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Capsule  
02

# Mains Capsule Series

Paper - II

## Constitution & Polity, Governance, Social Justice, and International Relations

*Coverage of Entire Syllabus of Mains Examination  
for IAS/PCS in Question & Answer Format*





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# **Mains Capsule Series**

## **Paper – II**

**Constitution & Polity,  
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Social Justice, and  
International Relations**



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**Question:** “There is a need for simplification of procedure for disqualification of persons found guilty of corrupt practices under the Representation of Peoples Act”. Comment. **(150 words) 10**

**Answer:** The Representation of the Peoples Act (RPA), 1951 deals with the conduct of elections to the parliament and state legislatures. It also covers the qualifications and disqualifications for the membership of these Houses, the corrupt practices and other election offences.

**Section 123 of RPA, 1951 provides for disqualification on ground of corrupt practices like:**

- Bribery i.e. any gift/offer/promise or gratification to any person as a motive or reward.
- Undue influence i.e. any direct or indirect interference on part of the candidate with the free exercise of any electoral right.
- Publication by a candidate any statement of fact which is false.
- Promotion of feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of citizens.
- The incurring of expenditure more than the stipulated limit.

**Procedure of Disqualification under RPA**

- The procedure of disqualification under the corrupt practices can be started only after the election is over and only in an election petition submitted in the State High Court in accordance with the provisions of Article 329 of the Constitution.
- Section 8 (3) of the Act states that if an MP or MLA is convicted for any other crime and is sent to jail for 2 years or more, he/she will be disqualified for 6 years from the time of release.
- Despite such an elaborate classification of corrupt practices that could potentially nullify the election of a candidate, electoral malpractice continues to flourish.

**Reasons**

- Many of the provisions are extremely difficult to enforce despite an assertive Election Commission.
- Electoral frauds such as booth capturing and casting of false votes have been drastically reduced, but vote-buying and unaccounted campaign expenditure continue unabated.
  - A study by the Centre for Media Studies found that over the last decade, at least one-fifth of India’s electorate was paid cash for their votes.
- Besides, the cap on campaign expenditure is often breached by candidates.
- The petitions are filed before the High Courts, which already have a large number of pending cases. The RPA has mandated that the petitions be disposed of within a period of six months, in reality, they drag on for years.
- The RPAs lack clear provisions and guidelines on the matters related to the misuse of official machinery that gives an unfair advantage to the ruling party.

**Way forward**

- The Law Commission has recommended changing the procedure for hearing election petitions. It said that special election benches should be constituted to dispose of election petitions quickly.

- It also recommended that the President of India should decide the period of disqualification of guilty candidates on the advice of the Election Commission.

**Question:** “Recent amendments to the Right to Information Act will have a profound impact on the autonomy and independence of the Information Commission”. Discuss. **(150 words) 10**

**Answer:** The basic objective behind the Right to Information (RTI) Act was to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.

#### **The recent amendments to the RTI Act**

- The Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 has changed the status, salary and tenure of the Central Information Commissioners (CICs) and State Information Commissioners (SICs).
- The original Act prescribed salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the state CIC as “the same as that of an Election Commissioner”, and the salaries and other terms of service of the State Information Commissioners as “the same as that of the Chief Secretary to the State Government”. However, the amendment says that these “shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government”. Thus, the Centre now has the powers to decide the salaries, term, and service conditions of CICs and SICs.

It has been argued that the amendments were necessary to correct certain anomalies. For example, the mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are non-identical, so should be their status and service conditions.

However, the amendments have the potential to impact the autonomy and independence of the Information Commissions.

- Independent structures set up to regulate and monitor the government are vital to a democratic state committed to delivering justice and constitutional guarantees.
- The amendment allows the interference of the executive in the functioning of information commissions which are quasi-judicial bodies. This may affect the doctrine of separation of powers, which underscores this independence and is vital to our democratic checks and balances.
- Apart from this, the amendment also affects the constitutional principles of federalism, as now the Central government can change terms of service of state information commissions.
- The amendment has the potential to make access to information difficult. Easy and quick access to information is vital to ensure the accountability of the representatives and the State.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ARC held that RTI is the master key to good governance as it checks the misuse and arbitrariness of power and corrupt governance. Therefore, in the pursuit of good governance, the RTI Act requires strengthening of the provisions.

**Question:** How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer. **(150 words) 10**

**Answer:** A federation is a political entity characterized by a union of partially self-governing states or regions united by a central government. Granville Austin describes the Indian federation as an example of cooperative federalism that produces a strong Central government but does not result in weak provincial governments. Such distinctive nature of federalism gives rise to cooperation, competition and sometimes confrontation among the federal units.

#### **Cooperation**

- It was seen during the GST reforms when each state agreed to leave some part of their share in the tax pool for the long-term good.

- Cooperation was also evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when states and the Centre acted as one in the fight against the virus.

### Competition

- With the Liberalisation Reforms of 1991, there has been a competition among the states to attract foreign investment and industries.
- The Planning Commission was replaced by NITI Aayog to promote positive competition among states and promote the spirit of cooperative and competitive federalism. The NITI Aayog publishes rankings of different states on parameters such as quality of school education (School Education Quality Index), public healthcare services (Healthy States, Progressive India Index), agriculture reforms (Agricultural Marketing and Farmers' Friendly Reforms Index). This has led to several states and districts doing reforms at the ground level.
- The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) started by the NITI Aayog aims to identify 115 laggard districts in terms of socio-economic outcomes and institute a programme with convergence, collaboration and competition as the core tenets.

### Confrontation

- From 1967 to 1990, India had witnessed confrontational federalism due to the emergence of regional parties. The confrontation between States and the Union was due to the role of the Governor and the use of Article 356.
- Politically, the rise of coalition politics increased the role of states at national level. This can be seen in the role of West Bengal in River Sharing Agreement with Bangladesh and of Tamil Nadu during India's role in conflict with LTTE in Sri Lanka.

This cooperation, competition and confrontation has shaped the Indian federation. It is visible in following ways:

- The diverse regional aspirations have managed to constantly assert themselves, resulting in the decentralisation of governance in India and the institutionalisation of the Local Self Government institutions under the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts.
- The passing of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is another such example. By implementing GST, the Centre and States have become equal fiscal partners in sharing a common indirect tax base.
- The Union government accepted the 14th Finance Commission recommendation to give the States 42% share of the funds from the central pool.

Cooperative and competitive federalism are complementary ideas that will drive India's growth story in the coming decades. However, it is necessary to avoid confrontation among the units of federalism. Inter-state Council can play an enabling role in bringing the Centre and the States together on contentious policy issues.

**Question:** The judicial systems in India and the UK seem to be converging as well as diverging in recent times. Highlight the key points of convergence and divergence between the two nations in terms of their judicial practices.

**(150 words) 10**

**Answer:** Both India and the United Kingdom are democratic countries with parliamentary form of government. Besides, there are differences as well as similarities on how the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary of these two countries function.

The Indian Judicial System has its origin in the 'Mayors Courts' established by the East India Company in 1726. During the course of the British Rule, the judicial systems developed imbibing the features like rule of law, and recording judicial precedents.

After independence, India inherited the same judicial system but made changes to suit the peculiar Indian situation.

**The points of convergence in the judicial system include:**

- **Independence of Judiciary:** In Britain as well as in India the judges can only be removed from the office for serious misbehavior and with the consent of both the Houses of Parliament.
- **Ultra-vires:** Courts in both the UK and in India can declare the action of executive as ultra-vires i.e. acting or done beyond one's legal power or authority.
- **Interpretation of Constitution:** The courts in both India as well as in the UK act as the highest interpreter of the constitution.

**The points of divergence in the judicial system include:**

- **Sovereignty of Parliament:** Under the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty, the judiciary in the UK lacks the power to strike down an Act of Parliament. However, in India, the courts have been given this power.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine:** The courts in India have come up with the Doctrine of Basic Structure, which prevents executive from making laws or amendments which alter or deviate from the basic values enshrined in constitution. British system lacks the concept of 'Basic Structure'.
- **Unified Three-Tier System:** The United Kingdom does not have a single unified legal system, England and Wales have one system, Scotland another, Northern Ireland a third. The Constitution of India has established a unified three-tier system of judiciary, with the Supreme Court at the top.
- **Appointment of Judges:** In the UK, the Constitutional Reform Act, 2005 has created the Judicial Appointments Commission for appointment of judges. However, in India, the Judges of the Supreme Court, as well as High Courts, are appointed by the President under collegium system.

The British judicial system provided the foundation on which its Indian counterpart was built. But Indian judiciary has evolved and learnt from the best practices around the world to safeguard democracy and rule of law.

**Question:** 'Once a Speaker, Always a Speaker'! Do you think this practice should be adopted to impart objectivity to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha? What could be its implications for the robust functioning of parliamentary business in India? (150 words) 10

**Answer:** The Speaker of the House is a key office in parliamentary democracy. The Speaker facilitates the business of the House and maintains decorum in the House. The Speaker has functions to perform in regulatory, administrative and judicial matters.

However, the Speakers have often been alleged to be working under their respective party affiliations. There have been incidents when the opposition members have been denied the chance to raise questions. In a recent case, the demand for recording of votes has been declined by the Speaker and the motion had been passed by voice vote.

Speakers have also been blamed for harboring political ambitions as the person elected as Speaker is eligible for further appointment. For example, G.S. Dhillon, Speaker of the Lok Sabha (for two terms), stepped down in 1975, and became the Union Minister for Shipping.

As a revamp in the structure of the office, the UK practice of 'Once a Speaker always a Speaker' is sometimes suggested. In the United Kingdom, once elected, the Speaker gives up all party affiliations and remains in office until retirement. Political parties do not field candidates from the constituency of the Speaker to ensure his/her re-election to the house. The British Parliament automatically elevates the Speaker to the House of Lords once they demit office.

**Implications of adopting UK system of Speaker in India:**

- The UK system ensures impartiality, fairness and autonomy of the Office of the Speaker.
- It ensures the freedom from interference and pressures which provide the necessary atmosphere where one can work with absolute commitment to the cause of neutrality as a constitutional value.

# 2

## GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Question:** In order to enhance the prospects of social development, sound and adequate health care policies are needed particularly in the fields of geriatric and maternal health care. Discuss. **(150 words) 10**

**Answer:** Poor health constitutes suffering and deprivation of the most fundamental kind. Diseases impact the well being, burden family, weaken societies, and squander potential. Over the years, significant strides have been made in increasing life expectancy and reducing some of the common killers associated with child and maternal mortality.

### Linkages between social development and health care:

- In developing countries, breaking the vicious circle of poverty and ill-health is an essential condition for development.
- Health is pertinent for the realization of basic human needs and for a better quality of life. Health is a causative factor that affects a country's aggregate level of economic growth.
- The rising out-of-pocket expenditures on healthcare pushes around 32-39 million Indians below the poverty line annually.

Women and elderly are one of the most vulnerable sections of society. In this context, access to quality health care and sound health policies are crucial for their healthy development, reducing deprivation, and social empowerment.

### Geriatric Health:

- Ageing is a continuous, irreversible, universal process, which starts from conception till the death of an individual.
- However, the age at which one's productive contribution declines and one tends to be economically dependent can probably be treated as the onset of the aged stage of life. National Elderly Policy defines people of 60+ age group as elderly.
- With well-designed and judicious investments, ageing population can help build-up human, social, economic and environmental capital.
- However, this would call for investing in all the phases of life, fostering enabling societies, and creating a flexible but vibrant environment for building a society for all ages.
- In order to generate comprehensive data on social, economic and health conditions of the elderly, the Government undertook a Longitudinal Aging Study of India.
- Other initiatives of the Government of India:
  - Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP)
  - Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)
  - Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)
  - Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana (VPBY)
  - Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)



**Maternal Care:**

- Women are strong pillars of any society. Sustainable development in India can only happen through maternal and child care.
- Maternal health is an important aspect of the development in terms of increasing equity and reducing poverty.
- The survival and well being of mothers is not only important in their own right but are also central to solving larger economic, social, and developmental challenges.
- The Sustainable Development Goal 3 pertains to maternal health, where the target is to reduce maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 70 per 100000 live births.
- Institutional deliveries are an important means to achieve maternal health. Key initiatives in this are:
  - Janani Suraksha Yojana
  - Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram
- Midwifery initiative aims to create a cadre of skilled nurses for providing compassionate women-centred, reproductive, maternal and newborn healthcare.

Healthcare has a major role to play in reducing social exclusion at the local level, due to its impact on employment, working conditions and household income. It can drive forward the implementation of local and national goals for sustainable development.

**Question:** “Institutional quality is a crucial driver of economic performance”. In this context suggest reforms in the Civil Service for strengthening democracy. **(150 words) 10**

**Answer:** Institutional quality in a democracy determines how successfully the government machinery adheres to the principles of public service, rule of law, and social justice. One such institution is the Civil Services, which acts as a link between the government and citizenry, strengthening democracy and furthering economic objectives such as sustainable growth and development.

**Challenges Faced By Civil Services in India**

- **Status Quoist:** As instruments of public service, civil servants have to be ready for change. The common experience, however, is that they resist changes as they are wedded to their privileges and prospects and thereby, have become ends in themselves.
  - For example, the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution have envisaged democratic decentralization. However, due to the reluctance on the part of the civil servants to accept the changes in control and accountability, the intended vision has not been achieved.
- **Rule-Book Bureaucracy:** It means following the rules and laws, in words and not in spirit, without taking care of the actual needs of the people. Due to rule book bureaucracy, some civil servants have developed the attitude of ‘bureaucratic behaviour’ which brings issues like red-tapism and poor responses to the needs of the people.
- **Political Interference:** The political representatives for the sake of fulfilling the populist demand, often influence the functioning of administrative officials. This leads to issues like corruption and arbitrary transfers of honest civil servants, an important reason for inefficient implementation of policies.

**Civil Services Reforms**

- **Prompt Delivery of Services:** Every department should seek to simplify their processes to cut administrative delays and ensure participatory feedback mechanisms for efficient service delivery.
- **Reducing Discretion & Enhancing Accountability Mechanism:** There is an inherent need to set key responsibility/ focus areas and progressively reduce discretionary aspects to evaluate civil servants.
  - Online Smart Performance Appraisal Report Recording Online Window (SPARROW) should be instituted in all central and state cadres.

- Also, as suggested by many committees, there is a need to develop benchmarks to assess the performance of officers and compulsorily retire those deemed unable to meet the benchmarks.
- **Incorporation of Code of Ethics:** As suggested by 2nd ARC, along with streamlining of code of conduct rules, there is a need to inculcate ethical underpinning in the civil servants by implementing the Code of Ethics. This will sensitize civil servants to the problems of people.

Sardar Patel considered the civil service “the steel frame of government machinery”. However, without adequate reforms, this steel frame may start to get corroded and may collapse.

**Question:** “The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government”. Discuss. (150 words) 10

**Answer:** The Fourth Industrial Revolution is a way of describing the blurring of boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds. It’s a fusion of advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), Quantum Computing, and other technologies. It is about more than just technology-driven change; it is an opportunity to help everyone, including government, policy-makers and people to harness converging technologies in order to create an inclusive, human-centred future.

The recent technological changes have fundamentally altered the way states govern and people respond. The growth of computers, digital technologies and telecommunications has drastically changed the way the state conducts its functions.

Electronic governance or e-governance is one of them. E-governance is about a process of reform in the way governments work, share information and deliver services. Specifically, e-government harnesses information and communication technologies (ICT) to deliver information and services to citizens and businesses.

Some positive examples of the e-governance that have promoted effectiveness of government at the national level include:

- **Digital India:** It strives to bring inclusive growth and bridge the digital divide by leveraging technology solutions that are low cost, developmental, transformative and designed to empower ordinary Indians.
- **BharatNet:** One of the largest digital infrastructures of the world was conceived to connect all the 250,000 gram panchayats by a high-speed optical fibre network.
- India is seeing a dramatic growth in the number of online transactions involving citizens and the government. It proves that citizens are quick to adopt these technologies. The onus lies on the government to provide the relevant infrastructure and policies to enable effective digitization of the economy.
- **UMANG:** It is a platform that enables access to services offered by the Government, such as EPF, Ayushman Bharat, on mobile phone.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Under this initiative subsidies and scholarships are directly credited in the bank account of the beneficiary. It has immensely helped in targeted delivery of benefits and reducing corruption.

Industrial Revolution 4.0 brings with it immense potential to improve governance. Its right use will result in improving accountability, access to services, and strengthening of democracy.

**Question:** The strength and sustenance of local institutions in India has shifted from their formative phase of ‘Functions, Functionaries and Funds’ to the contemporary stage of ‘Functionality’. Highlight the critical challenges faced by local institutions in terms of their functionality in recent times. (250 words) 15

**Answer:** “When the panchayat raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Local Self Government is the management of local affairs by such local bodies who have been elected by the local people. The history of local institutions in India goes back to 1952 when the **Community Development Programme (CDP)** was introduced.

### Formative Years of Local Institutions

- In the developing phase of the local institutions, the debate was around what functions shall be allotted to these institutions, who will execute these functions and how the funds will be mobilised for their implementation.
- In **1957, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee** reviewed the working of the CDP. The committee suggested three-tier **PRIs**, namely, Gram Panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level.
- In **1977, Ashok Mehta Committee** recommended compulsory **power of taxation** and in **1985 the GVK Rao Committee** recommended assigning a role with respect to planning, implementation and monitoring of **rural development programmes**.
- The **Gadgil Committee** in **1988** made comprehensive recommendations on local institutions. Based on its recommendations, **73<sup>rd</sup>** and **74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments** were passed.
  - It provided a three-tier system for local government and assigned them constitutional status.
  - Gram Sabha is the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system.
  - All members of local bodies shall be directly elected by the people and seats shall be reserved for SC/ST and women at all three levels.
  - State Election Commission to supervise elections.
  - Endowment of power and functions, such as preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.
  - Formation of State Finance Commission every 5 years to review the financial provisions of local bodies.
- The above amendments have been able to address the functions, functionaries and funds debate. However, in recent times strength and sustenance of local bodies are facing functionality related issues.

### Functionality related challenges

- **Structural Deficiencies:** PRIs suffer from structural deficiencies i.e. inadequate secretarial support and lower levels of technical knowledge which restricted the aggregation of bottom-up planning.
- **Adhocism:** There is a presence of adhocism i.e. lack of clear setting of agenda in Gram Sabha, Gram Samiti meetings and no proper structure.
- **Proxy Representation:** Though women and SCs/STs have got representation in PRIs through reservation mandated by 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment, proxy representation, for example, in case of women through Panch-Pati, acts as a major hurdle.
- **Overlapping Functions:** The issue of ambiguity in the division of functions and funds has allowed concentration of powers with the states and thereby restraining the elective representatives who are more aware and sensitive to the ground level issues to take control.

Local institutions have been able to strengthen democracy at the grassroot level. But as the institutions have evolved, new challenges have emerged. Their rectification will require raising awareness among masses and their representatives, clear demarcation of responsibility and a system of accountability.

**Question:** “The incidence and intensity of poverty are more important in determining poverty based on income alone”. In this context analyse the latest United Nations Multidimensional Poverty Index Report. **(250 words) 15**

**Answer:** According to the World Bank, Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity.

A common method used to estimate poverty is based on the income or consumption levels and if the income falls below a given level, then the household is said to be poor. According to the World Bank, population living



# 3

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Question:** Critically examine the role of WHO in providing global health security during the Covid-19 pandemic. (150 words) 10

**Answer:** WHO's primary role is to direct and coordinate international health within the United Nations system. Its main areas of work are health systems; health through the life-course; non-communicable and communicable diseases; preparedness, surveillance and response; and corporate services.

### WHO during COVID-19 pandemic

- COVID-19 is characterised as a virus-induced pandemic which refers to a new disease for which people do not have immunity.
- The WHO issued guidelines and practices to be followed by the people to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
- However, the WHO was criticised for not functioning independently under Chinese pressure. It also delayed declaring COVID-19, a pandemic.
- WHO was also criticised for its handling of China, where the virus had originated. There was a deliberate delay in releasing virus-related information.
- Delay in releasing information resulted in late actions by countries which aggravated the pandemic.
- On the one hand, the WHO was accused of dancing to China's tunes and, on the other, there were serious questions on the powers that the WHO enjoys when it comes to taking strict action against deep funders like China.
- Withdrawal of the USA, inadequate funds and manpower further curbed the WHO's independence and its ability to function.

Today's global institutions are extremely dependent on their contributors for funding that they often become pawns for their political agendas. When the US cut funding to the WHO, China increased its contribution. However, the WHO is not a failure. Possibly, it needs restructuring. In the 70 years since its founding, the WHO did a commendable job in helping eradicate smallpox, reduced polio cases and has been on the front lines of the battle against outbreaks like Ebola.

**Question:** 'Indian diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries'. Comment with examples. (150 words) 10

**Answer:** According to estimates released by the United Nations, India was the leading country of origin of international migrants in 2019 with a 17.5 million-strong diaspora. The diverse profile of the Indian diaspora allows it to actively shape the polity and economy of the host country.

### Political Dimensions

- **Electoral Power:** The growing number of Indians in host countries has entrusted them with the ability to influence election results. For instance, Indian-Americans make up around 1% of the electorate, but their votes are crucial in swing states. In 2019, the British House of Commons had 15 MPs of Indian origin.

- **Emerging Leaders:** Many people of Indian origin hold top political positions reflecting their ability to lead. Examples include Kamala Harris - USA's vice president, Rishi Sunak - UK's Finance Minister, António Costa - Portugal's Prime Minister.
- **Lobbying Capacity:** The Indian community's efforts at lobbying the US Congress are seen in the context of diasporic mediations in international relations, like the India-U.S. nuclear deal.
- **Soft Power:** Indian diaspora through Yoga, movies, spirituality, has created tremendous 'soft power' power in host countries. It helps India to build strong diplomatic relations.

### Economic Front

- **Technological Prowess:** Indian diaspora is known for their innovative skills and tech-savvy attitude which has contributed in benefiting the host countries. For example, at Silicon Valley, they have significantly contributed towards the growth of the IT industry. Technological giants like Google, Microsoft are headed by Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadela.
- **Indian Industrialists:** Indian Industrialists have left their mark on the American and European industrial landscape. Indians abroad have made the nation a brand. There are several eminent British industrialists of Indian origin, including Lakshmi Mittal, and the Hinduja brothers.
- **MNCs:** Many Indian MNCs have made their global presence felt by investing heavily and creating employment. For example, Jaguar and Land Rover, which are British car manufacturers, is owned by Tata.

The Indian diaspora has gained new visibility as their political and financial clout has grown. It contributes by way of remittances, investment, lobbying for India, promoting Indian culture abroad and building a good image of India by their intelligence and industry.

**Question:** "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)' is transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times." Discuss. (250 words) 15

**Answer:** Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is the informal strategic dialogue between India, the USA, Japan, and Australia. The Quad was established, primarily as a strategic bloc, to counter China's aggressive stance in the Indo-Pacific region. However, Quad's shared objective to support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region, is also forming the basis of a trade agreement and turning it into a major trade bloc.

### Is Quad Transforming into a Trade Bloc?

- **Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative (IPOI):** The IPOI is an open, non-treaty-based global initiative that aims at practical cooperation in seven thematic areas which also include Maritime Resources; Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Science, and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport. Australia and Japan have agreed to lead IPOI pillars on Maritime Ecology and Connectivity respectively.
- **Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP):** Japan's FOIP builds around 'two continents', Asia and Africa, and 'two oceans', Pacific and Indian. Japanese FOIP endorses cooperation with countries that share the common vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- **Blue Dot Network:** It is a multi-stakeholder initiative led by the USA along with Japan and Australia to bring together governments, the private sector, and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development. It could directly counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI):** As COVID-19 and trade tensions between China and the United States threatened global supply chains, Japan mooted the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) as a trilateral approach to trade, with India and Australia as the key-partners. SCRI is a direct response to individual companies and economies concerned about Chinese political behaviour and the disruption that could lead to the supply chain.

### Challenges Remain

- **Integration:** All the trade associated initiatives launched by the QUAD nations are independent. There is a need for a joint push in the domain of trade and economy.
- **Lack of Cooperation:** The Quad nations have so far not been able to iron out their trade-related difference. For example, India still does not have a Free Trade Agreement with Australia and the USA.
- **Need for Clear Vision:** The Quad nations need to better explain the Indo-Pacific Vision in an overarching framework with the objective of advancing everyone's economic and security interests.
  - This will reassure the littoral States that the Quad will be a factor for the regional benefit, and a far cry from Chinese allegations that it is some sort of a military alliance.

Quad member countries agreed that a free, open, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region will serve the long-term interests of all countries in the region and the world at large. However, there is a need to put the military component and the economic component together.

**Question:** What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (250 words) 15

**Answer:** India's relationship with the US on defence and strategic issues has strengthened as reflected in Indo-US proximity in the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region. Nonetheless, Russia remains the largest supplier of arms to India, though its share has declined in recent years.

### Russia: A Traditional Partner

- Russia has been a longstanding and time-tested partner. India has longstanding and wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in the field of defence.
- Military-technical cooperation has evolved to involve the development and production of advanced defence technologies and systems, such as BrahMos.
- However, India desires to diversify its defence imports. There is also dissatisfaction in India with post-sales services and maintenance offered by Russia.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen the rise of a relentless China. China's assertive, and bullying attitude is most evident in the Indo-Pacific region where it is challenging the sovereignty of ASEAN countries thus also threatening the free sea.

An engaging feature of the current global situation is the transformation of the Sino-Russian relationship from enmity to entente. The changed scenario has an impact on India and the USA.

### USA: India's New Best Friend?

- India has steadily developed important military ties with the US as their interests in the Indo-Pacific are being threatened by China's expansionist policies.
- The US supports India's desired role as a "net security provider" to preserve maritime transportation routes in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Thus, India and the US have signed a number of defence deals which also includes four foundational agreements viz., LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA, and GSOMIA. They enable interoperability of assets, provide each other logistic support, and allow sale of sensitive weapons.
- The US has also sold weapons like Apache, P-8I aircraft which have enhanced India's defence capabilities.
- QUAD which is an informal strategic forum between the US, India, Japan, and Australia has a shared objective to support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region."
- However, the US support doesn't come without a rider. It has also frowned on the S-400 deal which India has signed with Russia and has also threatened to impose sanctions on India under CAATSA.



In the last two decades, the US and India defence relations have strengthened due to sustained efforts from both the countries to iron out differences and agree on protocols in working together against common threats. But, India needs to balance relations with its two defence partners by considering its concerns associated with China and Pakistan over security issues.

**Question:** What do you understand by ‘vaccine diplomacy’? Discuss how this is not only about moral responsibility but also smart foreign policy. **(250 words) 15**

**Answer:** The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to various new, repurposed or newly popular terms. The newest entry to the pandemic lexicon is “vaccine diplomacy”, with some countries using their jabs to strengthen regional ties and enhance their power and global status. Countries possessing scientific ingenuity in vaccine production, like Russia, China, have tried to project their soft power through this. However, the country which can derive the most benefit by using this diplomatic tool is India.

- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, India produces 60 percent of the world’s vaccine, with WHO sourcing 70 per cent of its essential immunization vaccine from India.
- Given the need for saving millions of lives by controlling the spread of coronavirus through vaccination, India has a moral responsibility to fulfil.
- The rich countries of the world have turned nativist in their vaccine policy, the US European Union and others have signed deals with manufacturers to meet their domestic needs. This has isolated the “have-nots” countries of the world from Asia and Africa -who lack economic resources and scientific capability to protect their citizens.

With its unmatched potential to produce vaccines and being the hub of the world’s biggest pharmaceutical companies, India by assuming the leadership of vaccine supply can fulfil its moral/humanitarian responsibility as well as project its soft power.

- India has been donating supplies of the AstraZeneca/Oxford jabs produced in the country to regional neighbours including Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal, bolstering not only its reputation as a supplier of cheap and accessible vaccines to the global south but also challenging China’s efforts at regional dominance at a time of heightened tensions between the two countries.
- Large shipments of vaccines have been sent to Brazil, African and CARICOM countries.
- The COVAX program initiated by vaccine alliance GAVI, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) in partnership with UNICEF, has a major role for India.
- Fighting disease has in fact long been used as a means for extending soft power and winning friends. During the cold war period, the US and USSR for increasing their influence used the smallpox eradication campaign as an opportunity for spreading their soft power. Responding to the SARS epidemic in 2002, China provided assistance and support to affected countries to bolster its global power status. The current crisis offers a similar opportunity to India.

Vaccine diplomacy complements and reinforces our cultural ethos and foreign policy objectives. The Indian culture promotes the ideas of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ and ‘Sarve Santu Niramaya’. Similarly, India’s foreign policy aims to espouse world peace and mutual assistance in facing common challenges of humanity. These noble beliefs could be put into practice by extending help to other countries through vaccine diplomacy.

**Question:** “The challenges faced by fledgeling democracies in India’s neighbourhood have put India into a dilemma.” Analyse this, with respect to recent political developments in Nepal and Myanmar. **(250 words) 15**

**Answer:** In the post-colonial period, democracy failed to take roots in many newly independent countries because of military coups or dictatorship. India has been an exception in this regard and due to its endearing and enduring democratic credibility, it has naturally favoured democratic and people-centric forces in its neighbourhood.



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