



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

**Model Answers
for UPSC Mains
2026**

GS Paper 2



GS2 QUESTION

1. Right to privacy relating to self-identity is very dear to every human being and well protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. In this context, examine the effect of the amendment in 2026, to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
2. "Women as a class neither belong to a minority group nor are they regarded as forming a backward class." In the light of this statement, discuss the evolution of women's reservation from local bodies to Parliament.
3. Examine whether the constitutional office of the Lok Sabha Speaker has become vulnerable to partisan politics under the current anti-defection regime. What institutional changes are required to ensure the neutrality of the Lok Sabha Speaker in managing a polarised House ?
4. Is the right to vote a fundamental right ? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters ?
5. Do constitutional bodies like the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) possess adequate enforcement powers to secure substantive social equality ? Suggest measures to enhance their institutional effectiveness.
6. Does India's tribal development policy reflect the aspirations for a socially grounded and equity-based governance ? Justify your answer.
7. Malnutrition in India is not merely a public health concern; it is also a challenge of social equity, human development and effective welfare governance. Discuss.
8. Analyse the advantages and limitations of the generalist structure of the Indian Civil Services in contemporary governance.
9. "IPMDA (Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness) bridges the gap between India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Quad's collective Indo-Pacific strategy." Make a critical assessment of the statement focusing on IPMDA.
10. "BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South." Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings.
11. Discuss the position of the Governor in the federal polity of India. What is the nature of his power while giving assent to a bill passed by the State Legislature ? Is he bound by the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers in all his functions ?
12. What is meant by judicial legislation ? In this context, discuss the verdicts of the apex court allowing "passive euthanasia" and a "living will".
13. How far has the Indian federal framework been successful in accommodating regional and cultural diversities ? Highlight the role of asymmetric federalism and suggest measures to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective.
14. Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA.
15. To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests ? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions.
16. "Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.
17. Can the constitutional mandate of rights-based welfare be effectively realised in the context of non-integrated governance and minimal public investment ? Examine.

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18. Should education be treated primarily as a welfare obligation of the state or as a strategic investment for building a globally competitive, knowledge-driven nation ? Critically evaluate.
19. "India's global diaspora acts as a living bridge, as a critical economic factor and knowledge network in transforming cultural heritage into geopolitical influence and strategic leverage worldwide." Critically examine this statement.
20. "China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has transformed South Asia from a regional space into a theatre of great power competition." Analyse the strategic implications of the BRI for India's security and regional influence in South Asia.

Q1. Right to privacy relating to self-identity is very dear to every human being and well protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. In this context, examine the effect of the amendment in 2026, to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Answer:

Right to self-identity flows from Article 21's dignity and autonomy dimensions, reinforced by Puttaswamy (2017); the 2026 Amendment to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 significantly reshapes this constitutional guarantee.

Constitutional Foundation of Self-Identity

1. NALSA v. UOI (2014) recognized transgender persons as "third gender," grounding self-identification in Article 21's dignity and autonomy.
2. K.S. Puttaswamy v. UOI (2017) declared privacy, including personal/sexual identity, an intrinsic, non-negotiable fundamental right.
3. Gender identity is thus doctrinally an "informational and decisional privacy" matter beyond mere administrative classification.

Transgender Persons Act, 2019 vs Amendment Bill, 2026

Aspect	2019 Act	2026 Act
Definition	Broadly defines transgender person based on <u>gender mismatch with sex assigned at birth</u> ; includes specified categories.	Removes the definition and provides an <u>enumerated list of categories</u> ; excludes persons based solely on sexual orientation/self-perceived sexual identity.
Categories Covered	Includes <u>kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta, persons with variations in sex characteristics</u> , trans-men/trans-women and genderqueer persons.	Retains <u>socio-cultural identities</u> and persons with variations in sex characteristics; <u>removes trans-men, trans-women and genderqueer</u> ; adds eunuchs and persons forcibly made to assume transgender identity.
Identity Certification	Person may apply to <u>District Magistrate (DM)</u> for a transgender identity certificate.	DM issues certificate after recommendation of a designated <u>Medical Board</u> , headed by CMO/Deputy CMO.

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Change in Gender	Revised identity certificate may be obtained after gender-reassignment surgery.	Revised certificate mandatory after gender-change surgery; medical institution must inform the DM.
Existing Offences	Forced/bonded labour, denial of passage/public spaces, forced eviction and harm/injury: 6 months–2 years + fine.	Existing offences retained; new, enhanced offences and penalties introduced.

Effect on Right to Privacy and Self-Identity

A. Positive Effects

- Stronger Protection From Coercion:** Criminalising forced transgender identity, servitude and exploitation protects bodily autonomy and dignity.
- Legal Recognition Of Identity:** Explicit provision for first-name change in official documents strengthens identity, dignity and social recognition.
- Enhanced Protection Of Vulnerable Persons:** Stringent penalties for **kidnapping, mutilation and grievous injury** strengthen the right to life, dignity and personal liberty under Article 21.

B. Negative Effects

- Medicalisation of Identity:** Mandatory **Medical Board recommendation** shifts recognition from self-identification towards third-party determination, potentially undermining autonomy.
- Privacy Concerns:** Medical scrutiny and mandatory communication of **gender-change surgery** to the DM may expose sensitive personal/medical information.
- Narrower Recognition:** Exclusion of **trans-men, trans-women and genderqueer** persons may restrict the right to self-defined identity.
- Chilling Effect:** Fear of **institutional scrutiny** may discourage individuals from seeking legal recognition, affecting privacy, dignity and equal access to rights.
- Bureaucratic Eertification** may increase **harassment, delay and denial of dignity** for marginalised applicants, per NHRC concerns.

Measures Needed

- Make gender identity primarily **self-determined**, with medical assessment only where strictly necessary.
- Ensure confidentiality, purpose limitation and restricted access to medical/identity records.
- Ensure protection extends to all gender identities without arbitrary exclusions.
- Establish an accessible mechanism to address discrimination, denial of certification and privacy violations.

The amendment reflects tension between welfare governance and constitutional autonomy; judicial scrutiny must ensure **Article 21's self-identity dignity is not diluted.**

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Q2. “Women as a class neither belong to a minority group nor are they regarded as forming a backward class.” In the light of this statement, discuss the evolution of women’s reservation from local bodies to Parliament.

Answer

For decades, women have remained a decisive **“vote bank”**, influencing electoral outcomes but rarely becoming a corresponding **“power bank”** in decision-making; **Article 15(3)** laid the constitutional foundation for affirmative political representation.

Why Women’s Reservation is Necessary Despite No “Backward Class” Or Minority Status

1. **Underrepresentation:** Women’s political voice remains disproportionately low, only **14.4% of the 18th Lok Sabha are women**, necessitating corrective representation.
2. **Patriarchal Structures:** Formal reservation does not automatically ensure agency; **‘Sarpanch Pati’** reflects continued male control over women representatives in some Panchayats.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Legislation:** Women’s presence can foreground issues often under-prioritised such as care economy, maternal health, sanitation, gender violence.
4. **Unequal Political Capital:** Women face barriers in party tickets, campaign finance and political networks, limiting entry into electoral politics.
5. **Leadership Pipeline:** Local body reservation has created a large pool of women leaders. (eg: over **14 lakh elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions**).
6. **Democratic Legitimacy:** Women constitute **nearly half the electorate**, yet remain underrepresented; reservation strengthens representative and inclusive democracy.

Evolution of Women’s Reservation

1. **73rd & 74th Amendments, 1992:** Articles **243D and 243T** mandated at least **one-third reservation for women** in Panchayats and Municipalities, including chairperson positions.
 - a. It marked a shift from formal political equality to substantive representation.
 - b. **Example:** Today, around **14.5 lakh women** constitute nearly **46% of elected PRI** representatives, while **21 States have provided 50% reservation**.
2. **Judicial Validation:** **K. Krishna Murthy v. UoI (2010)** - upheld local-body reservation for adequate representation and empowerment.
3. **Grassroots to Higher Politics:** Local reservation created a leadership pipeline, but party-ticket and electoral barriers limited upward mobility. (e.g., **Panchayat se Parliament initiative**, exemplifies this transition).
4. **Long journey towards Parliament**
 - a. The **1974 Committee on the Status of Women in India (Towards Equality)** highlighted women's marginalisation in political participation.
 - b. The **Geeta Mukherjee-led JPC (1996)** examined the first Women's Reservation Bill and supported reservation, including a 15-year period.
 - c. **Bills introduced in 1996, 1998 and 1999** failed to become law, reflecting the absence of political consensus.
5. **106th Constitutional Amendment, 2023:** **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** provides 1/3 reservation in Lok Sabha & State Assemblies, including SC/ST-reserved seats.





However, Implementation Remains Prospective

1. **Delay in Delimitation** postpones tangible political empowerment despite legislative sanction of reservation.
2. **Rotation of Reserved Constituencies** may weaken long-term accountability and incumbency-building for women legislators.
3. **Intersectional Representation for OBC** and minority women remains unaddressed within the current reservation framework.
 - a. **Sub-quota Demand for OBC Women**, similar to local-body layering, remains a contested, unresolved issue.

Way Forward: Bridging Representation and Empowerment

1. **Time-Bound Implementation:** The government must expedite the census and delimitation process by establishing a clear statutory timeline to ensure that the constitutional amendment translates into actual political representation without undue delay.
2. **Intersectional Inclusion:** Sub-reservation for OBC women within the quota framework can make representation more socially inclusive and prevent the concentration of benefits among relatively privileged groups.
3. **Capacity Building:** Provide elected women legislators with constituency management support, legislative drafting assistance, and financial management training to address the capability deficit that enables proxy representation.
4. **Enabling Structural Conditions:** Reservation must be complemented by investments in women's education, safety, economic independence, and grassroots leadership, since substantive political empowerment depends on broader social transformation.

The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 can break a long-standing democratic glass ceiling, but substantive empowerment will depend on whether numerical representation is accompanied by institutional reform and broader social change that enables women to exercise real political agency.

Q3. Examine whether the constitutional office of the Lok Sabha Speaker has become vulnerable to partisan politics under the current anti-defection regime. What institutional changes are required to ensure the neutrality of the Lok Sabha Speaker in managing a polarised House ?

Answer

The Constitution envisages the Lok Sabha Speaker as a non-partisan guardian of parliamentary dignity and procedure. Yet his constitutional neutrality in anti-defection adjudication faces erosion amid growing political polarisation, procedural delays and partisan controversies.

Constitutional Safeguards Ensuring Neutrality of the Speaker

1. **Security of Tenure:** Under Article 94, removal of the speaker requires an "effective majority" resolution of the House with prior notice, ensuring independence from executive pressure.
2. **Financial and Procedural Independence:** Salary charged on the Consolidated Fund of India limits executive influence.

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- a. **Article 122** protects parliamentary proceedings from routine judicial interference.
3. **Casting Vote Principle:** Under **Article 100(1)**, the Speaker votes only in case of a tie, symbolising political neutrality.
4. **Independent procedural authority:** **Article 118** empowers Parliament to frame rules, while the Speaker has final authority in regulating House proceedings.

Anti-Defection Provisions Undermining Speaker's Neutrality

1. **Speaker as Adjudicator:** **Tenth Schedule** vests disqualification power in the Speaker, making a political office-holder decide matters with direct consequences for **party strength and government survival**.
2. **Ruling-Party Affiliation:** Speaker generally belongs to the **ruling coalition**, thus may have potential bias when disqualification may save or alter the government's majority.
3. **No Time Limit:** Tenth Schedule prescribes no **fixed deadline**, thus scope for deliberate delay to protect defectors until a crucial vote or political realignment.
 - a. **Example:** Prolonged pendency of disqualification petitions during Maharashtra political crisis (2022–24).
4. **Discretion Over "Voluntarily Giving Up" Membership:** Broad interpretation under Para **2(1)(a)** gives the Speaker considerable discretion, leaving possibility of selective treatment of legislators.
5. **Whip-Related Disqualification:** Voting against the party whip can trigger disqualification, and speaker's ruling on whether the conduct attracts the Tenth Schedule can become contentious.

Other Factors Undermining Speaker's Neutrality

1. **Party Dependence:** Speaker continues as a party member, thus perceived conflict between party loyalty and constitutional neutrality.
2. **Election By Simple Majority:** Speaker is elected through majoritarian support, often from the ruling side, thus limited cross-party ownership of the office.
3. **Government Control Over Business:** Power over admission, **listing and scheduling of motions/Bills** can affect Opposition's legislative space.
4. **Discretion in Disciplinary Powers:** Authority to suspend members, name members and regulate debates may attract allegations of selective enforcement.
5. **Certification Power:** **Money Bill certification** can determine the route of legislation and limit Rajya Sabha's scrutiny, making impartiality especially consequential.

Institutional Changes Required To Ensure the Neutrality

1. **Codification of Neutrality Conventions:** Mandate resignation from active party roles and formalise ethical guidelines to reduce partisan influence.
 - a. **Example:** In the **United Kingdom, the Speaker resigns from party** and contests as neutral, reinforcing impartiality.
2. **Independent Tribunal for Anti-Defection Cases:** **Dinesh Goswami Committee** and the **170th Report of the Law Commission of India**, defection cases could be decided by the President or the Governor.
3. **Strengthening Judicial Oversight:** Ensure limited but effective judicial review (**as upheld in Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu (1992)**) to check arbitrary decisions.
4. **Time-bound Decision Framework:** Implement strict timelines (period of three months - **as emphasised in Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Speaker (2020)**) to prevent strategic delays

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5. **Transparent and Reasoned Decision-Making:** Require publication of detailed rulings (especially in Money Bill certification under Article 110) to enhance accountability and public trust.
- a. **Example:** Rojer Mathew v. South Indian Bank (2019)- SC, ruled that while the Lok Sabha Speaker's certification of a Money Bill remains subject to judicial review.

The placement of the Sengol, symbolising righteousness, near the Speaker's chair underscores the ethical gravitas of the office. It reflects that beyond institutional safeguards, true neutrality depends on adherence to constitutional morality, impartial conduct, and a culture of principled restraint.

Q4. Is the right to vote a fundamental right ? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters ?

Answer

The right to vote is a constitutional/statutory right, not a fundamental right; however, its exercise is central to representative democracy. The ECI's electoral-roll revision must therefore balance electoral integrity with citizens' right to participate.

Is the Right to Vote a Fundamental Right?

1. **Not a Fundamental Right:** The right to vote is a constitutional/statutory right, primarily flowing from Article 326 (adult suffrage) and Section 62, RPA 1951.
 - a. **Janchowkidar case (2013):** The Supreme Court has reiterated that voting is not a fundamental right; Parliament can therefore regulate its exercise through electoral law.
 - b. **Under Section 62(5), RPA 1951**, a person confined in prison or in lawful police custody cannot vote, except those under preventive detention—illustrating that the right is subject to statutory restrictions.
2. **Article 19 Distinction:** The right to know candidates' antecedents and make an informed electoral choice is protected under Article 19(1)(a), but the act of voting itself is not.
3. **Judicial Position:** PUCL v. Union of India (2003) and subsequent cases distinguish the fundamental freedom to express political choice from the statutory right to cast a vote.

ECI's Position While Revising Electoral Rolls

1. **Plenary Constitutional Power:** Under Article 324, ECI has wide powers over electoral rolls.
 - a. **Example:** Supreme Court (2026 Bihar SIR case) upheld SIR as advancing the constitutional imperative of free and fair elections.
2. **Article 324 as a Power-Reservoir:** S.Y. Quraishi's interpretation emphasises that Article 324 enables ECI to fill legislative gaps where necessary for conducting free and fair elections, subject to constitutional and statutory limits.
3. **Periodic/Intensive Revision:** ECI can determine the need, timing and manner of intensive revision to ensure clean, accurate and inclusive electoral rolls; the Supreme Court recognised this as falling within ECI's electoral mandate.
4. **Due Process Against Wrongful Exclusion:** The Supreme Court has stressed that electoral purification cannot become disenfranchisement:
 - a. **Reasoned Decision** - exclusion must have a legally sustainable basis.

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- b. **Notice and hearing** - affected elector gets an opportunity to respond.
- c. **Claims & Objections** - avenue to seek inclusion/correction.
- d. **Appeal/Remedy** - exclusion remains challengeable before the prescribed appellate authority.
- e. **Speaking Order** - final adverse decision should disclose reasons.

Can ECI Examine Citizenship

ECI has a limited power to examine citizenship for electoral eligibility	Final determination of citizenship lies within the statutory citizenship framework
Section 16, RPA 1950: Non-citizens are disqualified from electoral registration; hence, citizenship is a condition precedent to enrolment. 2026 SC – Bihar SIR: ECI cannot maintain a valid electoral roll without satisfying itself that electors meet this citizenship threshold. Scope is limited: ECI may verify citizenship-related eligibility while preparing rolls, but this does not confer a general power to adjudicate citizenship. Burden of electoral verification: Where citizenship is doubtful, ECI can seek documents/evidence and conduct an inquiry within the electoral-roll framework.	Article 11: Parliament has exclusive legislative competence to regulate acquisition and termination of citizenship. Citizenship Act, 1955: Provides the substantive framework for acquisition, termination, deprivation and determination of citizenship. Competent authorities: Parliament has created/delegated statutory/quasi-judicial mechanisms for citizenship/nationality determination. Example: Foreigners Tribunals under the Foreigners (Tribunals) framework; the Citizenship Act also provides for a Committee of Inquiry in specified cases.

Thus, the principle of **“one person, one vote, one value”** rests on accurate and inclusive electoral rolls, not merely periodic elections. Hence, ECI’s revision powers must ensure electoral integrity without wrongful disenfranchisement, balancing purity of rolls with universal participation.

Q5. Do constitutional bodies like the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) possess adequate enforcement powers to secure substantive social equality ? Suggest measures to enhance their institutional effectiveness.

Answer

Substantive equality demands active dismantling of caste hierarchy, not mere formal parity. The **NCSC and NCST (Articles 338, 338A) guard this promise**, but their largely advisory character leaves enforcement powers inadequate to the task.

Enforcement powers the Commissions do possess

- Under Art. 338(8)/338A**, they wield civil-court powers — summoning witnesses, compelling documents, recording evidence on affidavit.

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2. **Art. 338(9)** makes consultation with the Commission mandatory for the Union/States on all major SC/ST policy.
3. They can recommend **prosecution and lay Annual Reports** before Parliament under **Article 338(5)**.

Powers Remain Inadequate for Substantive Equality

1. **Non-binding recommendations:** Under **Articles 338/338A**, Commissions can recommend remedial action but cannot enforce compliance.
2. **NCST bypassed:** During the **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023**, NCST's views were not sought by the Joint Committee, exposing the absence of **compulsory-consultation powers**.
3. **Institutional vacancies:** The **7th NCSC, constituted in March 2024**, functioned without a Vice-Chairperson and with fewer members and executive-controlled appointments.
4. **Reports without follow-through:** **NCSC's 2020–21 & 2021–22** reports were submitted only in September 2023.
5. Absence of a time-bound Action-Taken Report enables **prolonged executive inaction**.
6. **Weak enforcement outcomes:** **57,582 crimes against SCs (NCRB, 2022)** co-existed with only **~34% conviction under the SC/ST (PoA) Act**, as Commissions can monitor and recommend, but cannot prosecute or enforce.
7. **Executive dependence:** Dependence on **government for budget**, personnel and investigative/prosecution support limits institutional autonomy and their ability to secure substantive, not merely formal, equality.

Measures to enhance institutional effectiveness

1. **Make Action Taken Reports Statutorily Time-Bound** (e.g., six months), on the **CAG-PAC** model, with reasons recorded for rejection.
2. **Render Art. 338(9) Consultation Justiciable** : A mandatory pre-condition for SC/ST-affecting policy.
3. **Confer Limited Quasi-Judicial/Contempt Powers** for wilful non-compliance, akin to State Human Rights Commissions.
4. **Guarantee Fixed, Charged Budget** and a dedicated investigative cadre with regional offices and forensic support.
5. Time-bound filling of vacancies through a transparent, collegium-style selection process.
6. Institutionalise convergence with DMs, Special Courts and Special Public Prosecutors under the PoA Act to close the case-to-conviction gap.

The Commissions are not powerless but toothless where it counts — able to investigate, unable to enforce. Binding follow-through, guaranteed autonomy and enforced consultation would transform them from advisory sentinels into real engines of substantive equality.

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Q6. Does India's tribal development policy reflect the aspirations for a socially grounded and equity-based governance ? Justify your answer.

Answer

For India's **10.45 crore tribal citizens (8.6% of the population, across 705 Scheduled Tribes)**, "socially grounded" governance means anchoring policy in tribal self-rule and the jal-jungle-zameen ethos, while "**equity-based**" governance means dismantling entrenched deprivation. India's tribal policy reflects these aspirations substantially in welfare intent, but only partially in rights and autonomy.

Where The Policy Affirms These Aspirations

1. **Robust Constitutional Grounding:** The **Fifth and Sixth Schedules, Articles 244, 275(1), 46, 15(4), 330/332**, and the **NCST (Art. 338A)** institutionalise protection, self-governance and affirmative action.
2. **Rights-Based Legislation:** **PESA, 1996 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006** recognise Gram Sabha primacy and "correct historical injustice" — the socially grounded core of the framework.
3. **Scaled-up Equity Spending:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs' budget rose from **₹4,295 crore (2013-14) to ₹14,926 crore (2025-26)**, and DAPST to ₹1.23 lakh crore across 42 ministries.
4. **Saturation-Mode Schemes:** PM-JANMAN targets **75 PVTG communities**, and **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan** covers **63,843 villages and over 5 crore tribal people across 549 districts** through 17 ministries, an outcome-equity, service-delivery model.
5. **Symbolic Representation:** **Droupadi Murmu** as India's first tribal President signals political inclusion.

Where the policy falls short of these aspirations

1. **Self-Governance Deficit:** PESA remains weakly implemented, and many north-eastern and mineral-rich states have barely operationalised community rights.
2. **Rights Recognition Falters:** Over **1.87 million forest-rights claims have been rejected**, often on technical grounds like missing satellite imagery, and Community Forest Rights.
3. **Consent Bypassed:** The **Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2023** diluted Gram Sabha consent; the NCST was not consulted, and its Chairman resigned in June 2023 after his objections were dismissed, a failure of the "socially grounded" principle.
4. **Displacement Without Safeguards:** A **2024 CAG audit** indicted the NTCA for displacing Scheduled Tribes from tiger reserves without the consent the FRA requires, even as reserves opened to **eco-tourism**.
5. **Development-vs-Rights Tension:** Struggles like **Hasdeo Aranya** show mineral and infrastructure imperatives repeatedly overriding tribal consent.

Way Forward

1. Set up a **dedicated FRA division for time-bound review** of rejected claims and fast-track Community Forest Rights titling.
2. Render **Gram Sabha/PESA consent and NCST consultation (Art. 338A(9))** justiciable pre-conditions for any land diversion in Scheduled Areas.

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3. Institutionalize coordination between the Tribal Affairs and Environment ministries to reconcile development with rights, and rehabilitate the displaced with FRA safeguards.
4. Shift from **top-down welfare saturation** to **genuine self-governance**, treating tribes as partners in decision-making rather than beneficiaries.

India's tribal policy is **equity-rich in welfare architecture** but autonomy-poor in rights delivery. It reflects the aspiration for socially grounded, equity-based governance — but realising it fully requires shifting from top-down saturation to genuine tribal self-determination, treating tribes as partners in governance rather than beneficiaries of it.

Q7. Malnutrition in India is not merely a public health concern; it is also a challenge of social equity, human development and effective welfare governance. Discuss.

Answer

Malnutrition is a manifestation of **multidimensional deprivation**, arising not only from inadequate food but also from poverty, poor maternal health, weak WASH facilities, low education and gaps in welfare delivery. The **2025 SOFI notes that 42.9%** of India's population cannot afford a healthy diet, highlighting that nutrition is fundamentally an issue of access and opportunity.

Malnutrition as a Public Health Challenge

1. **Persistent Undernutrition:** About **12% of India's population** is undernourished, while child undernutrition remains substantial.
2. **Micronutrient Deficiency:** **NFHS-5 found 67% of children** under five and **~57% of women** aged 15–49 anaemic, weakening immunity, cognition and productivity.
3. **Maternal–Child Cycle:** Early pregnancy and maternal anaemia contribute to low birth weight and perpetuate **intergenerational malnutrition**.
4. **Infection–Nutrition Nexus:** Poor sanitation and unsafe water impair nutrient absorption; **19% of households practised open defecation** according to NFHS-5.

Thus, malnutrition is simultaneously a disease burden, developmental constraint and productivity loss.

Malnutrition as a Challenge of Social Equity

Nutrition outcomes are strongly shaped by social determinants, making malnutrition an equity issue.

1. **Gender Inequality:** Low female education limits access to antenatal care, appropriate infant feeding and nutrition awareness. Children of mothers with no schooling had **46% stunting**, compared with **26% among those whose mothers had 12+ years of schooling**.
2. **Economic Inequality:** Poor households often cannot afford protein-rich and micronutrient-rich foods beyond subsidised cereals.
3. **Nutritional Inequality:** **42.9% unable to afford a healthy diet** indicates that food security does not automatically translate into nutritional security.
4. **Vulnerability Across Groups:** **Tribal communities**, migrants, adolescents and geographically isolated populations face differentiated nutritional vulnerabilities.

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Hence, malnutrition reflects unequal capabilities to access, afford and utilise nutritious food, rather than merely unequal food availability.

Malnutrition as a Human Development Challenge

1. **Impaired Child Potential:** Persistent stunting (**35.5% under-five, NFHS-5**) curtails cognitive growth and lifelong earning capacity.
2. **Hidden Hunger:** Improved cereal access has not fixed protein and micronutrient deficits, **67% of under-five children remain anaemic (NFHS-5)**.
3. **Health-Nutrition Cycle:** Poor sanitation as **19% of households still practise open defecation (NFHS-5)**—drives recurrent infection that blocks nutrient absorption.
4. **Economic Drag:** A malnourished workforce lowers productivity, weakening the demographic dividend on which India's growth depends.

Malnutrition is fundamentally a challenge of welfare governance

1. **Fragmented Delivery:** Nutrition depends on **food, health, WASH and gender interventions** housed in separate ministries with weak convergence.
2. **Coverage Without Quality:** Schemes reach wide but often deliver poor service quality, as continuing wasting and anaemia show.
3. **Food-System Design Flaw:** Policies long prioritised calorie availability over dietary diversity, leaving diets nutrient-poor.
4. **Inflation Squeeze:** Rising prices of **pulses, oils and milk** push poor households toward cheaper, less nutritious food.
5. **Weak Accountability:** Social audits, beneficiary feedback and independent evaluations can identify exclusion, leakage and poor-quality services.

Way Forward: From Food Security to Nutrition Security

1. Adopt a **multidimensional nutrition lens** integrating food, income, health, WASH, gender and social vulnerability.
2. Promote **dietary diversity through PDS, agriculture and school-feeding systems**, including greater emphasis on millets, pulses and micronutrient-rich foods.
3. **Strengthen convergence** between POSHAN, healthcare, sanitation, drinking water and livelihoods at the local level.
4. **Leverage technology and local institutions** like POSHAN Tracker, Panchayats, SHGs and Anganwadi workers can improve identification and last-mile delivery.
5. **Institutionalise outcome-based monitoring**, using NFHS and POSHAN Tracker data to identify persistent nutrition hotspots and redesign interventions accordingly.

Ending malnutrition demands a **life-cycle, multi-sectoral approach** uniting nutrition, health, sanitation and livelihoods. Treating it as an equity, human development, and governance challenge together is essential to realise **SDG 2, SDG 3 and SDG 10**, ensuring no one is left behind.





Q8. Analyse the advantages and limitations of the generalist structure of the Indian Civil Services in contemporary governance.

Answer

From the ICS to the IAS, India retained a broad-based administrative cadre to preserve continuity, neutrality and national integration. Sardar Patel's "Steel Frame" thus rested on generalist administrators, whose relevance is now tested by specialised governance challenges.

Advantages Of The Generalist Structure Of Indian Civil Services

1. **Policy Coordination:** Generalists coordinate across departments and ensure a whole-of-government approach.
 - a. **Example:** Operation Sankat Mochan required coordination across evacuation, security, and diplomatic agencies
2. **Administrative Neutrality:** Civil servants maintain unity, integrity, continuity and non-partisan functioning of the state.
 - a. **Example:** In T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India (2013) case SC, pushed for fixed tenure for civil servants.
3. **Field Administration:** District administration requires a broad understanding of law and order, welfare, elections, disaster response and public grievances.
 - a. **Example:** Imposition of Section 144 and the subsequent actions undertaken during conflicts.
4. **Public Sector Management:** Generalist officers help in management of public enterprises and implementation of economic policies.
5. **National Integration:** Common recruitment and inter-state postings foster a unified administrative culture.

Limitations of Generalist Structure in Contemporary Governance

1. **Tech Deficit:** AI/cybersecurity demand specialised knowledge. (e.g., algorithmic bias in AI regulation).
2. **Regulatory Complexity:** Modern markets require domain expertise. (e.g., SEBI and algorithmic trading).
3. **Crisis Complexity:** Emergencies require multidisciplinary skills. (e.g., COVID-19 and genomic surveillance).
4. **Domain Dilution:** Frequent transfers impede expertise. (e.g., short tenures in specialised departments).
5. **External Dependence:** Skill gaps encourage consultant reliance. (e.g., technology consultants in e-governance)
6. **Innovation Gap:** Procedural orientation can hinder experimentation. (e.g., DPI requires product/data expertise).

Way Forward: Accommodating Specialists With Generalists

1. **Preserve Merit-Based Entry:** A common examination should remain the gateway to civil services, preserving neutrality, national integration, and a shared foundation for governance.

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2. **Progressive Specialization:** Officers should gradually develop sectoral expertise after broad administrative exposure, combining versatility with domain knowledge.
 - a. **Example:** Yugandhar Committee's recommendation of mid-career training.
3. **Continuous Capacity Building:** Develop domain expertise through continuous training and upskilling to keep pace with evolving technologies and governance challenges.
 - a. **Example:** Mission Karmayogi.
4. **Targeted Lateral Entry:** Use lateral recruitment selectively to address specialised skill gaps while preserving the primacy of the regular civil service.
5. **Cross-Sector Mobility:** Enable temporary movement across government, academia, NGOs, and industry to build specialized expertise while retaining a broad governance perspective.
6. **Incentivize Expertise:** Promotion systems should value specialized knowledge, professional development, and demonstrated performance alongside experience.
 - a. **Example:** The Surinder Nath Committee recommended performance-based promotions.

The generalist model remains indispensable for coordination, neutrality and field administration, but must evolve with governance itself. The future lies in a “generalist–specialist synthesis”, retaining administrative breadth while embedding deeper domain expertise.

Q9. “IPMDA (Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness) bridges the gap between India’s SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Quad’s collective Indo-Pacific strategy.” Make a critical assessment of the statement focusing on IPMDA.

Answer

Launched at the **2022 Tokyo Summit**, the Quad’s Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (**IPMDA**) integrates commercial satellite telemetry across 32 million square nautical miles to monitor dark shipping and illicit maritime activities.

IPMDA bridging SAGAR and Quad strategy

1. **Delivering Non-Coercive Regional Public Goods:** Aligns with India’s SAGAR doctrine by offering transparent surveillance data to littoral states without military conditionality, reinforcing a cooperative regional order.
2. **Institutionalising India’s Maritime Leadership:** Anchors the Indian Ocean architecture to Indian command nodes, advancing India’s role as a net-security provider within evolving Indo-US strategic cooperation.
 - a. **Example:** The Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram functioning as the primary data-dissemination node.
3. **Deterring Gray-Zone Maritime Coercion:** Fulfills the Quad’s objective of rules-based order enforcement by stripping away anonymity from hostile maritime militias.
 - a. **Example:** Real-time tracking of vessels that deliberately disable their Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) for illicit transshipments.
4. **Facilitating Inclusive Multi-Alignment:** Enables strategic convergences with ASEAN and Pacific Island nations without forcing formal military bloc alignments.

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- a. **Example:** Formal operational linkages established with the Pacific Fusion Centre (Vanuatu) and the Information Fusion Centre (Singapore).

Structural Gaps and Constraints

1. Surveillance-to-Interdiction Deficit:

Generates actionable intelligence but fails to address the lack of physical interception assets among smaller partner states.

- a. **Example:** Littoral nations like Maldives and Seychelles lack sufficient Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) to apprehend flagged violators.

2. Technological Dependency: Relies heavily on Western commercial constellations and software, posing long-term challenges to indigenous data sovereignty.

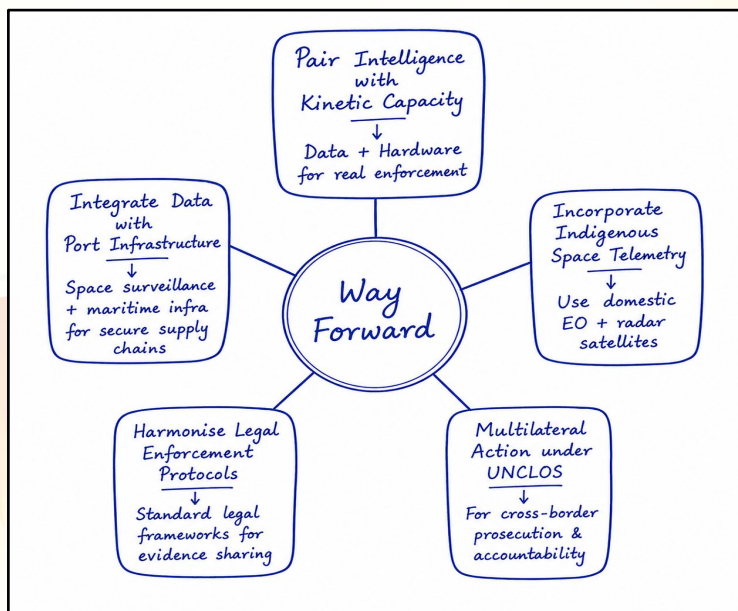
3. Hesitation among Neutral Littorals:

Southeast Asian nations remain cautious of full integration, viewing the mechanism as potential Quad-led containment.

- a. **Example:** Reluctance among non-aligned ASEAN member states to establish direct sovereign naval data links with IPMDA.

4. Regional Coverage Gaps: Geographic focus remains concentrated on the Western Pacific and Eastern Indian Ocean, leaving western sea lanes vulnerable.

- a. **Example:** India's reliance on parallel arrangements, such as India-France maritime cooperation, to secure the South-Western Indian Ocean.



Transforming IPMDA from situational surveillance into collective interdiction capacity will firmly anchor stability, international law, and maritime security across the Indo-Pacific.

Q10. “BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South.” Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings.

Answer

Following its recent expansion, BRICS+ now commands roughly **44% of global GDP (PPP)** and over 50% of the world's population, emerging as a definitive geopolitical counterweight to Western multilateralism.

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Role of BRICS in Projecting an Alternative Global Architecture

1. **Institutional & Financial Architecture (Alternative to Bretton Woods)**
 - a. **Unconditional Development Lending:** Provides sovereign infrastructure financing without imposing prescriptive Western structural-adjustment mandates or fiscal austerity conditionalities.
 - i. **Example:** Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) acts as a non-Western liquidity buffer.
 - b. **Decentralized Payment Infrastructure:** Bypasses Western financial weaponization and **SWIFT vulnerability** by establishing sovereign, sanction-resistant financial rails.
 - i. **Example:** Rupee-Ruble, Yuan-Rial trade.
2. **Geoeconomics, Trade, & Strategic Resources (Alternative to G7 Monopolies)**
 - a. **Democratizing Multilateral Trade Regimes:** Combats **unilateral trade protectionism** and G7 rule-making by championing development-first multilateralism.
 - i. **Example:** Coordinated BRICS advocacy for the restoration of the WTO dispute-settlement mechanism
 - b. **Consolidating Strategic Energy & Resource Sovereignty:** Reconfigures global commodity pricing power away from Western consumers by **integrating top energy producers** and critical raw material suppliers.
 - c. **Supply Chain De-risking:** Builds **South-South industrial and logistics networks** that insulate developing economies from Western supply chokepoints and export restrictions.
 - i. **Example:** Strategic alignment with the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
3. **Global Governance & Diplomatic Multi-Alignment (Alternative to Unipolarity)**
 - a. **Promoting Strategic Autonomy over Bloc Politics:** Replaces prescriptive Western security alliances with flexible, non-aligned multi-polarity, safeguarding national policy space.
 - i. **Example:** BRICS Track 2 initiatives, including the BRICS Think Tanks Council, shaping independent policy paradigms for the Global South.
 - b. **Rebalancing Multilateral Decision-Making:** Functions as a **unified negotiating bloc** inside the United Nations to press for UNSC expansion and equitable quota reallocation in global financial institutions.
 - c. **Championing Climate Justice & Differentiated Responsibility:** Counters unilateral Western green trade barriers by demanding equitable climate financing and technology transfers.
 - i. **Example:** Resistance against EU's CBAM

By empowering this multipolar coalition, developing nations can definitively dismantle unipolar architectures, fostering a genuinely equitable and representative international order.

Q11. Discuss the position of the Governor in the federal polity of India. What is the nature of his power while giving assent to a bill passed by the State Legislature? Is he bound by the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers in all his functions?

Answer

The Governor is a constitutional head and federal link, but the office has increasingly become a site of center–state contestation, particularly over discretion and assent to State Bills.

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Governor in India's Federal Polity

1. **Constitutional Head:** Appointed by the President under Article 155; executive power is formally vested in him under Article 154.
2. **Federal Bridge:** Links Union and State, but his Union appointment and pleasure tenure under Article 156 can generate perceptions of partisan intervention.
3. **Constitutional Sentinel:** Expected to uphold the Constitution without becoming an “agent of the Centre.”
4. **Federal Friction:** Conflicts over Bill assent, floor tests and government formation have tested cooperative federalism.

Nature of Governor's Power while Giving Assent to Bills (Article 200)

1. **Four Constitutional Options:** The Governor may assent, withhold assent, return a non-Money Bill for reconsideration, or reserve it for the President.
 - a. **Return for Reconsideration:** Returns a non-Money Bill with a message for reconsideration; if repassed, assent cannot be withheld.
 - b. **Reserve for President:** Refers the Bill to the President where constitutionally warranted and other bills. (e.g. Mandatory if bill derogates from High Court powers).
2. **No pocket veto:** The Governor cannot keep a Bill pending indefinitely to frustrate the elected Legislature.
3. **Discretion is Constitutional:** The choice under Article 200 cannot be converted into a political veto over the State government.
4. **Judicial Position:** State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor (2025) emphasised that prolonged inaction cannot be used to defeat the legislative process.
 - a. However, the 2025 Presidential Reference clarified that courts cannot prescribe rigid timelines or create “deemed assent.”
5. **Federal Principle:** Assent power must therefore be exercised with constitutional propriety, expedition, and respect for the elected Legislature, consistent with cooperative federalism.

Aid and Advice: Scope and Limits

1. Article 163 Binds the Governor to the Council of Ministers' aid and advice, except where discretion is expressly provided.
2. **Discretionary Areas** include Article 200 reservation, Chief Minister's appointment in a hung Assembly, and President's Rule recommendation.
3. The Governor is not an independent parallel authority but a constitutional functionary ordinarily bound by ministerial advice.
4. Personal Satisfaction under Article 356 recommendation has been judicially subjected to S.R. Bommai (1994) scrutiny.

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Way Forward

1. **Time-bound Assent to Bills:** The Supreme Court has held that Governors cannot indefinitely withhold assent. A reasonable, time-bound framework for assenting or returning bills should be institutionalised.
 - a. **Nabam Rebia (2016):** Gubernatorial discretion cannot be expanded beyond the constitutional scheme.
2. **Sarkaria Commission:** Governors should embody political neutrality and high integrity. It emphasises the need for consultation with the state Chief Minister before appointments.
 - a. **Shamsher Singh (1974):** Governor is ordinarily a constitutional head, not an independent executive.
3. **Punchhi Commission (2010):** It urged a fixed tenure for Governors to insulate them from political pressures. It also advised restricting discretion and advocated for clear guidelines for Bill reservation.
4. **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC):** It suggested that Articles 200 and 201 be amended to set a time limit for the Governor's decision on Bills.
5. **Administrative Reforms Commission (1968):** Recommended that the report of the governor regarding the president's rule has to be objective, and also the governor should exercise his own judgement in this regard.

The Governor's office embodies the tension between constitutional guardianship and democratic mandate. Its legitimacy depends on using discretion as a constitutional safety valve - not a political brake - thereby preserving both federal balance and parliamentary government.

Q12. What is meant by judicial legislation ? In this context, discuss the verdicts of the apex court allowing "passive euthanasia" and a "living will".

Answer

Judicial legislation is the judiciary crafting binding, law-like norms in a legislative vacuum. The passive euthanasia and living-will verdicts embody this, expanding Article 21's dignity guarantee while stepping into Parliament's rightful law-making domain.

Judicial Legislation

1. **Rule-Making, Not Rule-Reading:** Courts frame enforceable norms where statute is silent, going beyond interpreting existing text.
2. **Constitutional Levers:** Article 141 makes the Court's declared law binding on all courts; Article 142 enables orders for "complete justice."
 - a. **Example:** In Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997), the Court laid down workplace-harassment guidelines that had the force of law until the 2013 Act replaced them.
 - b. **Example:** In M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (1987), the Court devised the "absolute liability" principle, creating a new legal standard.
3. **Interim by Design:** Such norms are meant as a stopgap, expressly operating "until the legislature enacts a law."





Distinguishing the key concepts

1. **Passive Euthanasia:** Withdrawing or withholding futile life support, permitted with safeguards.
2. **Active Euthanasia:** Administering a lethal substance to cause death, still a crime under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.
3. **Living Will:** A written advance directive in which a person, while healthy, refuses future life support if terminally ill and incapable of deciding.

Evolution of the euthanasia jurisprudence

1. **Gian Kaur (1996):** Held the right to life under Article 21 does not include a right to die, but acknowledged the idea of dignity at the end of life.
2. **Aruna Shanbaug (2011): Permitted passive euthanasia** for the comatose Mumbai nurse under strict High Court supervision, India's first judicially sanctioned case.
3. **Common Cause v. Union of India (2018):** A five-judge Constitution Bench held the "right to die with dignity" to be intrinsic to Article 21.
 - a. Recognised the "living will" or advance medical directive as legally valid.
 - b. Relied on Puttaswamy (2017), treating end-of-life choice as part of personal liberty and privacy.
 - c. Laid down a detailed procedural code for both executing directives and withdrawing life support.
4. **The 2023 Simplification:** A five-judge Bench modified the 2018 Common Cause guidelines after the Indian Society of Critical Care Medicine argued the original procedure was unworkable.
 - a. **Two-Tier Medical Boards:** The earlier multi-layered process was streamlined into a Primary Medical Board (at the treating hospital) and a Secondary Medical Board (with an official nominee).
 - b. **Fixed Timelines:** Each board must now convey its decision within 48 hours, preventing indefinite delay in withdrawing treatment.
 - c. **Eased Eligibility:** The minimum experience required for board doctors was reduced from 20 years to 5 years, widening availability.
 - d. **No Magistrate Needed:** The mandatory countersignature of a Judicial Magistrate First Class was removed; a notary or gazetted officer may now attest the living will.

Why these verdicts amount to judicial law-making

1. **The Court's Own Admission:** The Bench observed that framing such a regime was "an area meant for the legislature."
2. **A statute in Substance:** The rules on board composition, consent and timelines resemble delegated legislation.
3. **Filling a Vacuum:** With no parliamentary law despite the Law Commission's 2006 recommendation, the Court supplied the missing framework.
4. **Nationwide Force:** Under Article 141, the guidelines bind the entire country like enacted law.

A balanced assessment

1. **Upholds Autonomy:** Advances Article 21 dignity and self-determination.
2. **Prevents Suffering:** Spares terminally ill patients futile, undignified treatment, as the Shanbaug facts illustrated.
3. **Constitutional Morality:** Protects individual rights over legislative hesitation.
4. **Separation-of-Powers Concern:** Amounts to policy-making without electoral accountability.
5. **Access Gap:** Weak awareness and the absence of advance-directive registries limit real use, especially in rural areas.

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6. **The Law Commission (196th and 241st Reports)** recommended a dedicated statute.
7. **Comparative Lesson: Netherlands and the UK** legislated such regimes rather than leaving them to courts.

Way forward

1. **Enact a Statute:** A comprehensive end-of-life care and living-will law.
2. **Build Registries:** Digital advance-directive registries linked to hospitals for easy verification.
3. **Sensitise Stakeholders:** Train medical boards and inform families about dignified-dying protocols.
4. **Bridge Access Gaps:** Extend the framework to rural and under-served regions.

The verdicts are a legitimate but interim exercise of judicial creativity, wedding law to human dignity. Enduring legitimacy now demands a parliamentary law converting these court-made guidelines into a democratically sanctioned statute on dignified death.

Q13. How far has the Indian federal framework been successful in accommodating regional and cultural diversities ? Highlight the role of asymmetric federalism and suggest measures to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective.

Answer

India's "**holding-together**" **federalism (Article 1: *Union of States*)** was designed to bind a uniquely plural society. It has largely succeeded in accommodating regional and cultural diversity, though recent Centre-State frictions expose gaps in dispute resolution.

Role of Asymmetric Federalism

1. **Concept:** Asymmetric federalism **grants differential powers to specific regions/states** rather than treating all states identically.
2. **Special Provisions:** **Articles 371 to 371-J** extend tailored autonomy, e.g., **Article 371A** protects Naga customary law and land; **Article 371G** does so for Mizoram.
3. **Erstwhile Article 370:** Gave **Jammu & Kashmir special status** until its abrogation in 2019, reorganising the state into two Union Territories.
4. **Fifth and Sixth Schedules:** Provide distinct administrative regimes for **Scheduled Areas and tribal areas** respectively.
5. **Significance:** Offers culturally distinct regions a tailored **constitutional bargain**, easing separatist pressure, as seen in the relative integration of the North-East.

How the Federal Framework Has Accommodated Diversity

1. **Linguistic Reorganisation:** The **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, redrew state boundaries on language lines, defusing agitations like the **Andhra movement after Potti Sriramulu's death** (1953).
2. **Recognition of Languages:** The **Eighth Schedule protects 22 languages**, legitimising distinct cultural identities within one polity.

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3. **Tribal Self-Governance:** The Sixth Schedule creates Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, giving tribal communities law-making powers over land and custom.
4. **Cooperative Institutions:** The Finance Commission, GST Council and erstwhile Planning/NITI Aayog institutionalise shared decision-making between the Union and States.
5. **Federal Resilience:** Unlike many post-colonial multi-ethnic states, India has seen no successful secession, reflecting the framework's absorptive capacity.

Persisting strains in the federal balance in accommodating regional and cultural diversities

1. **Governor–State Friction:** Conflicting judicial positions on Article 200 have prolonged uncertainty over gubernatorial discretion. (e.g., Tamil Nadu's bills-assent dispute).
2. **Fiscal Centralisation:** Growing reliance on cesses & surcharges, outside the divisible pool, constrains States' fiscal autonomy. (e.g., States' demand for a larger share of central taxes).
3. **Cultural–Linguistic Anxieties:** Perceived Hindi-centricity and concerns over the three-language formula fuel regional sensitivities. (e.g., Tamil Nadu's resistance to NEP language provisions).
4. **Representation Fears:** Proposed delimitation based on updated population creates concerns that successful population control could reduce southern States' political weight.
5. **Trust Deficit in Institutions:** Allegations of selective use of ED/CBI against opposition-ruled States weaken cooperative federalism. (e.g., repeated Centre–State confrontations over central investigations).

Weaknesses in Existing Dispute-Resolution Mechanisms

1. **Inter-State Council (Article 263):** Constitutionally envisaged but rarely convened, weakening structured dialogue.
2. **River-water tribunals:** Suffer prolonged delays, the Cauvery dispute took decades despite the 1956 Act.
3. **Article 131 Original Jurisdiction:** Slow and adversarial, unsuited to political negotiation.
4. **GST Council:** Faces friction over compensation and voting weightage, with limited neutral arbitration.
5. **Niti Ayog:** It acts only as an advisory body and lacks the statutory power or financial authority to resolve inter-state disputes.

Measures To Make Dispute Resolution More Effective

1. **Revive the Inter-State Council:** Convene it regularly as a permanent forum, as the Punchhi Commission recommended.
2. **Permanent River Tribunal:** Establish a single standing tribunal with fixed timelines, replacing multiple ad-hoc bodies.
3. **Codify the Governor's Role:** Enact clear statutory timelines for assent to end recurring deadlocks.
4. **Strengthen Fiscal Federalism:** Cap cesses and surcharges and widen the divisible pool to reduce grievances.
5. **Institutional Dialogue:** Reinvigorate zonal councils and Chief Ministers' forums for pre-emptive conflict resolution.

Asymmetry has been India's genius for unity-in-diversity, allowing distinct regions to coexist within one Union. Institutionalising neutral, time-bound dispute mechanisms is now essential to prevent cooperative federalism from sliding into contestational federalism.

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Q14. Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA.

Answer

Separation of powers prevents tyranny by dividing state functions among distinct organs. India practises it functionally through a parliamentary system, while the USA enforces a rigid presidential model, shaping the sharply different authority of the Indian Prime Minister and the US President.

Separation of Powers Doctrine And Its Origins

1. **Montesquieu's Conception:** In The Spirit of Laws (1748), he argued liberty survives only when legislative, executive and judicial powers are separated.
2. **US Embodiment:** The 1787 Constitution created three co-equal branches in watertight compartments with mutual checks.
3. **Indian Adaptation:** The framers rejected rigid separation, opting for a Westminster fusion of executive and legislature with an independent judiciary.

How the US Practises Rigid Separation

1. **Structural Separation:** The President, Congress and Supreme Court are constitutionally distinct and independently sourced.
2. **Personnel Bar:** No person may serve in two branches at once, the President is not a member of Congress.
3. **Checks and Balances:**
 - a. Judicial review, established in Marbury v. Madison (1803).
 - b. Senate confirmation of appointments and ratification of treaties.
 - c. Congressional control over the budget ("power of the purse").
4. **Fixed Independence:** A President cannot dissolve Congress, nor Congress dismiss the President except by impeachment.

How India Practises Functional Separation

1. **Fusion of Powers:** The executive (Council of Ministers) is drawn from and answerable to the legislature under Article 75.
2. **No Strict Wall:** The doctrine is not expressly enumerated, unlike Articles 50 (judiciary-executive separation) which is only a Directive Principle.
3. **Basic-Structure Status:** Separation of powers is inviolable, affirmed in Kesavananda Bharati (1973) and Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975).
4. **Overlaps Permitted:** The executive legislates via ordinances (Article 123) and the judiciary makes rules and law (Article 141).
5. **Checks Retained:** Judicial review, legislative oversight and executive accountability coexist despite the fusion.

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The Indian Prime Minister's Actual Authority

1. **Real Executive:** The PM leads the Council of Ministers that aids and advises the President under Article 74.
2. **Primus Inter Pares:** First among equals in the Cabinet, but dominant in practice when leading a majority.
3. **Conditional Tenure:** Holds office only while commanding Lok Sabha confidence; a no-confidence motion can remove the government anytime.
4. **Legislative Command:** With a majority and the anti-defection law (Tenth Schedule), the PM effectively controls the legislative agenda.
5. **Context-Sensitive Power:** Coalition governments (1989–2014) diluted PM dominance; single-party majorities concentrate it.

The US President's Actual Authority

1. **Dual Role:** Simultaneously head of state and head of government.
2. **Fixed Mandate:** A rigid four-year term with independent electoral-college legitimacy, insulated from legislative confidence.
3. **Removal Only by Impeachment:** Congress cannot oust the President over policy disagreement.
4. **Structural Limits:** A hostile or divided Congress can gridlock budgets, block appointments and stall the agenda.
5. **Veto Power:** The President may veto legislation, subject to a two-thirds Congressional override.

The central paradox: Indian PM vs USA

1. **Weaker Tenure, Stronger Grip:** The PM is easily removable yet, with a majority, dominates the legislature more completely than the US President.
2. **Stronger Mandate, Tighter Limits:** The President enjoys secure tenure but is checked by a genuinely independent legislature.
3. **Underlying Reason:** Fusion concentrates power when numbers align; separation disperses it regardless of mandate.

The US President commands a firmer mandate but operates within tighter institutional constraints, whereas the Indian PM has precarious tenure yet, when backed by a majority, wields more concentrated power. Authority thus flows not merely from constitutional design but from the surrounding political context.

Q15 To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests ? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions.

Answer

A healthy democracy is not exhausted by periodic voting; it lives in the continuous contest of organized interests. Pressure groups and social movements deepen it by voicing the excluded, yet the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power threatens the autonomy of formal democratic institutions.

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How Pressure Groups, Social Movements, and Corporate Lobbies Deepen Pluralistic Democracy

1. **Agenda-Widening:** They force issues onto the public agenda that electoral politics ignores, expanding the boundaries of deliberation.
2. **Empowering The Voiceless:** The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's village-level struggle for wage records grew into the RTI Act, 2005, a right built from the margins upward.
3. **Compelling Reform:** The 2011 India Against Corruption movement pressured a reluctant Parliament into enacting the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.
4. **Reshaping Law Through Outrage:** The 2012 Delhi gang-rape protests produced the Justice Verma Committee, whose report shaped the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.
5. **Protecting Ecological Commons:** The Silent Valley movement (1970s-80s) halted a hydel project, embedding environmental protection into development choices.
6. **Sustained Accountability:** The 2020-21 farmers' agitation secured repeal of the three farm laws, proving organized pressure can check majorities mid-term.

Why the deepening is only partial

1. **Episodic Energy:** Movements often peak around a crisis and dissipate, as the anti-corruption wave of 2011 fragmented soon after.
2. **Urban-Elite Skew:** Several high-visibility mobilizations drew disproportionately on the urban middle class, under-representing rural and informal India.(eg: #metoo movement)
3. **Sectional Over Public Interest:** Many pressure groups chase narrow gains such as subsidies and protections rather than collective welfare.
4. **Bypassing Institutions:** Reliance on street pressure can weaken, rather than strengthen, formal deliberative channels like Parliament.
 - a. **Example: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar** had cautioned that employing civil disobedience within a constitutional democracy equates to endorsing 'anarchy'.

How The Wealth-Power Nexus Threatens Institutional Autonomy

1. **Distorting Political Equality:** When economic clout converts into political access, the principle of equal citizenship, one vote, one value is quietly hollowed out.
2. **The Electoral Bonds Verdict:** In ADR v. Union of India (February 2024), the Supreme Court struck down the scheme for breaching voters' right to information under Article 19(1)(a).
 - a. In 2024–25, seven major corporate groups contributed ₹2,107 crore (55% of the total) to electoral trusts.
 - b. Such patterns sharpen the risk of quid pro quo, where funding shadows the award of contracts and clearances.
3. **Regulatory Capture:** Oversight bodies risk being steered by the industries they are meant to regulate, blunting impartial enforcement.
4. **Porous Boundaries:** Personnel moving between corporate boards and public office dilute accountability and breed conflicts of interest.
5. **Manufactured Consent:** Concentrated ownership of media and information can tilt public discourse toward vested interests.

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Measures to Safeguard Democratic Autonomy

1. **Clean Funding Architecture:** Move toward transparent, capped political finance and explore state funding of elections as suggested by Dinesh Goswami Committee on Electoral Reforms, 1990.
2. **Statutory Lobbying Disclosure:** Mandate registration and public reporting of lobbying to make influence visible. (eg: DARPAN portal)
3. **Insulated Regulators:** Strengthen the independence of the Election Commission, CAG and sectoral regulators.
4. **Curb the Revolving Door:** Enforce cooling-off periods between public office and private employment.
5. **Protect the Counterweights:** Safeguard the autonomy of civil society and a plural press.

Pressure groups and social movements enrich pluralistic democracy when they channel excluded voices into policy. But when the same channels are dominated by concentrated corporate wealth, pluralism risks sliding toward oligarchy, making financial transparency the decisive safeguard for the autonomy of democratic institutions.

Q16. “Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance.”
Comment.

Answer

Transparency and accountability are often reduced to anti-corruption tools. The statement rightly reframes them as deeper enablers of legitimacy and instruments that build stakeholder trust in the policy process through the Rule of Law and Participatory governance.

Core Concepts

1. **Transparency:** Open access to information on decisions, processes and public spending, enabling scrutiny.
2. **Accountability:** The obligation of public authorities to answer for, and bear consequences of, their actions.
3. **Rule of Law:** Governance bound by known, predictable rules, guaranteed by Article 14 against arbitrariness.

Issues if Transparency & Accountability Are Restricted To Curbing Corruption

1. **Reduces Governance To Clean Government:** Ignores participation, fairness and responsiveness. (e.g., opaque land-acquisition decisions may be corruption-free yet socially contested).
2. **Compliance Is Not Accountability:** Emphasises rules/audits over outcomes. (e.g., schools may meet expenditure norms but deliver poor learning outcomes).
3. **Misses Legalised Influence:** Overlooks lobbying, regulatory capture and conflict of interest. (e.g., industry influence on regulatory standards).
4. **Weakens Stakeholder Ownership:** Transparency without consultation/deliberation cannot build policy legitimacy. (e.g., protests over farm laws highlighted gaps in stakeholder engagement).
5. **Promotes Defensive Bureaucracy:** Excessive focus on detecting wrongdoing encourages risk aversion, not responsible discretion. (e.g., officials delaying innovative procurement decisions fearing audit objections).
6. **Trust as Capital:** Even an honest administration fails if citizens distrust the fairness of its process.
 - a. **Example:** The 2nd ARC's "Ethics in Governance" report framed openness as democratic empowerment, not just graft prevention.

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Rule of Law as the foundation of trust

1. **Predictability:** Dicey's principle assures citizens that power is bound by rules, not personal whim.
2. **Non-Arbitrariness:** E.P. Royappa v. State of Tamil Nadu (1974) tied Article 14 to the absence of arbitrariness.
3. **Right to Know:** In the Electoral Bonds judgment (ADR v. Union of India, 2024), the Court held voters' right to information under Article 19(1)(a) essential to trust in democracy.
4. **Equal Application:** Uniform rules assure all stakeholders of fair, impartial treatment.

Participatory Governance As the Mechanism of Trust:

1. **Direct Oversight:**
 - a. Social Audits under MGNREGA exposed leakages and empower beneficiaries.
 - b. Gram Sabha scrutiny strengthens grassroots accountability under Article 243A.
2. **Institutional Tools:**
 - a. Citizen charters defining time-bound service standards.
 - b. The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy (2014) inviting public comment on draft laws.
 - c. Participatory budgeting, pioneered by Kerala's People's Plan Campaign.
3. **Co-Authorship:** Citizens become partners in policy, deepening ownership and compliance.

Corruption Control Still Matters

1. **False Binary:** Anti-corruption and trust-building are complementary, not rival, goals.
2. **Entry Point:** Curbing corruption often builds the very trust that legitimises governance.
3. **Enabling Tools:** RTI (2005), the Lokpal Act (2013) and CVC serve both purposes at once.
4. "Sunlight is the best disinfectant", transparency cures graft and earns confidence.

Contemporary Challenges Eroding Trust

1. **RTI dilution:** The DPDP Act, 2023 amendment to Section 8(1)(j) is seen as narrowing disclosure of official information.
2. **Institutional weakness:** Prolonged vacancies and pendency in Information Commissions blunt accountability.
3. **Digital divide:** Uneven internet and literacy access limit participatory reach.
4. **Tokenism:** Consultations that ignore feedback breed cynicism rather than trust.

Way forward

1. **Strengthen RTI:** Fill Information Commission vacancies and safeguard its disclosure mandate.
2. **Protect whistle-blowers:** Operationalise an effective statutory shield. (eg: Enforcement of Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014.)
3. **Deepen participation:** Make pre-legislative consultation and social audits mandatory and meaningful.
4. **Leverage technology:** Expand DBT, open-data portals and real-time dashboards for verifiable transparency.

Transparency and accountability are ultimately about legitimacy, not merely rectitude. Governance that citizens can see, question and shape earns the trust that makes the Rule of Law durable and participatory democracy genuinely self-sustaining.





Q17 Can the constitutional mandate of rights-based welfare be effectively realised in the context of non-integrated governance and minimal public investment ? Examine.

Answer

India's welfare framework has evolved from discretionary charity into justiciable entitlement. Yet siloed governance and modest public investment often reduce these guaranteed rights to unfunded mandates, limiting their power to deliver substantive social justice on the ground.

Rights-Based Welfare Marks a Shift From Benevolence To Enforceable Entitlement

1. **Constitutional Dignity:** Welfare now flows from Article 21's guarantee of a life with dignity, affirmed in Puttaswamy case (2017), rather than from state generosity.
2. **Right to Food:** The National Food Security Act, 2013, rooted in PUCL v. Union of India (2001), entitles about 81.35 crore people to subsidised grain.
3. **Right to Education:** Article 21A and the RTE Act, 2009 made elementary education a fundamental right.
4. **Right to Work:** MGNREGA (2005) guaranteed 100 days of wage employment on demand, legally enforceable.
5. **Right Over Forests:** The Forest Rights Act, 2006 vested statutory land rights in forest-dwelling communities.

Non-Integrated Governance Dilutes the Delivery of These Rights

1. **Departmental Silos Fragment a Household's Needs:** Food, health and education entitlements provided by separate ministries with little coordination, producing duplication and exclusion.
2. **Convergence Remains An Afterthought:** Missions like Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, must be designed to bring together 15–18 ministries, proving integration is not the governance default.
3. **Overlapping Jurisdiction Blurs Accountability:** Health being a State subject while many schemes are Centre-driven (Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY) creates last-mile gaps.
4. **A Weak Local Tier Fails the Last Mile:** Panchayats, under-staffed and under-funded, cannot convert paper rights into services despite the mandate of Article 243G.

Minimal Public Investment Turns Entitlements Into Unfunded Mandates

1. **Health Spending Lags the Stated Goal:** Government health expenditure stood near 1.9% of GDP in 2023-24, still short of the National Health Policy 2017 target of 2.5%.
2. **Education Funding Falls Below The Benchmark:** Public spending on education is around 4.6% of GDP, far from the 6% target set by the Kothari Commission (1964-66).
3. **Households Bear The Burden:** Though the government's share of health spending rose from 29% to 48% between FY15 and FY22, out-of-pocket expenditure remains high at roughly 39% of total health spending.
4. **Fiscal Space Caps Ambition:** Successive Economic Surveys concede limited room to expand social investment, forcing welfare heads to compete.

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Delivery Gaps Surface In Stubborn Human-Development Outcomes

1. **Persistent Malnutrition:** NFHS-5 (2019-21) found 35.5% of children under five stunted, despite decades of nutrition schemes.
2. **A Deep Learning Crisis:**
3. ASER 2022 showed only 20.5% of rural Class 3 children could read a Class 2-level text.
4. ASER 2023 ("Beyond Basics") found about a quarter of 14-18-year-olds could not fluently read a Class 2-level text in their own language.
5. **Coverage Without Quality:** Entitlements expand in reach but often fall short in the quality of the service actually delivered.

Framework Has Delivered Partial But Demonstrable Gains

1. **Crisis-Time Protection Worked:** Free grain under PMGKAY reached about 80 crore people during the COVID-19 shock, averting mass hunger.
2. **Technology Plugged Leakages:** The JAM trinity and Direct Benefit Transfer curbed diversion and improved targeting across subsidies.
3. **State Models Prove Feasibility:** Kerala's near-universal literacy and strong public health, and Tamil Nadu's near-universal PDS, show that integration plus investment does deliver.
4. **Rising Priority:** Social-services expenditure has climbed to about 7.8% of GDP, signalling growing commitment.

Integration And Investment Can Bridge The Gap

1. **Deliver In Mission-Mode:** Build a single-window, whole-of-government interface converging entitlements for each beneficiary.
2. **Finance The Mandates:** Raise health and education outlays steadily toward the 2.5% and 6% targets.
3. **Empower the Local Tier:** Devolve funds, functions and functionaries to Panchayats for genuine last-mile delivery.
4. **Budget For Outcomes:** Tie allocations to measurable results through outcome budgeting and independent social audits.

The constitutional promise of rights-based welfare is realizable, but never automatic. Only when justiciable entitlements are matched by integrated delivery and adequate financing can these rights move from statute books to substantive social transformation.

Q18. Should education be treated primarily as a welfare obligation of the state or as a strategic investment for building a globally competitive, knowledge-driven nation? Critically evaluate.

Answer

Education is often cast as either a welfare duty of the state or an economic investment. This is a false binary; it is inseparably both: a justiciable right securing equity and a strategic investment for a competitive, knowledge-driven nation.

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Education is A Core Welfare Obligation Rooted In Constitutional Guarantees

1. **A Judicially Affirmed Right:** Mohini Jain (1992) and Unni Krishnan (1993) read education into Article 21; the 86th Amendment then inserted Article 21A, operationalised by the RTE Act, 2009.
2. **A Directive Mandate:** Articles 41, 45 and 46 oblige the state to provide education, especially for children and weaker sections.
3. **A Corrective For Market Failure:** Markets price quality schooling beyond the poor, hence government schools still serve the majority, with UDISE+ 2023-24 recording a 37-lakh enrolment fall concentrated among SC, ST and minority children.
4. **A Lever of Social Justice:** Ambedkar saw education as the foremost tool of emancipation; the RTE's 25% EWS quota gives this constitutional form.

Education Is Equally a Strategic Investment in National Capability

1. **Human Capital For Growth:** A skilled workforce raises productivity, the foundation of sustained economic expansion.
2. **A Time-Bound Demographic Dividend:** With about 18% of the population aged 15-24, the window pays off only if the young are educated and skilled.
3. **Fuel For a Knowledge Economy:** Competitiveness in AI, semiconductors and digital services rests on research and higher-order skills.
4. **Policy Alignment:** NEP 2020 targets 6% of GDP, foundational literacy via NIPUN Bharat, and a 50% higher-education Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2035.

A One-Sided Welfare Framing Invites Chronic Under-Investment

1. **Persistent Funding Shortfall:** Public education spending stays around 4.6% of GDP (Economic Survey), still below the 6% Kothari Commission (1966) benchmark.
2. **A Deep Learning Crisis:**
 - a. ASER 2022 found only 20.5% of rural Class 3 children could read a Class 2-level text.
 - b. ASER 2023 ("Beyond Basics") found about a quarter of 14-18-year-olds could not fluently read a Class 2 text in their own language.
3. **A leaking Pipeline:** UDISE+ 2024-25 shows secondary retention at just 47.2% and a secondary dropout rate around 8.2%, over one in nine leaving before Class 10.

A Purely Investment-Driven Framing Breeds Inequity And Commodification

1. **Exclusion of The Poor:** A returns-only lens sidelines those unable to pay, widening the access gap.
2. **Over-Commercialisation:** Unregulated private expansion can privilege profit over pedagogy.
3. **Skewed Access At the Top:** Higher-education GER is only 28.4% (AISHE 2021-22), and lower still for SC (25.9%) and ST (~21%) students, exposing entrenched inequality.
4. **Neglect of Civic Purpose:** An employability-only view undervalues humanities, ethics and democratic citizenship.

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Reconciling equity and excellence is the state's essential task

1. **Equity As The Floor:** Guarantee universal, quality access as a non-negotiable right.
2. **Excellence As The Goal:** Invest strategically in skilling, research and higher education, reaching 50% GER needs enrolment to nearly double by 2035.
3. **A Bridging Framework:** NEP 2020 and Samagra Shiksha, if adequately financed, can unite access with quality.
4. **Mutually Reinforcing:** Equitable schooling produces the human capital on which competitiveness ultimately depends.

Education cannot be reduced to charity or commerce alone. As the **Kothari Commission** famously observed, "the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms." Realising that destiny demands - equity as the foundation, excellence as the aim, which remains the state's indispensable constitutional responsibility.

Q19. "India's global diaspora acts as a living bridge, as a critical economic factor and knowledge network in transforming cultural heritage into geopolitical influence and strategic leverage worldwide." Critically examine this statement.

Answer

With over 32 million members, India's diaspora is the world's largest, remitting an unprecedented \$125 billion annually (World Bank) and serving as the country's foremost geopolitical asset.

Diaspora Transforming Cultural Heritage into Strategic Leverage

Living Bridge	• Cultural integration fosters deep societal familiarity in host nations, elevating Indian heritage into global diplomatic capital. ◦ Example: Global adoption of the <u>International Day of Yoga</u>. • Historic diaspora settlements provide organic socio-cultural leverage to expand India's maritime security architecture.
Critical Economic Factor	• Continuous capital inflows provide a structural shock-absorber against trade deficits and external shocks. ◦ Example: Remittances account for nearly <u>3.4% of India's GDP</u>. • High-net-worth diaspora networks channel global venture capital and institutional investments into the domestic tech ecosystem
High-Tech Knowledge Network	• Converting historic "brain drain" into institutional "brain gain" for frontier scientific research. ◦ Example: <u>VAIBHAV (Vaishwik Bhartiya Vaigyanik) fellowship</u>. • Diaspora technocrats facilitate bilateral transfers in dual-use, emerging technologies.

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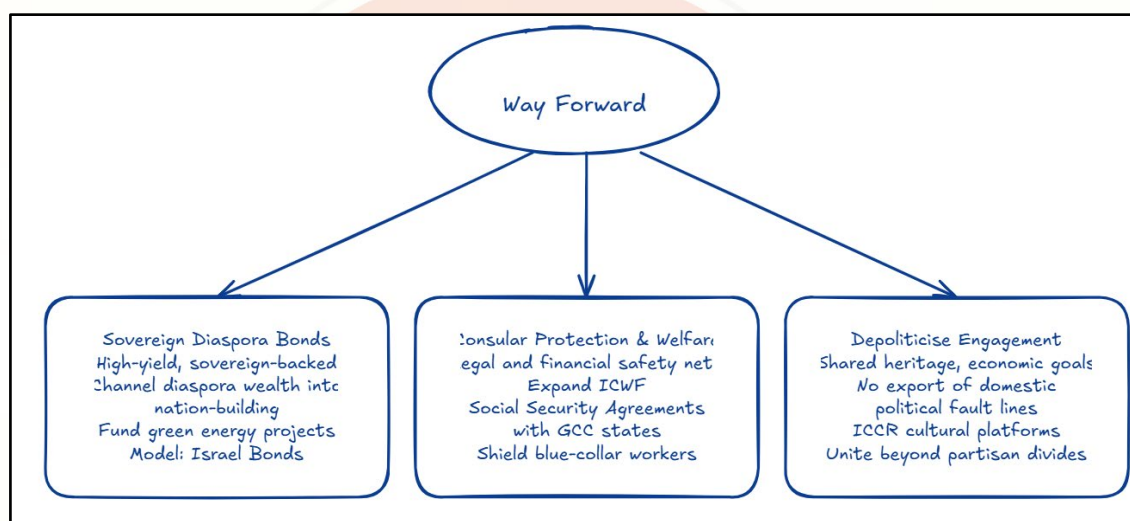
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Limitations and Vulnerabilities

1. **Low Capital Conversion:** Inflows remain concentrated in household consumption and real estate rather than manufacturing FDI.
2. **Imported Polarization:** Domestic socio-political divides replicate overseas, sparking diplomatic friction and foreign legislative scrutiny.
 - a. **Example:** Separatist protests in Canada and the UK.
3. **Security & Evacuation Burden:** Heavy concentrations of blue-collar labor in volatile regions create recurring consular and diplomatic costs.
 - a. **Example:** Operation Ajay in Israel; Operation Kaveri in Sudan.
4. **Nativism and Visa Protectionism:** The diaspora's success often triggers local backlash, resulting in stringent immigration laws that threaten knowledge networks.
 - a. **Example:** Historical H-1B tightening in the US or work visa reductions in Australia.



Transforming the diaspora from sentimental remitters into strategic co-architects will accelerate India's technological sovereignty and global rule-shaping capabilities.

Q20. "China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has transformed South Asia from a regional space into a theatre of great power competition." Analyse the strategic implications of the BRI for India's security and regional influence in South Asia.

Answer

With over \$65 billion committed to CPEC and strategic port acquisitions across Sri Lanka and Pakistan, China's trillion-dollar BRI has fundamentally challenged India's traditional primacy in South Asia.

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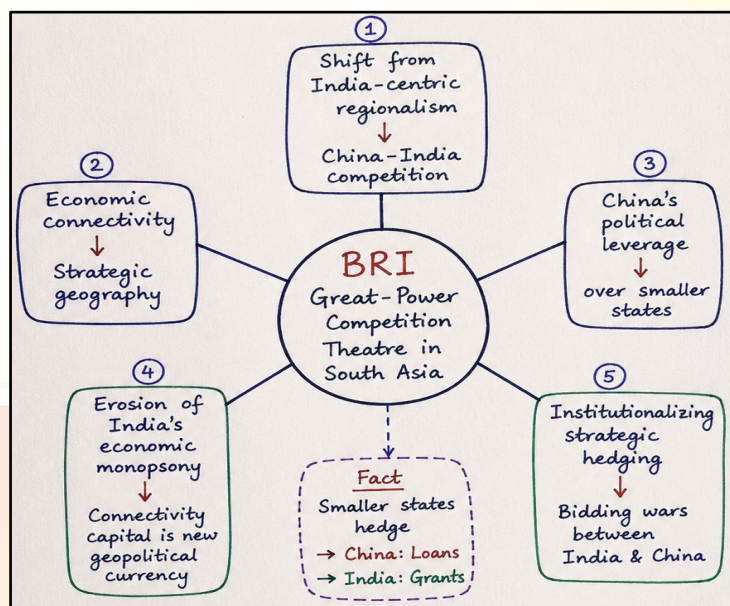
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Strategic Implications for India's Security

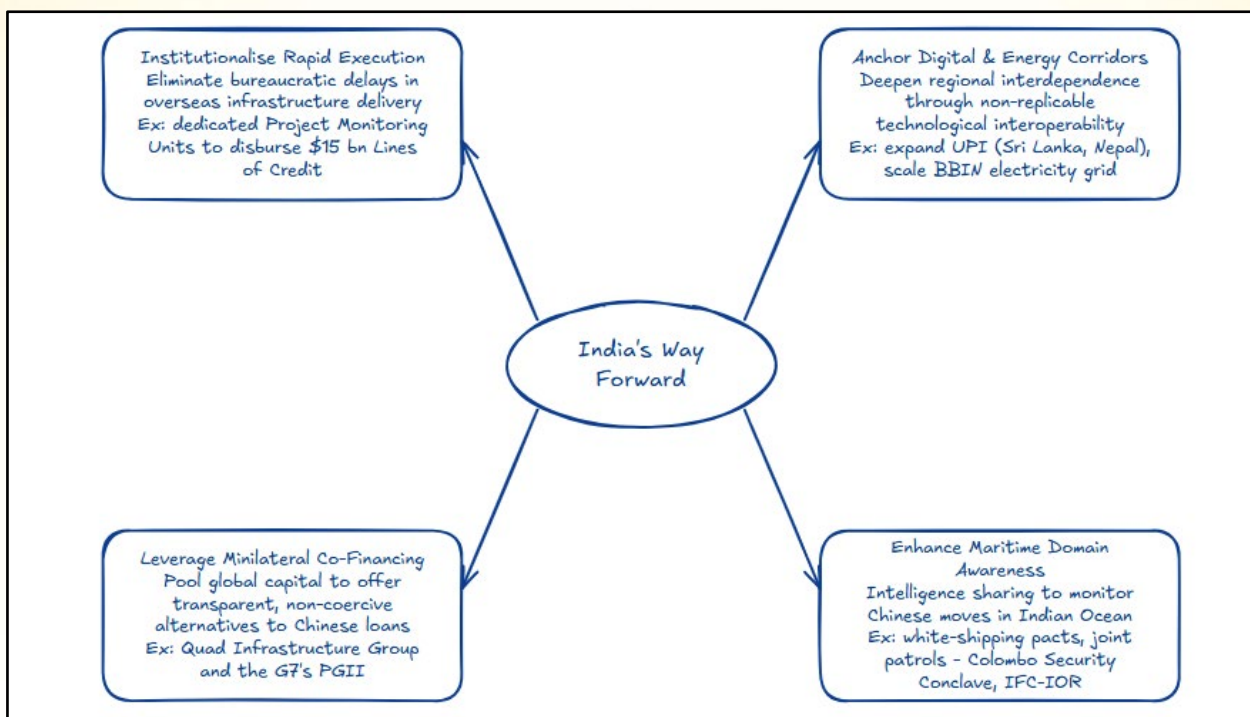
1. **Sovereignty Violations:** Megaprojects transiting through legally contested territories legitimize adversarial claims and establish a permanent physical foreign presence.
 - a. **Example: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** directly violates Indian sovereignty by crossing Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK).
2. **Dual-Use Maritime Encirclement:** Commercial deep-water ports establish a structural "**String of Pearls,**" elevating the risk of Chinese naval superiority and chokepoint control in the Indian Ocean.
 - a. **Example:** Strategic port developments spanning **Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), and Kyaukpyu (Myanmar).**
3. **Local Disruptions:** Emboldened by its expanding regional footprint, Chinese assertiveness escalates border friction, displacing local populations.



Implications for Regional Influence

1. **Displacement of Economic Primacy:** Chinese mega-financing has eclipsed New Delhi's traditional economic leverage.
 - a. China is now the primary infrastructure financier in Bangladesh, executing over \$10 billion in structural projects
2. **Strategic Coercion via Debt:** Asymmetric lending allows Beijing to extract geopolitical concessions from distressed neighbours.
 - a. Chinese loans constituting ~20% of Sri Lanka's external debt led directly to the equity seizure of its port assets.
3. **Institutional Marginalisation:** Beijing is establishing parallel geopolitical platforms that actively exclude India.
 - a. The creation of the China-Indian Ocean Region Forum intentionally circumvents Indian-led architectures like BIMSTEC and IORA.
4. **Strategic Hedging by Smaller States:** Peripheral nations use Chinese alternatives to maximize their bargaining power against New Delhi.
 - a. The Maldives leveraged Chinese ties to sign independent military assistance pacts, expelling Indian aviation platforms.





India's answer lies not in opposing connectivity but in making Indian-led connectivity faster, credible and genuinely development-oriented, thereby converting geography into enduring regional influence.

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