without aligning completely with any major power bloc. It should engage constructively with the US, Russia and other partners, while prioritising its energy security, economic interests and national sovereignty.



INTERLINKING OF RIVERS

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR**: Inter state water disputes
  - GS2: Federalism



Introduction

Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently put forward a proposal to link major rivers, from the Brahmaputra to the Godavari and Cauvery, at the Southern Zonal Council meeting. He contended that this could avert water shortages for the next 100 years, generate waterways, and lower fuel costs. He also called on southern states to settle water disputes through discussion.

What is the National River Linking Project (NRLP)?

The National River Linking Project (NRLP), earlier called the National Perspective Plan (drawn up in 1980), is an ambitious Government of India initiative aimed at transferring water from relatively water-surplus river basins to water-deficit regions through a network of dams, reservoirs, canals and other water-transfer structures.

It proposes to connect 14 Himalayan and 16 peninsular rivers via 30 canals and 3,000 reservoirs, forming a massive South Asian Water Grid. In all, 30 interlinking projects have been identified under the scheme.

The original idea of interlinking India's rivers was put forward in 1858 by a British irrigation engineer, Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton.

NRLP consists of two components:

Himalayan component

This component is aimed at building storage reservoirs on the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers and their tributaries in India and Nepal.

It comprises 14 links.

It will link:

- The Ganga and Brahmaputra basins with the Mahanadi basin.
- The Eastern tributaries of the Ganga with the Sabarmati and Chambal river systems.

Peninsular component

It comprises 16 links proposed to connect the rivers of South India.

It envisions linking:

- The Mahanadi and Godavari to feed the Krishna, Pennar, Cauvery, and Vaigai rivers
- The Ken river with the Betwa, Parbati, Kalisindh, and Chambal rivers
- West-flowing rivers south of Tapi with the area north of Bombay
- Some west-flowing rivers with east-flowing rivers.

The NRLP is run by the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti. NWDA was established in 1982 to carry out surveys and assess the feasibility of proposals for interlinking river projects. It has recently been reported that the Centre is considering setting up a National River Interlinking Authority (NIRA), which will have the power to create SPVs for individual link projects.

As of August 2026, the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) is the only one that has reached the implementation stage.

Earlier instances of river-linking in India: Several river-linking projects have been undertaken in the past. For instance:

Periyar-Vaigai Project: Under the Periyar Project, water was envisaged to be transferred from the Periyar basin to the Vaigai basin. It was commissioned in 1895.

Godavari-Krishna Link: The Godavari river has also been formally linked with the Krishna river at Ibrahimpatnam (near Vijayawada) in Andhra Pradesh in September 2015.

What are the advantages of Interlinking of Rivers?

Addressing India's Hydrological Imbalance (Drought and Flood Mitigation): India suffers from a large-scale hydrological imbalance, with an effective rainfall period of just 28 to 29 days. While some regions get very heavy rainfall, others face droughts. The scheme transfers water from flood-prone basins (Brahmaputra, Ganga tributaries in Bihar/Assam) to drought-prone peninsular basins, offering a combined solution to two recurring disasters.

Improving inland waterways: Interlinking rivers will create a network of navigation channels for developing and growing inland waterways in India. Expanded canal networks can form interconnected, eco-friendly inland shipping routes for bulk cargo, cutting logistics costs and highway congestion, and supporting the wider push under the Jal Marg Vikas Yojana.

Boosting irrigation potential: River interlinking has the potential to irrigate around 35 million hectares of land in the water-scarce western peninsula. This would help lower dependence on monsoon variability, stabilising farmer incomes and cropping intensity, particularly in drought-prone Bundelkhand, Marathwada, and Rayalaseema. For instance, the Ken-Betwa project alone is expected to irrigate roughly 10.62 lakh hectares of farmland every year.

Hydropower generation: Interlinked rivers have the potential to generate around 34 GW of hydropower in total. This would help India cut reliance on coal-based power plants and support its Paris Agreement targets. For instance, the Ken-Betwa project will generate 103 MW of hydropower.

Drinking water supply: The project envisages supplying 90 billion cubic metres of clean drinking water. This can help resolve drinking water scarcity in India. For instance, the Ken-Betwa project will benefit around 62 lakh people in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Boost to industries: River interlinking has the potential to provide around 64.8 billion cubic metres of water for industrial use. Thus, by ensuring reliable water availability, it can support industrial expansion, attract investment, generate employment, and promote balanced regional economic development.

Groundwater relief: By offering surface water alternatives, river interlinking can reduce over-extraction of groundwater in over-exploited blocks (e.g., Punjab, parts of Tamil Nadu), aiding long-term aquifer recovery.

Environmental benefits: Interlinking can improve ecological water availability, support wetlands and wildlife habitats, sustain riverine ecosystems, and reduce drought-induced forest-fire risks by maintaining moisture levels and water availability in vulnerable landscapes.

What are the issues/challenges in Interlinking of Rivers?

Impact of climate change: Reports suggest that climate change could wipe out nearly one-third of the Hindu Kush region's glaciers by 2100. As a result, Himalayan rivers may not stay "water-surplus" for long. Moreover, shifting rainfall patterns and water availability across the Indian subcontinent could undermine the long-term viability of river-linking projects. Thus, investing billions in such infrastructure may yield diminishing or only short-term benefits if future hydrological conditions turn out to be significantly different from present projections.

Human cost of displacement: Large infrastructure projects may submerge villages and farmland, leading to large-scale displacement and loss of livelihood, mainly for tribal and forest-dependent communities. For instance, the Ken-Betwa project alone is expected to displace over 7,000 families, many belonging to indigenous Gond and Kol tribes whose livelihoods are tied to the land and forests.

Huge financial cost: NRLP is a highly capital-intensive project. In 2001, the total cost of linking the Himalayan and peninsular rivers was estimated at Rs 5,60,000 crore, excluding relief, rehabilitation and other expenses. The cost-benefit ratio may no longer be favourable for implementing river interlinking projects. For instance, the cost of the Ken-Betwa project has shot up by over 2,100% from its initial estimate, raising questions about financial viability.

Impact on ecology and biodiversity: Building dams, reservoirs and canals can cause deforestation, habitat fragmentation and biodiversity loss — for instance, the Ken-Betwa Link Project submerges nearly 6,000 hectares of the core area of the Panna Tiger Reserve. Also, since every river's ecology is unique, mixing river waters may affect biodiversity. Additionally, since most rivers in the country are polluted, this could mix a less polluted river with a more polluted one. A key risk is the movement of invasive alien species from "surplus" to "deficit" basins. For instance, linking the Krishna river (home to 13-15 invasive species) to the Kaveri basin (home to 7-9) is projected to help spread these invasives southward, threatening native biodiversity.

Impact on wildlife: River-linking projects can fragment wildlife habitats, disrupt migration corridors, and alter aquatic ecosystems. For example, the Ken-Betwa project involves forest submergence in Panna, raising concerns over tiger habitat and biodiversity conservation.

International challenges: Interlinking Himalayan rivers like the Brahmaputra involves transboundary water-sharing dynamics with neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, raising international diplomatic and sovereignty concerns.

Inter-state river disputes: Water is a State subject in India, so implementing the NRLP depends heavily on inter-state cooperation. Several states, including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Sikkim, have already opposed the NRLP.

Infrastructural challenges: The government is proposing a canal irrigation method to transmit water from one area to another. Maintaining canals is also a major challenge, including preventing sedimentation and clearing waterlogging. Further, the government faces the challenge of acquiring large tracts of land for smooth implementation of the project.

What should be the way forward?

Comprehensive reassessment: Commission an independent, comprehensive and transparent reassessment of all proposed river links, incorporating the latest climate models rather than relying solely on historical data. This would help identify which basins are genuinely water-surplus or water-deficit under future climate scenarios.

Prioritise intra-state and small-scale links: Instead of massive inter-state mega-links that trigger political disputes, focus on smaller, intra-basin projects (for instance, the Kosi-Mechi or localised intra-state links) that carry a lower ecological footprint and are easier to execute.

Prioritise economically viable links: Prioritise river-linking projects where long-term benefits in irrigation, drinking water and power generation clearly outweigh financial, environmental and rehabilitation costs, ensuring efficient and sustainable use of public resources.

Climate-resilient planning: River-linking projects should factor in climate projections, glacier dynamics, changing monsoon patterns and extreme weather events during planning, ensuring the infrastructure stays viable and water transfers remain sustainable under future hydrological uncertainties.

Minimise displacement and ecological damage: River-linking projects should minimise displacement through careful site selection, environmental impact assessments and alternative designs. Ecologically sensitive forests and wildlife habitats must be protected, while affected communities receive fair compensation, rehabilitation and livelihood support.

National Waterways Project (NWP): According to some experts, the government should consider the National Waterways Project (NWP) instead of the NRLP. Under NWP, water from a flooded river flows into another one. It functions like a water grid, similar to a power grid. It needs only 1/3rd the land required for river interlinking, stays open to navigation all year round, and involves zero pumping. It can also irrigate almost double the land and has 76% more power generation capacity (60 GW) compared to the river interlinking project.

Prioritise local and nature-based solutions: Initiatives like watershed development, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and rejuvenation of local water bodies can provide sustainable water security at the local level. These are often cheaper and cause less social and environmental disruption than massive inter-basin transfers.

Conclusion

The interlinking project holds immense potential for water security but requires a science-based, people-centric approach, prioritising ecological safeguards and fair rehabilitation over financial ambition.

Uniform Civil Code

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR**: Salient features of Indian Constitution
  - GS2: DPSP



Introduction

Recently, Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would be implemented in all NDA-ruled States before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

What is Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) refers to a common set of laws governing personal matters of all citizens, irrespective of their religion. These matters include marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, guardianship and succession. The UCC is a proposal in India to formulate and implement personal laws that apply equally to all citizens regardless of their religion, gender or sexual orientation.

At present, personal matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and succession are governed by different sets of faith-based personal laws (such as Hindu Personal Law, Sharia Law or Christian Personal Law). Under a UCC, these distinct religious codes would be replaced by a single, standard civil legal framework binding on all citizens.

Constitutional Basis of UCC: The concept of UCC is enshrined in Article 44 of the Indian Constitution. The implementation of UCC falls under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).

Status of UCC in India

As of now, India does not have a nationwide Uniform Civil Code. The need for UCC was debated in the Constituent Assembly. After long deliberation, it was decided to place UCC under the DPSP.

Enactment of Special Marriage Act, 1954: The Special Marriage Act, 1954 was enacted to provide a secular alternative in marriages. The inheritance rights of the offspring of couples married under the Act were to be governed by the religion neutral chapter on inheritance in the Indian Succession Act of 1925.

Continued application of Uniform civil laws in Goa and Puducherry: Goa Civil Code/Goa Family Law: Goa is the only Indian state with a functional uniform civil code (the Goa Civil Code), inherited from Portuguese rule in 1867. Puducherry: In Puducherry, a sizable section of citizens called Renoncants (Indians whose ancestors had during the French rule abandoned personal law) are still governed by the 218 year old French Civil Code of 1804.

Uttarakhand UCC: Uttarakhand became the first state in post-independence India to officially enforce a modern state UCC law in January 2025. It regulates marriage, divorce, succession and mandatory registration of live-in relationships.

Other States: Gujarat, Assam and Madhya Pradesh have passed their respective state-level UCC Bills in 2026 and are undergoing the process of presidential assent and formal notification. States like Maharashtra, West Bengal and Rajasthan have set up formal state drafting committees to consult stakeholders and frame regional UCC draft Bills.

Arguments in favour of implementing UCC

Fulfilment of Constitutional mandate of equality: Proponents argue that it is a constitutional mandate to work towards a UCC, which is prescribed by Article 44 of the DPSP. This would ensure **equality before the law** among all citizens, irrespective of their religion, class, caste or gender.

Promotion of gender justice and equality: UCC can help eradicate discriminatory practices related to marriage, divorce and inheritance in various religious personal laws. For e.g. Even though the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 was amended in 2005 to give daughters equal inheritance rights at par with sons, similar reforms have not been adopted universally across all personal laws.

Protects Individual Rights: UCC can prioritise individual rights, dignity and equality over discriminatory personal law practices. It can ensure that individuals, particularly women and children, receive equal civil rights irrespective of their religion or community.

Strengthens Secularism: UCC can strengthen Indian secularism by ensuring that civil rights in matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance are governed by common, religion neutral principles, while individuals remain free to practise and propagate their faith under Articles 25 to 28.

Promotes National Integration: By applying common principles of equality, dignity and justice, UCC can strengthen citizens' identification with the Constitution rather than community specific legal systems. UCC will affirm the notion of "one nation, one law."

Societal reforms: A UCC can act as a catalyst for progressive social reform by replacing discriminatory or outdated personal law practices with gender neutral and rights based provisions. It can promote monogamy, equal inheritance, uniform marriageable age standards, safeguards against arbitrary divorce and stronger rights for children and spouses. For e.g. Ending the subdued status of women in the religious sphere.

Simplification of legal matters: UCC will simplify the cumbersome legal matters governed by different personal laws. It will also help in speedy disposal of cases and reduce burden on the judiciary. For e.g. Most of the pending cases in the judiciary pertain to divorce and inheritance issues of persons belonging to different personal laws.

Reflective of progressive jurisprudence: UCC is an embodiment of the progressive jurisprudence exercised by the Supreme

Court in matters related to gender and inter-religious equality. For e.g. In cases like the Shah Bano case (1985) where the SC allowed the grant of maintenance to a divorcee woman, and the Shayara Bano case (2017) where the SC banned the discriminatory practice of triple talaq.

Precedent of Goa's Civil Code: Proponents of the UCC cite the example of the successful implementation of UCC in Goa, where the civil laws of all Goans, irrespective of religion, are governed by a Uniform Civil Code.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE UCC

Violation of fundamental right to religious freedom: Critics argue that the UCC infringes upon the right to religious freedom provided by Article 25 of the Constitution. Also, UCC infringes upon the right of communities to preserve their distinct culture granted by Article 29 of the Constitution.

Diverse personal laws and customary practices in India: Enforcing uniformity will interfere with the diverse personal laws and customary practices followed in India by different communities. For e.g. The Special Marriage Act, 1954 (a secular law) prohibits marriage between first cousins, which is a common practice in some communities in India. Marriage between second cousins is a popular practice among Hindu communities in South India.

Cultural and Religious Diversity: India's religious, linguistic, tribal and cultural diversity means that personal practices relating to marriage, inheritance and family life vary significantly across communities. Critics argue that a single UCC may overlook legitimate customary practices and identities, leading to a perception of cultural homogenisation. For e.g. Tribal communities in the North East and other parts of India follow customary laws governing marriage, inheritance and property, some of which enjoy constitutional protection.

Existence of secular laws: Critics point to the existence of secular laws applicable to all citizens, irrespective of religion. For e.g. Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which is a secular law, provides for maintenance, and there also exist laws relating to domestic violence like the Domestic Violence Act.

Imposition of "Hinduised" Code: Some critics suggest that the UCC might impose a "Hinduised" code on all communities. For e.g. UCC could follow Hindu practices in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance and will legally force other communities to follow the same.

Placement of Personal laws in Concurrent List: Some constitutional law experts argue that perhaps the constitutional framers did not intend total uniformity in personal laws. They cite the placement of personal laws as Entry 5 of the Concurrent List, where both Parliament and State Assemblies have the power to legislate.

Lack of Broad Consensus: UCC affects deeply rooted religious and customary practices; implementing it without extensive consultation and consensus among diverse communities may generate mistrust, social resistance and polarisation, undermining its broader objectives.

Uniformity Does Not Necessarily Mean Equality: A single set of laws may provide formal equality, but it does not automatically ensure substantive equality. Different communities may have distinct social, cultural and economic conditions, requiring context sensitive legal provisions.

WHAT IS THE JUDICIAL VIEW ON UCC?

Shah Bano Case (1985): The Supreme Court directed the Government to enact a UCC. The SC observed that UCC will help the cause of national integration.

Sarla Mudgal Case (1995): The Supreme Court directed the Government to reflect the steps taken towards securing a UCC for the citizens of India.

Pannalal Bansilal Patil v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1996): The Supreme Court observed that while a uniform law is desirable, its enactment in one go might be counter productive to the unity and integrity of the nation. Gradual progressive change should be brought about.

J**ohn Vallamattom and Ors. v. Union of India (2003)**: The Supreme Court held that there is no necessary connection between religious and personal law in a civilised society. Matters of secular character like marriage cannot be brought within the guarantee enshrined under Article 25 and 26.

Shayara Bano Case (2017): Although the case was not directly a judgment on UCC, it demonstrated the Court's willingness to subject personal law practices to constitutional scrutiny and gender justice considerations.

Jose Paulo Coutinho Case (2019): The Supreme Court praised Goa as a "shining example" of a functioning UCC, observing that despite earlier judicial recommendations, no general attempt had been made at the national level to frame a common code.

WAY FORWARD

Awareness efforts to reform current personal laws

Gradual transformation of diverse personal civil codes to uniform civil code: The 21st Law Commission has recommended that a UCC is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage. The Government must take a piecemeal approach in removing gender disparities in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance across personal laws, and must restrain from implementing all aspects in a single legislation.

Build Broad-Based Consensus

Equality between men and women in communities rather than equality between communities: The 21st Law Commission had recommended that the government first concentrate on ensuring equality between men and women within the same community, rather than focusing on equality between communities.

Protect Legitimate Tribal Customs: UCC should recognise India's tribal and customary diversity rather than impose a uniform framework without safeguards. Many Scheduled Tribes follow distinct traditions governing marriage, inheritance, family relations and community life. Therefore, reforms should protect customary practices that are consistent with constitutional rights, while eliminating practices that are discriminatory or violate individual dignity.

Learn from Existing Models: India can draw lessons from Goa's common civil law framework and Uttarakhand's UCC, particularly regarding codification, registration, exemptions and implementation. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, their experiences can help identify practical challenges and best practices.

Prioritise basic reforms: The government must prioritise basic reforms such as a) having 18 years as the marriageable age for girls across all communities and genders, b) introducing a "no-fault" divorce procedure and allowing the dissolution of marriage on the ground of irretrievable breakdown, and c) having common norms for post-divorce division of assets.

Follow Constitutional Morality: The implementation of UCC should be guided by constitutional morality rather than religious or majoritarian preferences. It must balance equality and individual dignity with the constitutional protection of religious freedom and cultural diversity.

Conclusion

UCC in its true spirit must be brought about through gradual change. As recommended by the Law Commission, the focus should be on ending discriminatory practices against women, rather than enforcing uniformity. However, until that is done, the better course would be to bring about small reforms, correcting some inherent irrationality in certain personal laws, and making them suitable for modern times. This will lay the foundation for implementing a nationwide UCC at a later date.

Article 371 and Ladakh

RELEVANCE

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



Introduction

The Centre has proposed the insertion of a new Article 371K in the Constitution to provide special constitutional safeguards for Ladakh. The proposal follows an "in-principle understanding" between the Ministry of Home Affairs and representatives of the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance to establish a directly elected UT-level body with legislative, executive, financial and planning powers. In this context, it is important to understand Article 371 and the implications of extending a special constitutional framework to Ladakh.

What is Article 371?

Article 371 is a constitutional provision that enables the Centre to provide special provisions for certain States in India, taking into account their unique historical, social, cultural, administrative and developmental circumstances. It aims to address regional aspirations, protect the interests of local communities, promote balanced development and ensure effective governance while maintaining India's constitutional framework. It is part of Part XXI of the Constitution, titled Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions.

Core Objectives of Article 371:

Safeguard Indigenous and Tribal Rights: Protecting customary laws, socio-religious practices and land ownership rights of indigenous communities, particularly in the Northeast, from Parliamentary interference without the consent of the State Legislature.

Bridge Regional Economic Disparities: Setting up dedicated development boards and ensuring quota allocations in local jobs and higher education for underdeveloped areas.

Ensuring Political and Administrative Stability: Facilitating smooth political and administrative transitions during the integration of regions into full statehood, as seen in Sikkim, Nagaland and Mizoram.

Why has the Centre proposed special constitutional safeguards for Ladakh?

Addressing the governance gap after 2019: Following the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, Ladakh became a Union Territory, but without a legislature. While this arrangement provides for direct administration by the Union, it has also raised concerns about limited local participation in policymaking and decision-making. Special constitutional safeguards under the proposed Article 371K could provide greater institutional protection for local interests.

Protection of tribal identity and culture: Ladakh has a predominantly tribal population (over 90%). Constitutional safeguards could protect its distinct languages, customs, traditions and cultural heritage from external pressures.

Safeguarding land ownership rights: Ladakh's communities have expressed concerns that unregulated transfer or acquisition of land by outsiders could weaken local ownership and affect the traditional livelihoods of tribal communities. Special constitutional safeguards could provide a framework to regulate land transfers, protect community owned land and give greater legal protection to customary land use practices.

Protection of local employment: Special constitutional safeguards could enable the creation of mechanisms to reserve or prioritise certain government jobs for local residents, protecting employment opportunities for local youth from excessive competition with applicants from outside the region.

Responding to demands for greater autonomy: The proposal seeks to address longstanding demands raised by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), including greater local self-governance and constitutional protection.

Preservation of fragile Himalayan ecology: Constitutional protection of land, forests, natural resources and the environment could help address concerns regarding unregulated development in Ladakh's ecologically sensitive region.

What are the major challenges in providing constitutional safeguards to Ladakh?

Balancing local aspirations and national interests: Ladakh has significant strategic importance due to its borders with China and Pakistan. Safeguards must protect local interests while ensuring that national security and strategic infrastructure are not constrained.

Balancing Leh and Kargil interests: Ladakh comprises two distinct regions, Leh and Kargil, with differences in geography, demography, culture and political aspirations. Designing an arrangement acceptable to both can be challenging.

Administrative complexity: Providing special constitutional safeguards to Ladakh could create overlapping institutional jurisdictions if the powers of the Union Territory administration, Lieutenant Governor, Hill Development Councils and any proposed new constitutional body are not clearly defined.

Protecting local employment while attracting investment: Strong restrictions on employment or investment by outsiders could protect local opportunities but may also affect the availability of skills, capital and private investment.

Balancing autonomy with administrative efficiency: Greater local decision-making can strengthen participation, but excessive fragmentation of authority may complicate coordinated governance and implementation.

Ensuring effective implementation: Constitutional protection by itself may not guarantee better outcomes. It would need to be supported by clear legislation, capable institutions, adequate finances and effective accountability mechanisms.

What should be the way forward?

Clearly define institutional powers: The proposed constitutional arrangement should clearly demarcate the powers of the UT administration, autonomous councils and local representative institutions to avoid administrative overlap.

Protect land and employment: The constitutional framework should provide clear safeguards for land ownership, transfer and use to protect the interests of local and tribal communities while allowing essential public infrastructure and responsible private investment. Similarly, appropriate provisions for local employment and skill development can improve opportunities for Ladakhi youth without restricting the investment, entrepreneurship or access to specialised skills required for the region's development.

Strengthen local self-governance: The proposed constitutional safeguards should be accompanied by greater devolution of powers, functions and financial resources to local institutions in Ladakh. Local bodies should have a meaningful role in decisions relating to land use, local development, tourism, employment, culture and natural resource management.

Ensure equitable regional development: Special constitutional safeguards should ensure that development benefits reach both Leh and Kargil in a balanced manner, rather than being concentrated in a few urban or tourist centres. Resource allocation should consider differences in population, geography, infrastructure gaps and socio-economic needs.

Adopt an environment-sensitive development model: Ladakh's cold desert ecosystem, limited water availability and vulnerability to climate change make environmentally sustainable development particularly important. Development policies should therefore be based on carrying capacity assessments, especially for tourism, construction and urban expansion.

Conclusion

The proposed constitutional safeguards for Ladakh provide an opportunity to reconcile local aspirations with development and national interests. However, the framework should be carefully designed so that it not only increases public participation in governance, but also protects the land, culture, livelihood and fragile ecology of the cold desert region.

Election Commission of India

RELEVANCE

- **Syllabus:**
  - **PSIR**: Statutory Bodies/Institutions
  - GS2: Elections



Introduction

A recent media investigation has drawn fresh attention to the internal decision-making processes of the Election Commission of India (ECI). As per the findings, Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi are reported to have raised dissent notes at least 14 times over the last 10 months on orders and decisions tied to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), covering voter registration, deletion and restoration of names, and management of electoral rolls.

What is the ECI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an independent, permanent constitutional authority set up on January 25, 1950, tasked with supervising, directing and controlling elections to Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of President and Vice-President. Being a permanent constitutional body, it draws its authority directly from the Constitution itself. It has functioned as a three-member body, made up of the CEC and two Election Commissioners, since October 1993.

Constitutional Standing and structure

Part XV (Articles 324 to 329): Governs India's electoral framework.

Article 324: Provides for setting up the ECI.

Structure: Under Article 324, the ECI is made up of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) along with as many Election Commissioners (ECs) as the President decides from time to time. The CEC and other Commissioners are appointed by the President, subject to laws framed by Parliament, currently the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023. Once other Commissioners are appointed, the CEC heads the Commission as its Chairperson. The President may also appoint Regional Election Commissioners after consulting the ECI.

Tenure: 6 years, or till the age of 65, whichever comes first.

All Commissioners hold equal voting rights and equal standing, with decisions taken by majority vote. Their salary and service conditions match those of a Supreme Court judge.

What functions and duties does the ECI perform?

Administrative Duties:

Delimitation of Constituencies: Fixes the territorial limits of electoral constituencies nationwide, based on the Delimitation Commission Acts.

Electoral Rolls and EPIC: Compiles, updates and periodically revises voter lists to register eligible citizens and issue Electronic Photo Identity Cards.

Election Scheduling and Conduct: Announces election dates and schedules, examines candidate nomination papers, and oversees polling stations and counting centres.

Recognition of Political Parties: Confers official recognition on parties, classifying them as National or State parties based on electoral performance.

Allotment of Symbols: Assigns official symbols to recognized parties and independent candidates.

Enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC): Applies the MCC during elections to guarantee a level playing field, checking misuse of official machinery, state resources or unfair campaign tactics.

Oversight of Campaign Spending: Caps candidate expenditure and tracks spending to limit money power's influence over elections.

Control and Cancellation of Polls: Empowered to cancel or defer polling where there is booth capturing, large-scale violence, rigging or other operational lapses.

Advisory Duties:

MP Disqualification: Advises the President on disqualifying sitting Members of Parliament after elections.

MLA Disqualification: Advises State Governors on disqualifying sitting MLAs after elections.

President's Rule and Polls: Advises the President on whether elections can be conducted in a state under President's Rule, relevant to extending emergency beyond a year.

Quasi-Judicial Duties:

Disputes over Party Recognition and Symbols: Functions as an adjudicating body in disputes over party recognition or competing claims to names and symbols, such as during splits or mergers.

Recommending Candidate Disqualification: Recommends disqualifying candidates held guilty of corrupt practices by the High Courts or Supreme Court.

Failure to File Expense Accounts: Can disqualify candidates who do not submit election expenditure accounts within the stipulated time and format.

What constitutional powers does the ECI hold?

Overall supervision of elections: The ECI holds constitutional authority to oversee and manage elections to Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of President and Vice-President.

Maintaining electoral rolls: Supervises preparation and revision of electoral rolls, ensuring they are kept properly updated.

Requisitioning election staff: Can call upon necessary personnel for conducting elections and controls election-related officials through the process.

Setting the election calendar: Decides the election programme and its various stages, within the statutory framework.

Enforcing electoral discipline: Monitors adherence to the MCC and can issue directions to preserve a level playing field.

Adjourning or repeating polls: Where serious irregularities, violence or disruptions compromise poll integrity, can order fresh polling as provided by law.

Residuary powers under Article 324: Where the law is silent or inadequate, the Supreme Court has held that the ECI may exercise plenary powers, so long as this stays consistent with the Constitution and existing law.

What shortcomings and criticisms does the ECI face?

Concerns over appointment process: The manner of appointing Election Commissioners remains contested from an institutional-independence standpoint. The present statutory framework sets up a selection panel comprising the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM, and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Post-retirement appointments: No bar exists on CECs and Commissioners taking up government or political posts after retirement, which raises concerns about conflicts of interest and perceived independence.

Asymmetric removal safeguards: Under Article 324(5), the CEC has removal protection akin to a Supreme Court judge, while other Commissioners can be removed by the President only on the CEC's recommendation. The ECI has itself sought stronger constitutional protection for all its members.

Reliance on government machinery: The ECI depends heavily on central and state government staff and administrative apparatus to conduct elections, raising questions about its operational independence.

Weak hold over political parties: While the ECI can register and recognise parties and regulate certain aspects of their conduct, its authority over their internal democracy, organisational functioning and finances stays limited under existing law.

MCC lacking statutory force: Though vital to a level playing field, most of the MCC is not backed by standalone legislation, forcing the ECI to lean on existing election laws and constitutional powers for enforcement.

Difficulty monitoring poll expenditure: The scale of elections, indirect spending and third-party expenditure make tracking actual campaign costs difficult.

Budget not a charged expenditure: Unlike the salaries of Supreme Court judges or the CAG, which are charged directly to the Consolidated Fund of India, the ECI's administrative budget depends on parliamentary approval, leaving it financially dependent on government.

Controversy over SIR: The Special Intensive Revision exercise drew criticism over large-scale deletion or potential exclusion of voters, with fears that marginalised and vulnerable groups could be disproportionately hit due to verification and documentation hurdles, alongside concerns over transparency of the process, the basis for identifying voters, and procedural safeguards.

What reforms have been recommended by committees and the courts?

A more independent appointment mechanism: The Tarkunde Committee (1975), Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990) and the Law Commission's 255th Report (2015) called for a multi-member collegium comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and Chief Justice of India to appoint the CEC and ECs. The 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission suggested adding the Union Law Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to this panel. In Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023), the Supreme Court directed that, pending parliamentary legislation, appointments be made on the recommendation of a committee comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and Chief Justice of India, stressing the need for a fair and transparent selection process.

Bolstering institutional independence: The Law Commission's 255th Report (2015) proposed reforms to strengthen the ECI's independence and effectiveness, identifying this as a key objective of its broader electoral-reform work.

Uniform protection for all Commissioners: The same report argued for extending stronger security of tenure to all Election Commissioners, on par with the CEC, to curb the scope for executive influence.

Enhanced financial independence: The ECI's autonomy could be reinforced by charging its administrative expenditure directly to the Consolidated Fund of India instead of leaving it subject to the annual appropriation process.

Legal backing for the MCC: The Law Commission and other reform bodies have suggested giving the MCC firmer legal footing to allow quicker and more effective action against serious violations.

Better management of electoral rolls: Roll revisions should balance accuracy with due process, ensuring eligible voters are not wrongly excluded, backed by clear notice, accessible claims-and-objections mechanisms and proper grievance redressal.

The Supreme Court's 2026 ruling on Bihar's SIR upheld the ECI's power to conduct such revisions while scrutinising the statutory and constitutional safeguards involved.

Coordination with State Election Commissions: The 2nd ARC recommended a common institutional platform linking the ECI and State Election Commissions for coordination and resource sharing.

Conclusion

Electoral reform in India should aim to make the ECI more financially autonomous, transparent and accountable. Strengthening the Commission alongside appropriate checks and judicial oversight can help build greater public confidence in India's electoral democracy.



Mains Practice Questions

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

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

The competing pulls:

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

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

Balancing Strategies: Maneuvering the Tightrope:

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

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

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

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

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

2) Political theory is much more than mere science. Comment

According to Rajeev Bhargava, political theory is a form of systematic reflection characterized by conceptual sensitivity, rational structure, aspiration for a humanly achievable truth and objectivity, generality, and an explicit mandate to uncover deeper insights. Scholars assert that political theory transcends mere scientific knowledge. George Catlin notes that political theory is divided into political science and political philosophy. It is scientific in nature as it incorporates concepts like justice and equality, which are observable and testable, and adheres to the principles of reason and rationalism.

Conversely, political philosophy is a part of normative political theory, addressing questions such as the nature of justice, the concept of rights, and the distinction between 'is' and 'ought.' Additionally, political philosophy seeks to resolve conflicts between political theories that might appear equally valid under certain circumstances.

Andrew Hacker, in his work "Political Theory: Philosophy, Ideology, Science" (1961), highlights the dual nature of political theory. He contends that every political theorist must fulfill both the roles of a scientist and a philosopher, arguing that lasting contributions to political knowledge require integrating these dual roles in both science and philosophy.

Thus, political theory broadly encompasses political science and political philosophy, collectively performing three functions: description, criticism, and reconstruction.

Q) What role does the National Minority Commission play in ensuring full protection of minority rights as well as harmony in India's multicultural society.

The Indian constitution represents a multicultural approach towards minority rights, aiming to provide a life of dignity to all individuals living in India. It embraces a non-hegemonic, non-coercive approach of civic nationalism. In line with the commitment to protect minority rights, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was established in 1992 by the Government of India.

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

The functions of the NCM include:

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

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

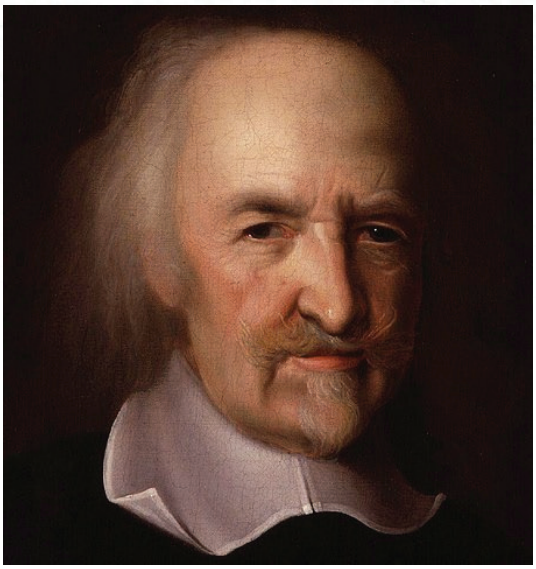
However, there have been concerns regarding the effectiveness of the NCM. It is seen as having limited power and impact. To strengthen the commission, there have been demands to provide it with constitutional status, the power to summon officials, and the ability to take action against non compliance.

Conclusion:

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

Scholar Digest: Know Your Scholars

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.

A.G. Frank



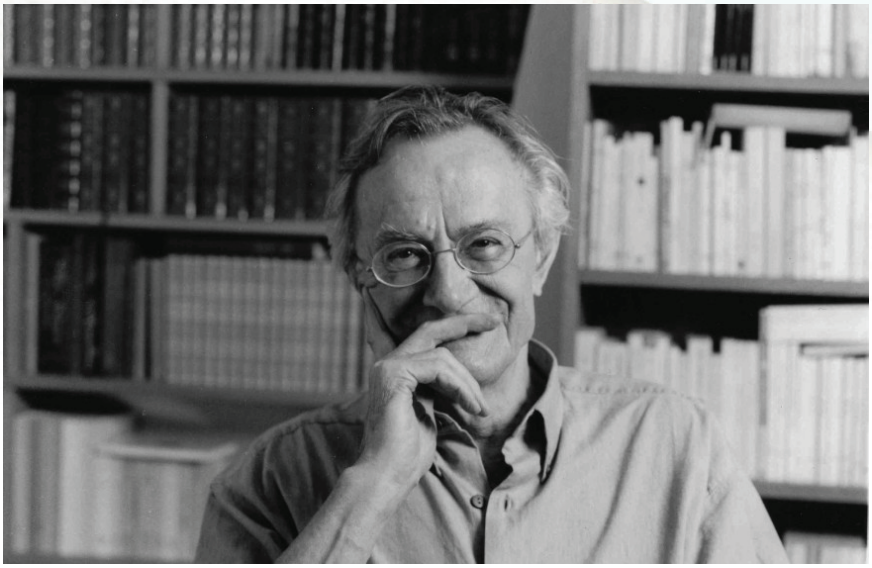
Introduction

Andre Gunder Frank, born on February 24, 1929, and passing away on April 25, 2005, was a prominent figure in the fields of sociology and economic history. Andre Gunder Frank, a German national, was a prominent left-wing economist and political activist. His extensive body of work spanned various domains, including economics, social and political history, development studies, and international relations. His most enduring legacy lies in his exploration of concepts such as the 'development of underdevelopment' and 'dependency theory.' Furthermore, he offered critical insights into the 'world system' of the 1970s and 1980s, shedding light on how it perpetuated global inequality.

dependency Theory

Frank's central argument revolved around the idea that in our interconnected and globalized world, some countries thrive while others suffer. According to dependency theory, the citizens of less-developed countries should not be held responsible for the lack of progress in their societies. Instead, Frank posited that Western nations actively hindered the development of these countries. He contended that historically, the "core" nations like the USA and UK, forming the privileged "metropolis," exploited the "peripheral" nations by keeping them in a state of dependency and underdevelopment. Developed nations accumulated wealth by exploiting the poorest nations, utilizing them as sources of cheap raw materials and labor.

Frank asserted that this exploitative relationship had persisted throughout history, evident in practices like slavery and Western colonization of various regions. Moreover, he argued that this pattern continued into the twentieth century, facilitated by Western countries' domination of international trade, the rise of large multinational corporations, and the reliance of less-developed nations on Western aid.



Introduction

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

Incredulity Towards Metanarratives

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

Critique of Grand Narratives

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

Language and Knowledge

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

The Postmodern Condition

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

Implications and Criticisms

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

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

Conclusion

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



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

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

Answer

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

↳ Relationship between India and SriLanka is inter twined in historical bond. (Rajasinghom Jayadevan)

Body: Tell the emerging China-SriLanka relations

↳ Hambantota port lease to SriLanka.

↳ Sri Lanka's debt to China tripled in last decade.

Give ideas of creative Diplomacy

↳ Using Buddhism as a common link

↳ Resolving small disputes of fishing etc

↳ Economic interdependence.

Conclusion

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

Q. Analyse the role of the election commission towards electoral reforms.

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

Approach of Answer

(Intro): Briefly write about Election Commission

(Body)

Write about positive role played by ECI towards electoral reforms.

eg → Introduction of EVM's.

→ Launch of website for information sharing

→ Computerisation of Electoral rolls 1998

→ Introduction of VVPAT.

→ Introduction of NOTA in 2014

→ Recently launched SVEEP for voter's education.

What more can be done

→ ECI be given rule making power under RPA

→ ECI be given more power's w.r.t Model code of Conduct.

Conclusion

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

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

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