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MARCH 1



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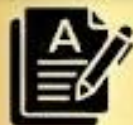
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55 years ago, when Parliament erupted over India-China book



HISTORY HEADLINE

BY SHIVAM LAL YADAV

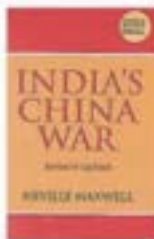
THE RECENT uproar over Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi quoting from former Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane's unpublished memoir has echoes of another storm that broke out in Parliament over another book on India-China relations.

In 1970, Australian journalist Neville Maxwell, then the New Delhi correspondent for *The Times*, published *India's China War*, a book that questioned the role of the Nehru-led political leadership during the 1962 war with China.

Even before Maxwell's book came out, there were three prominent books already in the market — *The Untold Story* (1967, by Lt Gen BM Kaul), *The Galley Men of 1962* (1967, by veteran journalist DR Manekkar) and *Himalayan Howlers: The Curtain-Raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962* (1969, by Brigadier JP Dubvt) — all critical of the role of the political and military leadership during the war. But unlike the others, Maxwell's book quoted excerpts from a classified document: the Henderson Brooks Report prepared by the Operations Review Committee set up by the Army after India's loss to China in the 1962 war.

The report was authored in 1963 by Lt Gen T B Henderson Brooks and Brigadier Premindra Singh Bhagat. Henderson Brooks, who was born in Burma, was commissioned into the British Indian Army in 1929 as a King's Commissioned Indian Officer. During the 1962 war, he commanded the Army's island-harbour-based XI Corps. After he retired from the Indian Army in March 1964, he migrated to Australia where he died in January 1997. Brigadier Bhagat later became Lt General.

Their report was submitted to then acting Army Chief JN Chaudhary in 1963. But since it was not a parliamentary or judicial commission, but an internal operational



T B Henderson Brooks (left), who co-authored the 1963 report on the 1962 war; Neville Maxwell's book carried excerpts from the report.

review ordered by the Army, it was never tabled in Parliament — and never made public. Which is why Maxwell created a stir when he quoted from the report.

On November 9, 1970, four months after Maxwell's book hit the stands, two MPs of the Praja Socialist Party, Nath Raju Pai and Hem Bataa, and CPI MP HN Mukherjee asked a combined question in Lok Sabha, "Whether Mr Neville Maxwell... obtained permission to reproduce extracts from the Henderson Brooks report on NEFA reserves; and if not, what action has been taken against the author for publication of these extracts?"

Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram replied, denying that Maxwell had approached the Government for permission to reproduce extracts from the Henderson report or that any such permission was given.

But Pai wasn't satisfied and moved a privilege motion against the Defence Minister. As other members supported Pai, Jagjivan Ram said, "If... it is found that anybody has supplied any classified document to any unauthorised person, action under the Official Secrets Act will be taken..."

But the matter didn't end there. On December 16, 1970, two days before the Winter Session was to be adjourned sine die, Jagjivan Ram made a statement before the House, announcing a CBI probe into Maxwell "having direct or indirect access to classified papers" and the possibility of a breach of the Official Secrets Act.

Several MPs from the ruling and Opposition benches joined the discussion. Pai again asked how many copies of the Henderson Brooks report were available, to which the Defence Minister said, "Only one." When pressed further, the minister said it was with the Cabinet Secretariat. To which, Hem

Bataa said, "If I say, sir, that the Cabinet Secretary sold the copy to Mr Maxwell, can you dislodge me from that position?"

It was a long day at work for the MPs. Pai's privilege motion was rejected by the Speaker, who said that the government had ordered a CBI inquiry and that any further discussion should be only after the report came out.

But if the Henderson Brooks report was never made public, the conclusion of the CBI inquiry into the leak of the report isn't known either.

On June 7, 1971, in reply to a Lok Sabha question by Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the status of the CBI inquiry, Jagjivan Ram said it was "yet to be concluded".

On April 6, 1976, another MP, HM Patel, again raised the issue of the results of the CBI inquiry not being made public. "Surely, there is nothing very terrible in it that prevents you from telling us. This secretiveness should not be carried too far. As a matter of fact, it may indicate where your weakness lay..." he said.

Since then, Maxwell's book and the Henderson Brooks report have periodically come up in the political discourse. In 2014, Maxwell posted a part of the report on his website. He died in 2019 in Sydney.

On July 8, 2014, in reply to Rajya Sabha member H K Dua's question on Maxwell posting the report on his website, Defence Minister Anurag Shetty replied, "This Henderson Brooks Report is a Top Secret document and has not been declassified so far. Further, release of this report, fully or partially or disclosure of any information related to this report would not be in national interest."

The writer is Senior Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*.

Key Terms and Explanations

Understanding this issue requires a firm grasp of several constitutional and administrative concepts:

The Official Secrets Act (OSA), 1923: An archaic, colonial-era anti-espionage law. It prohibits sharing classified government documents and penalizes both the leaker and the receiver.

- *Example:* If a defense official leaks a blueprint of a naval base to a journalist, both can be prosecuted under the OSA, even if the journalist argues it was for public interest.

Parliamentary Privilege: Special rights, immunities, and exemptions enjoyed by Members of Parliament (MPs) to ensure they can function without fear of legal action.

- *Example:* An MP cannot be sued for defamation for any statement made during a parliamentary debate.

Privilege Motion: A parliamentary tool used by an MP when they believe a minister has breached the privilege of the House by withholding facts or giving false information.

- *Example:* If a minister claims a report doesn't exist, but it is later proven that it does, an MP can move a privilege motion against the minister for misleading the House.

Adjournment *Sine Die*: This Latin term means terminating a sitting of Parliament for an indefinite period, without fixing a day to reconvene.

Declassification: The formal process of removing the "secret" or "classified" status from government documents, usually after a set number of years, making them available to the public and historians.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core debate revolves around the tension between **national security and democratic transparency**, particularly regarding historical military operations.
- **The Shield of National Security:** Governments frequently argue that making internal military reviews public—even decades later—could expose systemic vulnerabilities, reveal intelligence-gathering methods, or severely damage diplomatic relations with neighboring countries.
- **The Demand for Accountability:** Conversely, proponents of transparency argue that classifying historical reports is less about protecting national security and more about shielding political and military leadership from embarrassment or accountability for past blunders.
- **Parliament as the Ultimate Auditor:** The legislature plays a vital role in prying open the black box of the executive branch. Through debates, questions, and privilege motions, MPs attempt to force the government to answer for its handling of sensitive information.
- **The Role of the Press:** Often, the logjam of state secrecy is broken by investigative journalism. When the media publishes excerpts of classified documents, it forces the government's hand, moving the issue from closed corridors into the realm of public discourse.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The culture of secrecy in India has deep historical roots that have slowly been challenged over time:

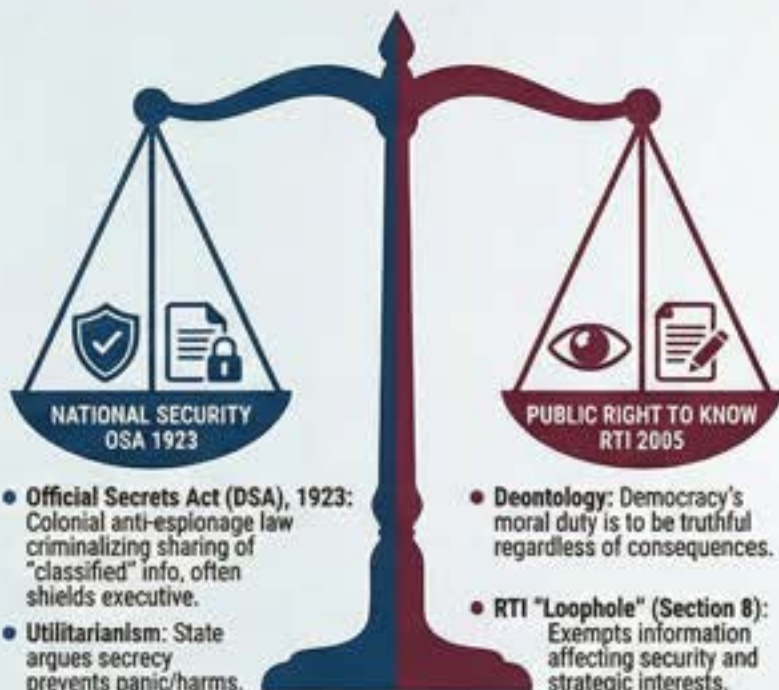
- **Colonial Era (1923):** The British enacted the Official Secrets Act primarily to muzzle the Indian press and prevent anti-colonial revolutionaries from accessing state information.

- **Post-Independence Challenges (1962):** Following the Sino-Indian War, internal military reviews were conducted to analyze the defeat. However, the culture of the OSA prevailed, and these assessments were locked away to protect the morale of the armed forces and the image of the political leadership. * **The 1970s Whistleblower Era:** Globally, and in India, this decade saw a rise in investigative journalism. Leaks of classified documents began to expose the gaps between the government's public narrative and the reality of military or diplomatic events, leading to fiery parliamentary showdowns.

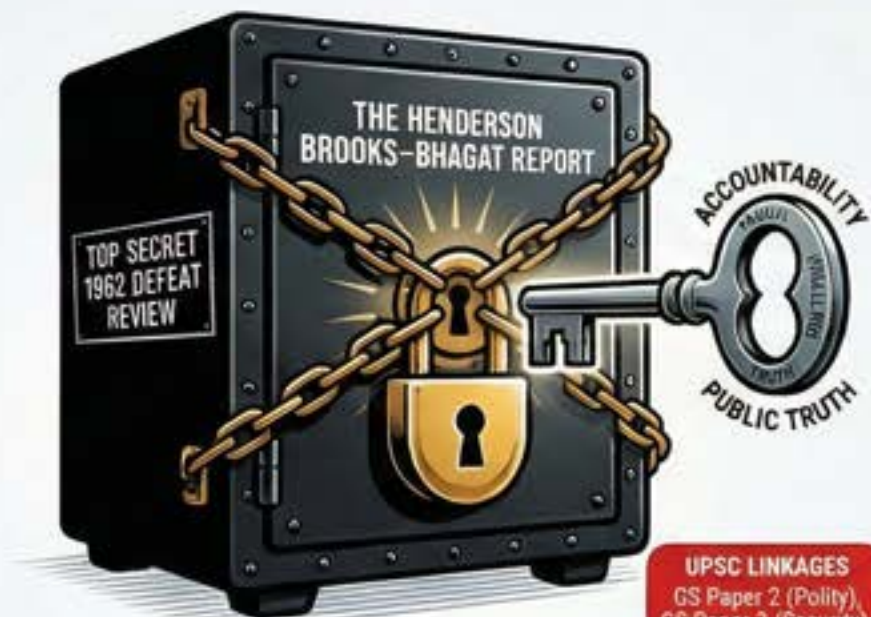
- **The Era of Right to Information (2005 onwards):** The enactment of the RTI Act was a watershed moment. However, Section 8 of the RTI Act explicitly exempts information that prejudicially affects the security, strategic, or economic interests of the State. This loophole has allowed historical military reports to remain sealed up to the present day.

National Security Secrecy vs. Parliamentary Accountability: The 1962 Case Study

LEGAL & PHILOSOPHICAL TUG-OF-WAR



FEATURE	OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT (GSA), 1923	RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT, 2005
Primary Goal	Secrecy & Anti-Expionage	Transparency & Accountability
Era	Colonial (British India)	Democratic (Modern India)
Presumption	Information is secret by default	Disclosure is the norm; secrecy the exception
Focus	Penalizing leaks	Empowering citizens to ask



UPSC LINKAGES
GS Paper 2 (Polity),
GS Paper 3 (Security),
GS Paper 4 (Ethics)

THE 1962 SAGA



MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT & REFORMS


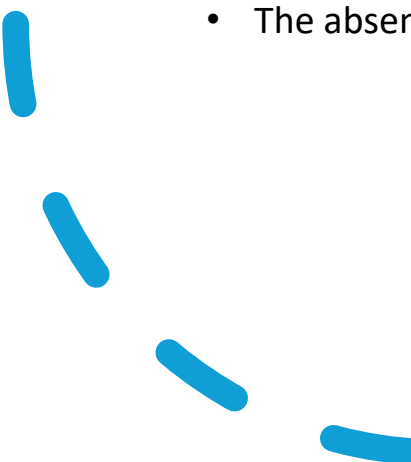
THE UPSC "360°" VIEW



THE WAY FORWARD: PROPOSED REFORMS



- Logical and philosophical base
- **Logic of secrecy**
 - Premise: Certain defence documents must remain secret to preserve operational security, troop morale, and sensitive relationships.
 - Assumption: Lessons from the 1962 war are still directly relevant to present-day deployment and strategy; adversaries could exploit detailed knowledge of past weaknesses.
 - Philosophically, this reflects a realist, security-centric view of the State, where national security is placed above public right to know.
- **Logic of transparency and accountability**
 - Premise: In a democracy, citizens and Parliament must know how and why failures occurred to hold leaders accountable and to prevent repetition.
 - Assumption: Sunshine is the best disinfectant; truthful history strengthens rather than weakens a nation.
 - Philosophically, this aligns with liberal democratic thought, social contract theory, and republican ideals of public reason and open scrutiny.
- **Civil supremacy vs professional autonomy**
 - A democratic State requires civilian control over the military, but also respects the professional domain of the armed forces.
 - The tug-of-war over who controls the report's fate (Army, Defence Ministry, Cabinet, Parliament) reflects deeper questions about the balance between these two imperatives.
- **Memory, narrative, and nation-building**
 - Which story about 1962 will become the "official" narrative: heroic but betrayed soldiers, incompetent leadership, or misunderstood geopolitical constraints?
 - Philosophically, this touches on historiography and collective memory: states often curate past events to protect legitimacy and national pride.

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- Multidimensional analysis
 - A. Social dimension
 - Collective memory of 1962 shapes public perceptions of China and border security.
 - Veterans and families of soldiers may feel that unacknowledged mistakes dishonour sacrifices.
 - Transparent recounting of failures can help society move from shame to constructive resilience.
 - B. Political dimension
 - The issue is a tool in party competition: different parties use the secrecy to blame predecessors.
 - It also reflects the strength (or weakness) of Parliament in demanding accountability on defence matters.
 - The persistence of secrecy across governments shows the power of bureaucratic and military advice in shaping political decisions.
 - C. Legal dimension
 - The Official Secrets Act vs Right to Information Act tension highlights the need for harmonisation.
 - Parliament's privilege to demand documents is in tension with executive discretion to withhold them on security grounds.
 - The absence of prosecution despite an apparent leak suggests selective enforcement or political calculation.
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- Linkages with NCERTs
 - **Class 12 – Politics in India Since Independence**
 - Chapter on India’s External Relations and the section dealing with India–China war.
 - Useful for understanding the broader foreign policy context and political fallout of 1962.
 - **Class 11 – Political Theory**
 - Chapters on “Rights,” “Citizenship,” and “Democracy.”
 - Help frame arguments on right to information, accountability, and limits of State secrecy.
 - **Class 12 – Contemporary World Politics**
 - Chapters on Cold War and non-alignment, offering context on global strategic environment around 1962.
 - **Class 12 – Indian Constitution at Work**
 - Chapters on Parliament, Executive, and “Working of the Constitution.”
 - Useful for analysing how Parliament questions the executive, what information it can demand, and what “collective responsibility” means in defence matters.
 - **Class 11/12 – History (Themes in World History; Themes in Indian History)**
 - Provide background on colonial borders, frontiers, and how modern nation-states negotiate boundaries.

Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus

GS Paper II (Polity and Governance)

- Topics:
 - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the issues of accountability.
 - Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges.
 - Role of civil services in a democracy; civil–military relations.
 - Important aspects of governance: transparency, accountability, and institutional mechanisms like RTI.

GS Paper I (History and Society)

- Post-independence consolidation and reorganisation within the country, including wars and their impact.
- Social psychology of national humiliation and recovery after 1962.

GS Paper III (Security and Economy)

- Internal and external security: border security challenges, defence preparedness.
- Role of media and social media in internal security (leaks, publication of sensitive information).

GS Paper IV (Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude)

- Ethical dilemmas in public office: secrecy vs transparency, duty to the nation vs duty to law.
- Case studies on whistle-blowing, journalistic ethics, and accountability for past mistakes.

Way forward

Comprehensive declassification policy

- Introduce a clear law/policy with time-bound declassification (e.g., 25–30 years) and defined exceptions for sensitive operational details.
- Provide for a high-level review committee (including defence experts, historians, maybe a retired judge) to decide on exceptions.

Graded disclosure of historical defence documents

- Release analytical and policy portions while redacting specific tactical or technical details still considered sensitive.
- Publish official summaries for public consumption, with detailed archives accessible to researchers under controlled conditions.

Reform of the Official Secrets Act

- Replace or substantially amend OSA to bring it in line with democratic standards and RTI; clearly distinguish national security secrets from mere government embarrassment.
- Add robust safeguards for journalists and researchers acting in public interest, while keeping penalties for malicious espionage.

Strengthening parliamentary oversight

- Institutionalise a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence with better access to classified briefings, subject to oath of secrecy.
- Allow in-camera presentation of sensitive reports to select committees even if full public release is not possible.

GS II – Polity & Governance

- 2013: “Discuss Section 66A of IT Act, with reference to its alleged violation of Article 19 of the Constitution.” (Theme: restrictions on freedom, similar logic as secrecy vs RTI.)
- 2016: “Discuss the role of Parliament in ensuring accountability of the executive in India.”
- 2017: “The emergence of Fourth Estate has strengthened democracy in India. Discuss.”
- 2018: “Examine the scope of parliamentary privilege and its impact on the functioning of Indian democracy.”
- 2020: “Discuss the role of non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.” (Leaks, media, foreign journalists as non-state actors.)

GS I – Post-Independence India

- 2013: “Critically discuss the objectives of the Forward Policy and examine its implementation.”
- 2017: “How did the India–China war of 1962 affect India’s strategic thinking?”

GS III – Security

- 2015: “The scourge of terrorism is a grave challenge to national security. Examine the role of media and social media in this context.” (Logic extends to sensitive disclosures.)
- 2017: “Border management is a complex task due to difficult terrain and hostile neighbours. Examine.”

GS IV – Ethics

- Several case-study type questions on whistle-blowing, conflict of interest, and transparency, which can easily be adapted to a case like use of a secret war report by a journalist.

FIVE STRUCTURAL SHIFTS IN AI WORLD ORDER



OPINION

DEBJANI GHOSH

Distinguished Fellow, NITI Aayog
and former President, Nasscom

FOR the first time, India convened the global AI value chain at one integrated forum. Policymakers, model builders, deep-tech founders, industry leaders, skilling institutions, investors and representatives from around 118 countries came together to discuss foundational research, infrastructure, applications, workforce transitions and governance.

I overheard a founder say, "We found our tribe." That sentiment stayed with me as it captured something important. Mature ecosystems are not built only on capital or talent; they are built on coherence. The summit created that. Here are five shifts the gathering highlighted.

From data to compute to intelligence: For decades, globalisation has revolved around efficiency—nations have competed on scale, cost arbitrage

and market access, with supply chains optimised for the lowest-cost producer. The digital era reframed the rules: data became the new currency, and platforms the new empires. The AI Impact Summit 2026 marked the pivot to a third phase: competition centred on applied intelligence at population scale.

The decisive frontier is no longer raw compute ownership. Value will accrue to those who integrate AI at population scale in agriculture, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, governance and skilling. That is where the next competitive frontier lies.

From market to co-creator: Global technology discourse often positioned India as a user, an adopter, a scale consumer. The summit signalled a significant shift in the narrative, reflecting that the world is increasingly moving from efficiency-first globalisation to resilience-first geoeconomics.

The conversations reflected recognition of India's ambition to build across the full AI stack: energy, infrastructure, compute, models, applications, governance and skilling. Most interestingly, the language itself changed from "India as our largest user base" to "How do we build with India?" A key discussion was how to participate in the development of the 'India stack'.

India is positioning itself as a trusted, development-first AI partner, open to collaboration but clear in its ambition to build foundational capability at home.

From hype to diffusion: AI conversations are clearly moving beyond experimentation toward deployment. It resulted in relevant questions such as how do we measure productivity gains? How do we ensure that deployment at scale remains inclusive?

The launch of the Global AI Impact Commons at the summit was a mega step forward in creating a common knowledge pool of best practices and know-how. It reinforced the critical thesis that AI leadership will be judged not by demos, but by diffusion.



Five trends defining the evolving age of artificial intelligence were visible at the summit in Delhi. India is positioning itself as a development-first AI partner, open to collaboration but clear in its ambition to build foundational capability at home

Here, India holds a unique hand. We have four strategic convergences unmatched elsewhere: population-scale digital public infrastructure; high-frequency datasets from 1.4 billion citizens; a young, multilingual talent pool; and a development-first policy stance. If done right, diffusion at India's scale

will redefine global benchmarks.


Legitimacy linked to workforce transitions: Across the world, AI's credibility is increasingly tied to employment outcomes. The summit did not shy away from this reality. Rather than indulging in alarmist narratives, discussions focused on the details behind the hype: sector-wise assessments of AI's impact, industry-linked reskilling pathways, modernisation of apprenticeships and the use of AI-enabled labour market intelligence to guide workforce planning. The emerging consensus was clear: AI strategy cannot be separated from workforce strategy.

AI as a geopolitical lever: We are entering an era where technology partnerships increasingly shape strategic alliances and national influence. The summit demonstrated India's unique ability to serve as a development-centric bridge—convening technology leaders, policymakers, innovators and entrepreneurs from across ideological and economic divides to speak a common language of human-centricity.

The India AI Impact Summit will likely be remembered for bringing ecosystem integration, narrative transformation, deployment focus, workforce alignment and geopolitical positioning into one coherent arc—anchored in the three guiding sutras of people, planet and progress.

(Views are personal)

Full article on [newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com)

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- Key Terms and Explanations
 - 1.1 Global AI Value Chain
 - Refers to the entire pipeline of AI: research, data, compute (chips, cloud), models, applications, distribution, skills and governance.
 - Like the global supply chain of oil earlier, control over different segments (e.g., chips, data centres, foundational models) now shapes bargaining power among states and firms.
 - 1.2 Raw Compute vs Applied Intelligence
 - **Raw compute:** Basic computational capacity—GPUs, data centres, cloud resources—which allows AI models to be trained.
 - **Applied intelligence:** Using AI at scale in real sectors—agriculture, health, logistics, finance—so that productivity, inclusion or security outcomes improve.
 - The shift is from “who has more GPUs?” to “who can use AI to transform the lives of millions?”
 - 1.3 Population-Scale AI
 - AI systems deployed for very large populations, often through digital public infrastructure—e.g., using AI chatbots for primary health advice across an entire state or country.
 - India’s Aadhaar, UPI and DigiLocker show how population-scale platforms work; AI adds a cognitive layer for personalised, real-time services.
 - 1.4 Development-First AI Partner
 - A country positioning itself not merely as a market or low-cost service provider, but as an equal partner focused on inclusive development outcomes.
 - In practice, this means co-creating solutions (e.g., agriculture advising systems) with other countries rather than selling ready-made products.

- Main Arguments and Substantive Parts
- 2.1 Core Thesis
- AI is causing **structural shifts** in the global order, not just short-term disruption in a few sectors.
- India sits at a critical inflection point where its choices on infrastructure, governance and skills can move it from “user” to “co-creator” and “development-first AI partner.”
- 2.2 Five Broad Shifts (Conceptual Reconstruction)
- **From data-driven globalisation to compute-and-talent-driven competition**
 - Earlier, scale of data and markets was the main advantage; now, access to compute, energy and AI talent is equally decisive.
 - The competitive frontier is applied intelligence at population scale, not mere accumulation of data.
- **From market to co-creator**
 - India and similar economies are repositioning themselves as partners in building the full AI stack: chips, cloud, models, applications and governance.
 - Language in international discussions is changing from “How do we sell to India?” to “How do we build with India?”
- **From hype to diffusion**
 - Policymakers now emphasise deployment outcomes: productivity, inclusion, governance quality.
 - A move is visible towards shared benchmarks, impact metrics and scalable pilots rather than isolated proofs-of-concept.
- **Legitimacy through workforce-linked transitions**
 - AI strategies increasingly hinge on employment and skills outcomes.
 - Governments emphasise reskilling, apprenticeships and AI-guided labour market planning so that workers do not perceive AI as purely job-destroying.
- **AI as a geopolitical and development lever**
 - Global partnerships in AI are becoming akin to strategic alliances, with countries seeking to align on compute infrastructure, standards and security.
 - India aspires to act as a development-centric bridge: articulating human-centric norms and building shared infrastructure for the Global South.

- Historical Evolution of the Issue
- 3.1 Pre-Independence and Early Post-Independence
 - Colonial India experienced technological dependency in railways, telegraph and industrial machinery, shaping later suspicion of foreign technological dominance.
 - Post-1947, the focus was on heavy industries, scientific institutions (IITs, CSIR labs) and import substitution—technology as a state-led, strategic resource.
- 3.2 IT Revolution and Services-Led Integration (1980s–2000s)
 - Liberalisation in 1991 opened the economy to global IT markets.
 - India became a hub for software services, BPO and IT-enabled services; global firms saw India as a **back-office and talent pool**, not a rule-setter.
 - Technology policy remained relatively hands-off; globalisation was efficiency-first, with India plugging into global value chains.
- 3.3 Digital Public Infrastructure and Data-Centric Phase (2010s)
 - Aadhaar, UPI, JAM trinity and other platforms marked India’s move to **population-scale digital infrastructure**.
 - Data became the “new oil”; debates focused on data protection, localisation and privacy.
 - AI was used, but largely in pockets—start-ups, some government pilots, private platforms.
- 3.4 AI as Structural Rewrite (late 2010s–early 2020s)
 - Deep learning breakthroughs and big-tech dominance created concerns of winner-takes-all markets.
 - Reports such as NITI Aayog’s AI strategy emphasised inclusive AI, but the framing still treated AI as a growth enabler.
- 3.5 Current Phase: AI as Axis of Power and Development Lever
 - Generative AI and foundation models transformed the narrative: AI now affects sovereignty, national security and global bargaining power.
 - India’s current strategy tries to combine:
 - Sovereign capabilities in compute, models and data.
 - Human-centric, inclusive deployment at population scale.
 - Role as a bridge between advanced economies and Global South.

THE 5 STRUCTURAL SHIFTS IN THE AI WORLD ORDER

FROM DATA/COMPUTE TO APPLIED INTELLIGENCE

Value shifting from raw GPU ownership to successful AI integration in real sectors for population-scale impact.



FROM MARKET TO CO-CREATOR

Nations like India moving beyond user bases to become partners in building the full AI stack: chips, cloud, foundational models.



FROM HYPE TO DIFFUSION

Leadership measured by routine AI integration in government workflows and citizen services, not flashy proofs-of-concept.



LEGITIMACY VIA WORKFORCE TRANSITIONS

AI adoption tied to employment outcomes, focusing on reskilling and using AI for labor market intelligence to prevent social backlash.



AI AS A GEOPOLITICAL LEVER

AI capacity influencing alliances and trade; India acts as a development-centric bridge for the Global South.



INDIA'S UNIQUE STRATEGIC CONVERGENCES

- Population-Scale Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**
Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker providing rails for personalized services to 1.4 billion.
- Massive Data Exhaust**
High-frequency data from one of the largest digitally active populations, a unique training ground.
- Young Multilingual Talent Pool**
Vast demographic dividend capable of building AI that understands hundreds of local dialects.
- Development-First Policy Orientation**
Prioritizing inclusive outcomes like crop-yield improvement and disease surveillance, unlike Silicon Valley.



CHALLENGES & SUSTAINABILITY (THE "TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE")

- Environmental & Resource Sustainability**
Large-scale AI requires massive energy, demanding green data centers and efficient chip cooling.
- Ethical & Legal Safeguards**
Avoiding "algorithmic authoritarianism" via robust data protection laws, algorithmic accountability, human-in-the-loop.
- Structural Bottlenecks**
High costs for advanced chips (GPUs) and shortage of deep-tier AI researchers relative to demand.



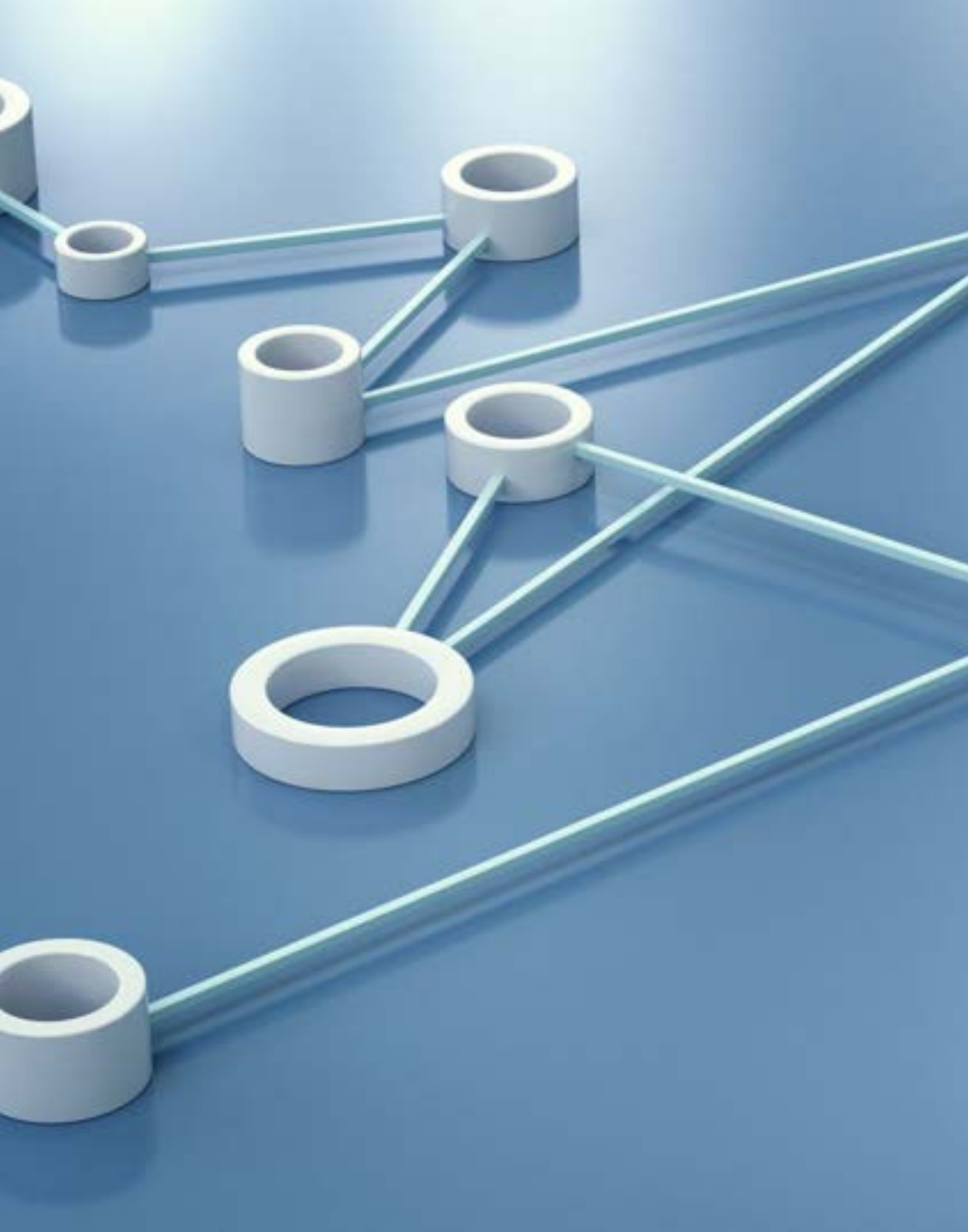
UPSC CSE SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- GS Paper II: Governance & IR**
Covers e-governance, transparency, India's role in G20 & Global South.
- GS Paper III: Economy & S&T**
Relevant for inclusive growth, employment, cybersecurity, indigenization of technology.
- GS Paper IV: Ethics**
Focuses on the "Capability Approach" (Amartya Sen), algorithmic bias, moral responsibility of autonomous systems.



TECHNOLOGY EVOLUTION IN INDIA

Era	Focus	India's Role
1980s-2000s	IT Services & BPO	Back-office & Talent Pool
2010s	Digital infrastructure	DPI Creator (UPI/Aadhaar)
2020s+	Applied AI	Co-creator & Global Rule-setter



- Logical and Philosophical Base
- 4.1 Underlying Logic
- Power in the 21st century is shifting from control over territory or raw materials to control over **intelligence infrastructure**—compute, algorithms, data and human skills.
- Countries that embed AI deeply into governance and production will enjoy compounding productivity and influence advantages.
- 4.2 Assumptions
- AI is a **general-purpose technology** analogous to electricity or the internet—its impact will percolate across all sectors.
- Deployment at scale is more critical than owning every layer of the stack; partnerships and commons can compensate for resource constraints.
- Human-centric governance and workforce-linked strategies are necessary to maintain social legitimacy.
- 4.3 Philosophical Foundations
- Echoes of **humanism**: technology must ultimately serve human agency and dignity, not replace it.
- **Capability approach** (Amartya Sen-style): AI is valuable insofar as it expands people’s capabilities—education, health, productivity.
- **Communitarian and cosmopolitan** blend: national sovereignty in AI is vital, yet shared norms and commons are necessary to manage transboundary risks.

- Multidimensional Analysis
- 8.1 Social Dimension
 - Potential for inclusive service delivery: AI-enabled health screening, personalised learning, language translation for underserved communities.
 - Risks of deepening digital divide if access to devices, connectivity and digital literacy remains uneven.
 - Identity and cultural concerns if models reflect only dominant languages and world-views.
- 8.2 Political Dimension
 - AI becomes integral to state capacity—policy design, welfare targeting, predictive policing, disaster management.
 - Risk of “algorithmic authoritarianism” if surveillance tools are misused for political control.
 - Electoral politics may feature promises of AI-enabled jobs and governance, influencing manifestos and coalitions.
- 8.3 Legal Dimension
 - Necessity of comprehensive AI and data-protection laws, sectoral guidelines and impact-assessment norms.
 - Questions around cross-border data flows, jurisdiction in cloud-based services and intellectual property for AI-generated content.
 - Judicial capacity to understand and adjudicate AI-related disputes.
- 8.4 Ethical Dimension
 - Issues of bias, discrimination and fairness in algorithms used for credit scoring, recruitment or policing.
 - Autonomy and consent when AI mediates decisions—from medical advice to content recommendations.
 - Moral responsibility when autonomous systems cause harm.
- 8.5 International Dimension
 - AI as a key agenda item in multilateral forums—UN, G20, BRICS, QUAD.
 - Global norms on lethal autonomous weapons, deepfakes, cross-border surveillance and cyber warfare.
 - Development cooperation: AI for SDGs, climate adaptation, pandemic preparedness.

- Linkages with NCERTs
- **NCERT Class 9–10 Social Science (Economics, Contemporary India)**
 - Chapters on globalisation, sectors of the economy and development help students connect AI-driven global value chains with earlier industrial and IT-led globalisation.
- **NCERT Class 11 Economics (Indian Economic Development)**
 - Chapters on infrastructure, human capital and liberalisation link directly to digital public infrastructure, skills and AI-enabled growth.
- **NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Indian Constitution at Work)**
 - Fundamental rights, federalism and the role of government in welfare relate to constitutional limits on AI-based surveillance and welfare targeting.
- **NCERT Class 12 Political Science (Contemporary World Politics, Politics in India since Independence)**
 - Cold War, globalisation and India's foreign policy provide context for AI as a new axis of power and India's role as a balancing actor.
- **NCERT Class 12 Economics (Macroeconomics, Indian Economic Development)**
 - Chapters on growth, employment and sectoral transformations help frame AI's impact on labour markets and productivity.

- Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus
- GS Paper I (Society, History, Geography)
- Impact of globalisation on Indian society.
- Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism and secularism (AI-driven information flows and polarisation).
- Urbanisation and its problems (smart cities, surveillance, digital divide).
- GS Paper II (Polity, Governance, IR)
- Governance, transparency and accountability; e-governance applications.
- Role of civil services in a democracy (AI-enabled decision-support).
- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- India and its neighbourhood; bilateral, regional and global groupings; global governance of emerging technologies.
- GS Paper III (Economy, Science & Tech, Environment, Security)
- Indian economy: inclusive growth, infrastructure, investment models, employment.
- Science and technology—developments and applications; indigenisation of technology; awareness in fields like IT, space, robotics, nanotechnology.
- Environment: energy demands of data centres, climate change implications.
- Internal security: cyber security, media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.
- GS Paper IV (Ethics)
- Ethics in public administration; information sharing and transparency.
- Probity in governance, dilemmas in the use of technology.
- Case studies on AI-based surveillance, welfare targeting, predictive policing.



- Way Forward
- **Build Sovereign, Green Compute Infrastructure**
 - Invest in domestic data centres and chip design while ensuring high renewable-energy share and strict efficiency norms.
 - Shared national AI clouds can lower entry barriers for start-ups, universities and states.
- **Codify Robust AI Governance Frameworks**
 - Enact comprehensive laws on AI risk-classification, transparency, accountability and redressal, aligned with constitutional rights.
 - Encourage regulatory sandboxes and standard-setting bodies involving industry, academia and civil society.
- **Prioritise Population-Scale, High-Impact Use Cases**
 - Focus early deployment on areas such as agriculture advisory, primary healthcare, learning outcomes and urban services, where benefits are clear and measurable.
 - Use pilots with rigorous impact evaluation before full roll-out.
- **Invest Heavily in Human Capital and Just Transitions**
 - Create national platforms for continuous reskilling, micro-credentials and apprenticeships linked to real-time labour market data.
 - Provide social protection and transition support for workers displaced or re-tasked due to AI.
- **Shape Global Norms and Commons**
 - Lead coalitions of Global South countries to develop open models, datasets and ethical guidelines.
 - Use multilateral forums to push for responsible AI norms, export controls that are fair, and technology transfer mechanisms.



UPSC CSE – Prelims (selected themes)

Questions on:

- Artificial Intelligence and its applications (recent years).
- Internet of Things, machine learning, blockchain.
- Data protection and privacy as part of polity and current affairs.

UPSC CSE – Mains (GS)

GS II

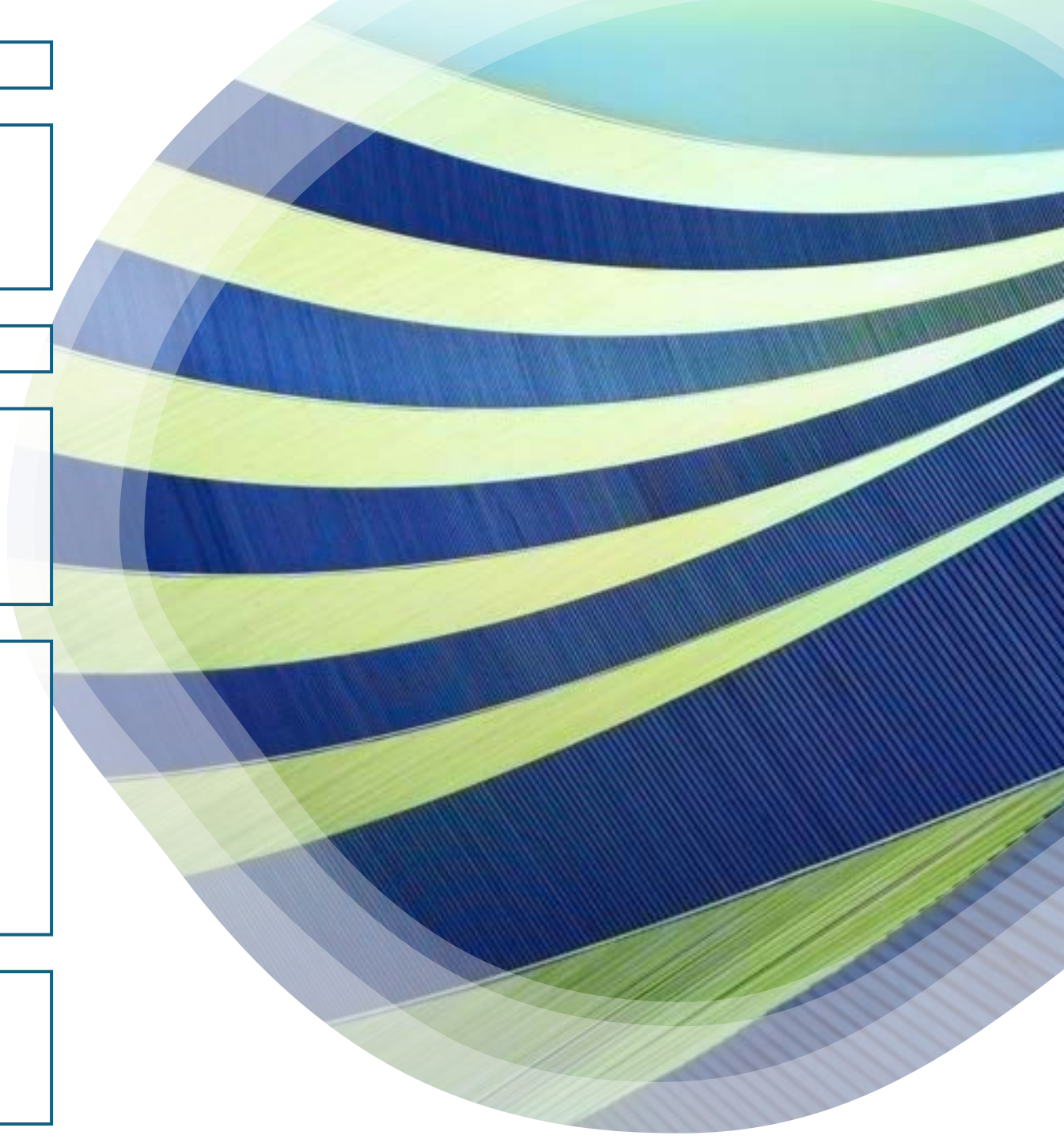
- “E-governance has the potential to transform service delivery, but it also raises concerns regarding privacy and exclusion. Discuss.”
- “Critically examine India’s data protection framework in the context of rapid digitalisation.”

GS III

- “How is Artificial Intelligence shaping the new world order? Examine its implications for India’s economic and national security interests.”
- “Discuss the potential of digital public infrastructure in promoting inclusive growth in India.”
- “The Fourth Industrial Revolution is transforming the nature of work. Examine the challenges and opportunities for India.”

GS IV

- Case-study style questions on use of surveillance technologies, facial recognition, or algorithmic decision-making by public authorities.



HISTORY'S GHOST: RETURN OF SHOCK & AWE IN WEST ASIA

THE skies over West Asia are lit up by the twilight phantom men caused by missiles. The ground below is enveloped by an unmistakable sense of doom and gloom. The initial US-led campaign targeted political and military infrastructure in Iran. In retaliation, Iran fired ballistic missiles at every country in the region bearing Oman, and targeted US military bases including the Central Command in Qatar that manages operations stretching from Egypt to Kazakhstan.

The US believes it can designate the leadership of the Iranian regime—the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the President and the Supreme Leader—and open the gates for another popular regime. The threat is challenged by history as regional foreign intervention leads to rally the masses around the national flag. From Iraq to Egypt to Pakistan, such hope has been repeatedly fanned. That said, the fact that this Iranian regime has conducted brutal reprisals in the past few years could provide a modification. The possibility of escalation is very large—the air spaces over Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar have been often targeted strikes are not as limited and precise for specific objectives. But assumptions are finally wrongheaded. The critics and the failures of dialogue and diplomacy have nullified the choice of force as the first, not the last, resort. The on-line symbolic regime messaging from 20,000 ft—shock, awe and uncertainty—which is all too familiar in West Asia.

The context is laid with irony. On Saturday, as US and Israeli forces bombarded Iran, Donald J Trump asked Iranian to start the authoritarian regime and seize control. The words of authoritarianism were originally propagated by the US and the UK. In 1901, the CIA and the NIS orchestrated Operation Ajax to crown the authoritarian Muhammad Reza Pahlavi as the absolute monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah, who was crowned as he promised the nationalization of oil companies, especially the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company that is now known as BP.

Kerens turned up in 1918. The Shah found himself in the crosshairs of a revolution engulfed in Paris that had got used to the absolute monarch. The tragedy of Iran is that every five decades, regimes that are fixed with the promise of liberty actually tightened the shackles on people. If the Shah unleashed his secret police based on the people, the Ayatollah's regime has used the Islamic Consultative Assembly for political oppression.

The military campaign is not without its share of irony. In the 1970s, Richard Nixon designed the greatest use doctrine to dominate regime using local power, without putting American boots on the ground. To convince the Shah's rule as a 'regional partner' the US pumped dollars. Even today, Iran's air force has F14 Tomcats led with its Top Gun, F16 Phantoms and F1 fighters, besides F4U fighters. The bombers being used by missiles in the region, including cruise, come to home to Iran's market and missile programmes, were designed by the US to serve the Shah. The assets being acquired were built with US dollars.

The missiles over West Asia illustrate the irony of diplomatic negotiation. For decades, Tehran and Washington have circled the effort in a dangerous dance of covert operations, covert talks, proxy clashes and sanctions. Iran designated the US as 'the regime of Satan' and the US put Iran on 'the axis of evil'. Diplomacy did light up hope—the 2015 nuclear deal promised a regional path for Iran's reintegration into the global economy.

Hope was shattered by distrust and the agreement was dissolved in 2018 by Trump. Iran was never reconciled to the idea. After all, both the US and Israel are based by the Big Brother— that no other regional player could go nuclear, as was illustrated in Operation Opera on the Osirak reactor in Iraq in 1981, Operation Desert Fox in 1998 and Operation Midnight Hammer conducted by the US in June 2003.

Following last year's attack on Iran's nuclear facilities in Fordo, Trump ordered Iran to come to the table for a deal. A mission fraught with the Shah's (2020) says, "The worst amongst people is one with the double face." Iranians reportedly refer to the nuclear talks, Khamenei's ruling against weapons of mass destruction, and assert they have no intention of using uranium for a bomb. The Israelis and Americans frequently refer to the term 'enlight' to point out that the future is nuclear, and cite the use of chemical weapons during the Iran Iraq war despite false claims. Recently the Iranians are being a considered nuclear power status. Trust has been a missing ingredient through the talks.

Hardly 30 hours before the first missiles were fired, Bach bin Hamad Al Binahawi, foreign minister Oman and a key mediator in the US Iran talks, said, "Peace is within reach." Iran had agreed to start talks, as mandated by its constitution and agreed monitoring. Trump, however, was not happy. "They're not getting to the right answer." Nobody quite knows what the right answer is 'was. And no nobody can explain the paradox of the depart meant of 'not negotiating with the board of power.

The conflict carries consequences for India and others—energy prices, shipping costs, risk premiums and capital flight. The strikes may be perceived as deterrence. But deterrence is not static and thresholds can be tested by non-state actors through acts of terrorism. The absence of answers in the dialogue of the dead has propelled the failure of the efforts of diplomacy—shock, awe and uncertainty.



THE THIRD EYE
SHANKAR AIYAR
Author of *Unsettled India: A New Era of Change* (The Atlantic, an imprint of Simon and Schuster)





- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- To fully grasp the complexities of West Asian geopolitics, several historical and strategic concepts must be understood:

- **Regime Change vs. Regime Messaging:** Regime change is the forcible replacement of a state's leadership by an external force (e.g., the 1953 overthrow of Iranian PM Mossadegh). Regime messaging involves using calibrated military strikes to warn a government without fully decapitating it, often referred to as "shock and awe."


- **The Begin Doctrine:** An unofficial Israeli foreign policy principle stating that Israel will use preemptive military strikes to prevent any regional adversary from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

- *Example:* The 1981 airstrike on the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq.

- **The Nixon/Gendarme Doctrine:** A 1970s US foreign policy strategy that relied on arming regional allies (like Iran under the Shah) to act as local "policemen" to protect Western interests, avoiding the need for direct American troop deployments.

- **Taqiyah:** A concept in Islamic jurisprudence allowing the concealment of one's beliefs under threat. In modern geopolitics, Western analysts often invoke this term to argue that a nation's diplomatic promises (like nuclear fatwas declaring WMDs un-Islamic) might be strategic deceptions rather than genuine commitments.

- **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA):** The 2015 agreement where Iran agreed to strict limits and inspections on its nuclear program in exchange for relief from crippling economic sanctions. The US unilaterally withdrew from this in 2018.



Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

When examining the cyclical violence in the region, several core theses emerge:

The Failure of Coercive Regime Change: Historically, foreign military interventions aimed at toppling governments tend to fail. Instead of sparking popular uprisings, external aggression typically triggers a "rally 'round the flag" effect, where the populace unites behind authoritarian leadership against the foreign threat.

The Boomerang Effect of Proxy Arming: Geopolitical interventions have long shelf lives. Military hardware and infrastructure provided to dictatorial allies often end up in the hands of future adversarial regimes. The assets targeted in modern conflicts are frequently the very assets built with the attacker's own funding decades prior.

The Fragility of Kinetic Deterrence: Relying exclusively on surgical strikes and military force to establish deterrence normalizes violence. When diplomacy fails, force becomes the primary language, leading to a volatile environment where thresholds are constantly tested by state and non-state actors alike.

The Devastation of the Trust Deficit: Lasting peace requires mutual trust. When international agreements are dissolved unilaterally due to domestic political shifts in one country, it destroys the credibility required for future diplomatic solutions.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The current geopolitical friction is deeply rooted in 20th and 21st-century interventions:
- **1953 - Operation Ajax:** Intelligence agencies from the US and UK orchestrated a coup to oust Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. This reinstated the Shah as an absolute monarch, planting deep seeds of anti-Western sentiment.
- **1970s - The Regional Gendarme:** Under the Nixon Doctrine, the US heavily funded and armed the Shah's military to secure Western interests in the Persian Gulf.
- **1979 - The Islamic Revolution:** The Shah was overthrown, and Ayatollah Khomeini established an anti-Western theocracy. The weapons and infrastructure provided by the US were absorbed by the new regime.
- **2015 to 2018 - The Rise and Fall of Diplomacy:** The signing of the JCPOA marked a high point in diplomacy, promising reintegration into the global economy. This hope fractured in 2018 when the US withdrew from the pact, re-imposing harsh sanctions.
- **2020s to Present (2026):** A transition from shadow wars and cyber-attacks to direct, overt military confrontations, marked by operations targeting nuclear infrastructure and retaliatory ballistic missile barrages across the region.

STRATEGIC DOCTRINES & KEY CONCEPTS



The Begin Doctrine

Israeli principle of pre-emptive strikes to prevent regional adversaries from acquiring WMDs (e.g., 1981 Osirak reactor strike).



Regime Change vs. Regime Messaging

Regime change: Forcible replacement of leadership.
Regime messaging: Calibrated strikes to warn a government without toppling it.



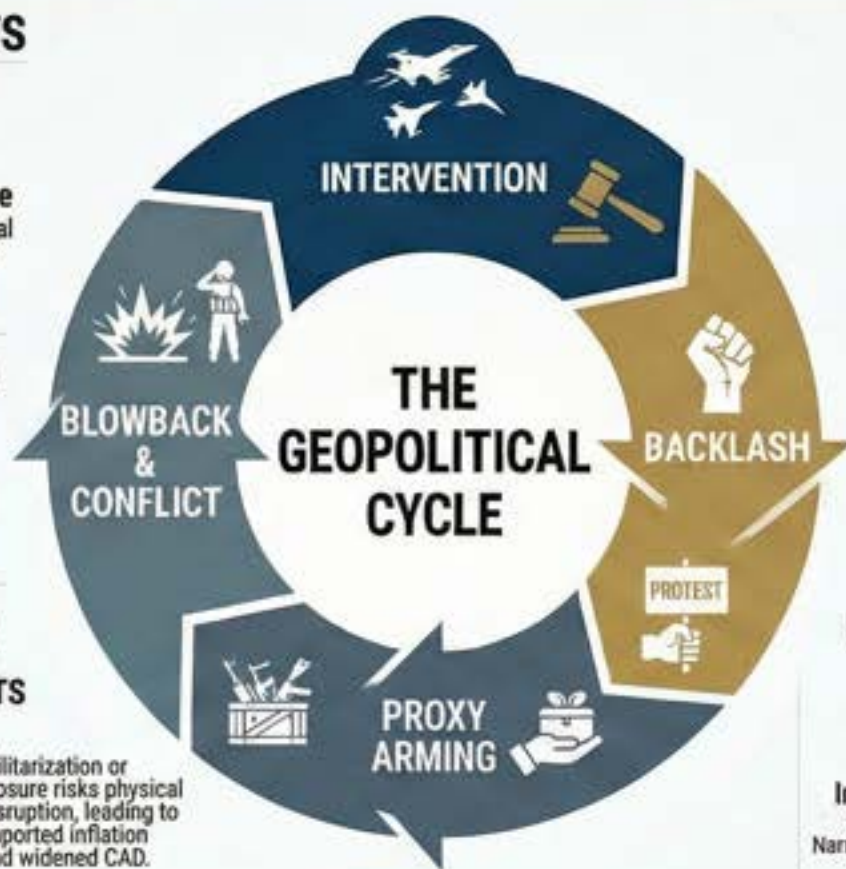
The Nixon/Gendarme Doctrine

1970s US strategy of arming regional allies (like the Shah of Iran) to act as "policemen" for Western interests, avoiding direct troop deployment.



Taqiyah & The Trust Deficit

Concept of concealment under threat, often invoked by Western analysts to question the sincerity of diplomatic promises like nuclear farwas.



TIMELINE OF INTERVENTION



1953: Operation Ajax

US and UK intelligence orchestrated a coup to oust Iran's PM Mossadegh, reinstating the absolute monarchy.



1979: The Islamic Revolution

US-backed Shah overthrown, leading to an anti-Western theocracy that absorbed weapons provided under the Nixon Doctrine.



2015-2018: JCPOA Rise and Fall

2015 Nuclear Deal promised economic reintegration but fractured in 2018 when US unilaterally withdrew, re-imposing harsh sanctions.



2020s-Present: Overt Confrontation

Transition from "shadow wars" to direct military strikes and ballistic missile barrages, testing the limits of kinetic deterrence.

THE INDIA FACTOR (ENERGY & ECONOMY)

80%

 Crude Oil Dependency

India imports the vast majority of its oil from West Asia, making its economy hyper-sensitive to regional price shocks.



Diaspora & Remittances

Millions of Indians in the Gulf contribute significantly to India's forex reserves but face safety risks during conflicts.

STRATEGIC CHOKEPOINTS



Militarization or closure risks physical disruption, leading to imported inflation and widened CAD.

VULNERABILITY VS. MITIGATION

Vulnerability Factor	Strategic Mitigation Strategy
High Crude Import Bill	Diversification of Basket (USA, Russia, Latin America)
Supply Chain Disruption	Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) in Mangalore, Padar, Visag
Regional Volatility	"Vishwamitra" Diplomacy (Balancing ties with Israel, Iran, and Arab nations)
Fossil Fuel Dependence	Transition to Renewables (International Solar Alliance)

MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT (UPSC SYLLABUS LINKAGE)



GS Paper 2: International Relations

Focuses on the "Clash of Narratives"—defensive deterrence vs. imperial terrorism.



Economy & Security

Covers energy security, maritime trade routes, and the impact of oil shocks on macroeconomic stability.



GS Paper 4: Ethics

Ethical dilemmas regarding "Just War"—pre-emptive strikes, and collective punishment through blanket sanctions.

THE WAY FORWARD



Multilateral Security Frameworks

Shifting from fragile bilateral deals to broad agreements involving regional stakeholders.



Do-linking Economics from Warfare

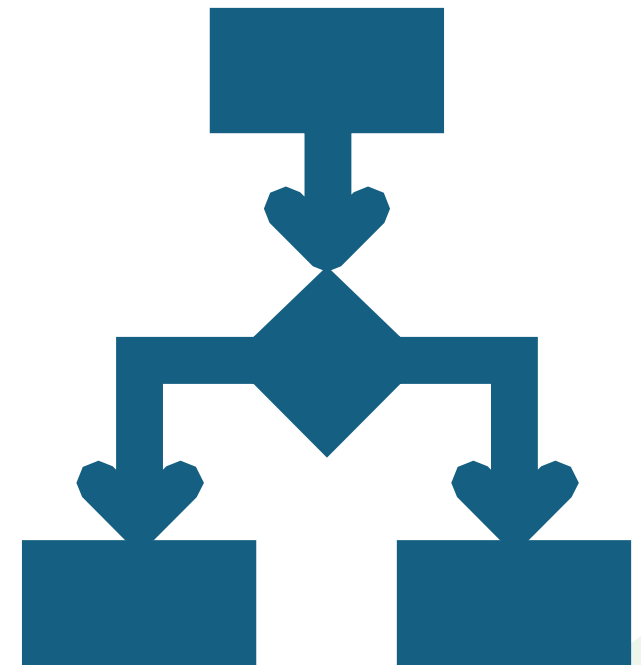
Establishing humanitarian trade channels for essential goods immune to sudden political sanctions.



India as a "Vishwamitra"

Leveraging ties with all parties to act as a neutral mediator for de-escalation.

- Logical and philosophical base
- a) Logic of “shock and awe”
- Assumes that overwhelming early force will break the enemy’s will, reduce casualties in the long run, and quickly impose a desired political outcome.
- Philosophically rooted in realist thought: states are driven by power and security; fear and coercion are central tools.
- Weakness: It underestimates nationalism, religious motivation, and the capacity of societies to absorb pain and reorganise through asymmetric warfare.
- b) Logic of regime change and engineered revolutions
- Presumes that replacing “bad” regimes with “friendly” or “democratic” leaders will align a state with external interests and stabilise the region.
- Influenced by liberal internationalism combined with strategic realism—values plus interests.
- Critique: Political systems are products of local histories, class structures and social coalitions; externally imposed changes often lack legitimacy and produce power vacuums.
- c) Logic of deterrence and sanctions
- Deterrence relies on rational choice: cost–benefit calculations will prevent escalation.
- Sanctions rely on economic pressure to trigger policy change or elite splits.
- Philosophical problem: When leaders derive legitimacy from resistance narratives, increased pressure may strengthen rather than weaken them (“rally around the flag” effect).
- d) Ethics of intervention
- Humanitarian and democratic arguments justify intervention to prevent atrocities or promote rights.
- However, selective application (some regimes targeted, others protected) raises questions of double standards and “just war” principles.
- The article’s conceptual thrust is sceptical of the moral claims of interveners, highlighting long-term harm to civilian populations.



- 
- Multidimensional analysis
 - Social dimension
 - Continuous conflict deepens sectarian divides (Sunni-Shia, ethnic rivalries), making reconciliation harder.
 - Refugee flows strain host societies, altering demographics and sometimes triggering xenophobia.
 - Education systems in conflict zones are disrupted, leading to a “lost generation” more vulnerable to extremist recruitment.
 - Political dimension
 - Authoritarian regimes use external threats to justify emergency laws and curb dissent.
 - Democratic states also experience polarisation over foreign policy decisions (war, sanctions, refugee intake).
 - Regional alignments shift: new minilateral groupings emerge, such as issue-based coalitions on energy, intelligence or maritime security.
 - Legal dimension
 - Questions arise about legality of pre-emptive strikes, targeted killings and cyber operations across borders.
 - Use of force without explicit UN Security Council approval tests the limits of the UN Charter.
 - Sanctions regimes raise due-process issues when individuals or entities are blacklisted without transparent evidence.
 - Ethical dimension
 - Civilian suffering versus claimed strategic necessity is a central ethical dilemma.
 - Double standards—support for some authoritarian allies and opposition to others—undermine normative legitimacy of “liberal interventionism”.
 - Ethics of arms sales: exporting countries profit from weapons used in conflicts they publicly deplore.
 - International dimension
 - West Asia’s crises intersect with global energy markets, migration patterns and terrorism networks.
 - Great-power competition (US, Russia, China, EU) shapes alignments; middle powers like India, Turkey, and Gulf states seek more autonomy.
 - Multilateral forums (UN, IAEA, SCO, BRICS) become arenas for contesting narratives and building coalitions.

- Linkages with NCERTs
- Political Science
 - Class 11, “Political Theory” – chapters on “Justice”, “Rights”, and “Peace” help understand ethical questions around intervention, war and sanctions.
 - Class 12, “Contemporary World Politics” – chapters on “US Hegemony in World Politics”, “Security in the Contemporary World”, and “Globalisation” directly relate to great-power behaviour, security doctrines and economic interdependence.
- History
 - Class 9–10 themes on colonialism and nationalism illustrate how resource extraction and foreign control shape anti-imperialist movements.
 - Class 12, “Themes in World History” – sections on “The Cold War Era” and “End of Bipolarity” help trace how Cold War rivalries affected West Asia.
- Economics
 - Class 11–12 Macroeconomics chapters on “Open Economy”, “Balance of Payments”, and “Government Budget” help understand how oil prices, sanctions and defence expenditure impact economies like India.
- Geography
 - Class 11–12 “India and the Contemporary World / Practical Geography” – chapters on “World Resources”, “Transport and Communication”, and “International Trade” link to energy security and strategic sea lanes in West Asia.



- Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus
- GS Paper I
- World history: “Events from the 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonisation and decolonisation” – colonial legacy and Cold War interventions in West Asia.
- Society: Impact of conflict, sectarianism, migration and refugees on social fabric.
- GS Paper II
- International relations: India’s relations with West Asian countries; role of external state and non-state actors; effect of policies of developed nations on India’s interests.
- Polity & governance: Debates on humanitarian intervention, democratic peace, and global governance institutions (UN, IAEA, UNSC reforms).
- GS Paper III
- Internal and external security: Terrorism, money laundering, cyber security, role of external state and non-state actors in internal security challenges.
- Economy: Energy security, impact of global oil prices and shipping disruptions on India’s growth and inflation.
- Science & tech: Missile technology, drones, nuclear technology, cyber warfare and their regulation.
- GS Paper IV (Ethics)
- Ethics of war and peace, “just war” theory, responsibility to protect (R2P) vs state sovereignty.
- Values in international relations: justice, fairness, empathy for civilians, integrity in foreign policy.

Way forward

Revive structured regional security dialogue

- Encourage inclusive platforms involving rival states, external powers and neutral mediators to discuss maritime security, missile doctrines and de-escalation protocols.
- Confidence-building measures like hotlines, prior notification of military exercises, and joint working groups on incidents at sea can reduce accidental escalation.

Pursue a realistic, phased diplomatic approach

- Instead of maximalist demands (complete regime change or zero-enrichment), adopt incremental agreements—e.g., caps on missile ranges, regional non-proliferation zones, time-bound verification.
- Link sanctions relief to verifiable steps, with snap-back provisions to address violations, thereby balancing trust and enforcement.

Strengthen respect for international law

- Ensure that any use of force complies with UN Charter principles; promote accountability for war crimes through international courts or hybrid tribunals.
- Clarify norms around cyber operations and drone strikes to protect civilian infrastructure and avoid indiscriminate harm.

Address socio-economic roots of instability

- Support diversification of oil-based economies into manufacturing, services and green energy; this reduces the incentive to weaponise oil and creates jobs for youth.
- International financial institutions and regional funds can prioritise reconstruction, education and health in conflict-affected areas.

- 
- UPSC Prelims
 - 2011–2023: Multiple questions on West Asian geography, Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Red Sea, Suez Canal, OPEC, oil pricing, and India’s energy security.
 - 2015: Question on “Arab Spring” and its global impact.
 - 2018: Questions on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and related organisations.
 - UPSC Mains – GS II
 - 2013: “Discuss the political developments in West Asia in the last decade and their implications for India’s national security.”
 - 2015: Question on “Iran nuclear deal” and its significance for India.
 - 2016: “The policies of the USA have a significant impact on India’s foreign policy.” (Using West Asia as a case study works well.)
 - 2018: Question on “Act East and Link West” policies.
 - 2020: Question on “India’s stand on Israel–Palestine issue”.
 - UPSC Mains – GS III
 - 2013 onwards: Recurring questions on energy security, impact of oil prices on Indian economy, external security challenges including terrorism and non-state actors.

It's time to declare the Modi Doctrine throughout the Indian Ocean

A Modi doctrine might protect the countries of the Indian Ocean basin from the predatory ambitions of China.

OPINION

MICHAEL RUBIN



For example, is about 0.3% of the cargo's value but, when Houthi target Indian, Greek, or Cypriot ships, that insurance rate more than triples, putting Indian-commercial interests at a competitive disadvantage to Chinese competitors.

The ouster of Sheikh Hasina's government in August 2024 coupled with interim leader Muhammad Yunus' antagonism to India and loyalty to Pakistan and China, suggest India barely avoided a far worse crisis in Bangladesh. Rather than reflex, New Delhi should recognize that those external intelligence operatives behind Yunus and Jamaat-e-Islami will simply try again, both to attack Bangladesh's sovereignty and India's control over the Bay of Bengal.

In 2022, I visited Cabo Delgado, Mozambique's northern province, to interview Islamic State prisoners captured by local security forces and their Brazilian partners, as well as to inspect the material they had with them when captured. In many cases, the extremist tracts came straight from Karachi or Lahore via Mossamb or Dar es Salaam.

Democratic Republic of Congo church leaders complained that Pakistanis working as UN peacekeepers were inciting extremism by teaching locals more extreme practices and intolerant interpretations of Islam. China, meanwhile, is increasingly influential if not dominant in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and is willing to compete with India in Mauritius. British Prime Minister

Keir Starmer's China policy opens the door to potential malign influence in that archipelago.

These challenges suggest that, as India rises, Modi must establish a regional doctrine and security doctrine commensurate with India's economic infrastructure and role in the world. In short, it is time for a Modi Doctrine akin to the U.S. Monroe Doctrine. President James Monroe declared the United States would be the preeminent power in the Western Hemisphere and that the United States would not tolerate European military and interference in the region.

Old school Indian policymakers might interpret the Monroe Doctrine, recently revived by President Donald Trump, as a manifestation of American imperialism but historically at least, the opposite is true. Monroe's policy was anti-imperialist. He articulated that Washington would interpret any European attempt to interfere in the affairs of independent American countries as a hostile act against the United States. Monroe did not seek to colonize South America; he sought to prevent France, Spain, and Portugal from seeking to re-establish their empires against the aspirations of newly independent countries.

Haiti, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Brazil each won independence from France, Spain, or Portugal prior to Monroe's declaration. Their former colonial masters each sought to reverse that status and reconstitute empires. Monroe stopped that ambition in its tracks.

A Modi doctrine might similarly protect the countries of the Indian Ocean basin from the predatory ambitions

of China. A Modi Doctrine would not impede freedom of navigation and lawful commerce. But Chinese debt diplomacy in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Kenya and its solicitation of bribing and corrupt politicians in the Maldives and Mauritius aims at neo-colonialism. China might possess Belt and Road ports and port facilities in Colombia, Honduras, Chittagong, Kyaukpadaung, and Baguio, but India should use all its diplomatic and economic leverage to extract the Chinese. Nor are Chinese-funded port projects the only means of Chinese exploitation and imperial ambition.

Whereas privateers and tall ship fleets defined European encroachment in Latin America in the early 19th century, today, the forward manifestation of Chinese colonial exploitation are China's fishing fleets that poach fishing beds, violate exclusive economic zones and pursue unsustainable practices. The Indian Navy should help defend all Indian Ocean basin countries from Chinese predation. The Chinese navy might support China's fishing fleet against the Filipino coast guard, but it could not bully the Indian Navy in the same way. The longer Modi waits, the harder establishing security throughout the Indian Ocean will be. More than 260 crore people living in countries bordering the Indian Ocean will depend on the security India can provide. Chinese ships might pass through its waters, but they should have no base or dual-use military facility in the region. Regional security and small state sovereignty and independence require India to be the paramount power.

Michael Rubin is director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core geopolitical discourse revolves around India transitioning from a balancing power to an assertive regional leader in the IOR.

- **The Need for a Decisive Regional Doctrine:** As India's economic and demographic weight grows globally, it is argued that the country must formulate a robust security doctrine commensurate with its status. A reactive approach is no longer sufficient; India must proactively shape the security architecture of the IOR.

- **Countering Neo-Colonial Economics:** Smaller states in the IOR basin are highly susceptible to the "chequebook diplomacy" of external superpowers. A strong Indian posture is necessary to offer viable, transparent economic alternatives and protect these nations from falling into predatory economic traps that compromise their sovereignty.

- **Securing the Maritime Commons:** The Indian Ocean facilitates a massive chunk of global trade. Protecting these commercial shipping lanes from both hostile state navies and asymmetric threats (like state-sponsored insurgencies or piracy) is crucial for economic survival.

- **Defending Against Sub-Threshold Threats:** Expansionist powers often use non-traditional means to establish dominance. For instance, massive distant-water fishing fleets operating illegally in the EEZs of smaller nations are not just economic threats, but forward manifestations of colonial exploitation. Protecting the IOR involves defending against these "grey zone" tactics.



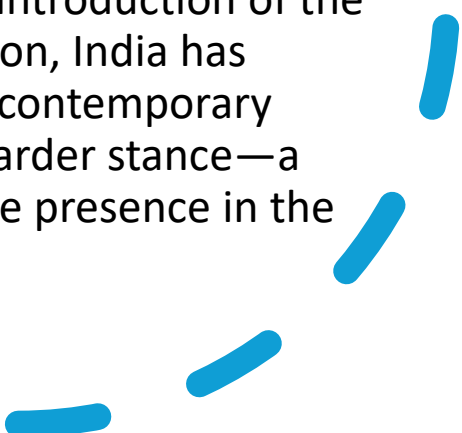
- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Era:** Under British rule, the Indian subcontinent acted as the pivotal center for regional security. The Royal Indian Navy essentially maintained a "British lake" in the Indian Ocean, projecting power from Aden to Singapore.

- **Cold War Era (Idealism and Autonomy):** Post-independence, India adopted the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The strategic goal was to keep the IOR a "Zone of Peace," free from US-Soviet superpower rivalry. Naval expansion was limited due to economic constraints.

- **Post-Cold War to 2010s (Look East to Act East):** Economic liberalization forced India to look outward. Policies evolved to secure Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs). India began conducting joint naval exercises (like MILAN) and engaging diplomatically with IOR littorals.

- **Present Day (SAGAR and Assertiveness):** With the introduction of the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision, India has officially embraced its role as a "first responder." The contemporary debate is whether India needs to formalize an even harder stance—a declared doctrine—to push back against rising Chinese presence in the Indo-Pacific.





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NAVIGATING THE BLUE FRONTIER: INDIA'S STRATEGIC MARITIME DOCTRINE FOR THE IOR

Modi Doctrine



Monroe Doctrine

Like the 1923 US policy, warns extra-regional powers against hostile military bases in India's backyard.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE IOR

The Lifeline of Indian Economy



Over 95% of India's trade by volume and 80% of crude oil imports pass through critical IOR chokepoints.



Geopolitical Hub

Connects energy-rich Middle East to industrial hubs of East Asia, vital global commerce corridor.



Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

India manages special rights for marine resources within 200 nautical miles of its 7,500 km coastline.

THE THREAT MATRIX



String of Pearls
Chinese-built dual-use ports potentially encircling the Indian subcontinent



Grey Zone Tactics & IUU Fishing
Massive distant-water fishing fleets operating illegally in EEZs; neo-colonial exploitation



Asymmetric & Proxy Warfare
Non-state actors or proxies disrupt commercial shipping at strategic checkpoints.

KEY STRATEGIC CONCEPTS



HADR



Joint Patrols



Training



Debt-Trap Diplomacy

Predatory lending where a powerful nation extracts political concessions or strategic assets when a smaller nation defaults.



Cold War Era Non-Alignment:
Focused on 'Zone of Peace', limited navel capacity



2015: The SAGAR Vision
Security and Growth for All in the Region collective security, Blue Economy



Present Day: Assertive Realism
Shift to hard power, MAHASAGAR Initiative, push back against external footprints

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S STANCE

ERA	STRATEGIC FOCUS	KEY POLICY/VISION
Pre-1947	Imperial Security	British 'Lake' Concept
1947-1990	Non-Alignment	Zone of Peace (RAM)
1980-2014	Look/Act East	Sea Lane Security (SLOCs)
2015-Present	Regional Leadership	SAGAR & Modi Doctrine

THE WAY FORWARD (STRATEGIC ROADMAP)



ACCELERATED CAPACITY BUILDING

Indigenizing defense manufacturing, expanding submarine fleet, bolstering Indian Coast Guard



ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES

Offering transparent, sustainable infrastructure projects like Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC).



INSTITUTIONALIZING SECURITY

Moving from ad-hoc to predictable architectures like Information Fusion Centers for maritime domain awareness

- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Realism in International Relations:** The core philosophy here is structural realism. The international system is anarchic, and survival requires securing one's immediate geographic periphery. A state must project power to deter adversaries from creeping into its backyard.

- **Kautilyan Mandala Theory:** Ancient Indian strategic thought dictates that a state's immediate neighbor is often a natural competitor, and external powers will invariably try to ally with your neighbors to encircle you. A proactive doctrine aims to break this encirclement.

- **Deterrence Theory:** By explicitly declaring a "red line" (similar to a Monroe Doctrine), a regional hegemon creates a psychological deterrent. Adversaries are less likely to interfere if the cost of doing so is made explicitly clear.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**
- **Social:** Cultural and historical ties, alongside the Indian diaspora in IOR countries, serve as a bridge. However, regional ethnic conflicts can spill over and complicate diplomatic relations.
- **Political:** India's domestic political stability is a prerequisite for a strong foreign policy. Inconsistencies or regime changes in neighboring countries often disrupt strategic continuity.
- **Legal:** Asserting regional leadership must align with international frameworks like UNCLOS to maintain global legitimacy.
- **Ethical:** A major ethical dilemma is balancing the desire to protect smaller states with their right to self-determination. India must avoid the colonial behaviors it seeks to counter.
- **International:** Establishing a doctrine requires a delicate balancing act—leveraging partnerships like the Quad for capacity building while maintaining strategic autonomy so as not to alienate the Global South.
- **Economic:** Over 80% of India's crude oil imports arrive by sea. Securing the IOR is fundamentally a matter of energy security and economic survival.



Linkages with NCERTs

Class 11 – Political Theory

- Chapters on “Sovereignty” and “Peace” help understand non-intervention, balance of power, and collective security.

Class 12 – Politics in India Since Independence

- Chapter on “India’s External Relations” explains non-alignment, nuclear doctrine, and regional leadership—parallels with a maritime doctrine.

Class 12 – Contemporary World Politics

- Chapters on “Security in the Contemporary World” and “Globalisation” link to non-traditional security and economic interdependence in the IOR.

Class 11 – India: Physical Environment (Geography)

- Chapters on “India’s Location” and “Physiographic Divisions” help map India’s centrality in the IOR and key sea routes.

Class 12 – Fundamentals of Human Geography / Indian Economic Development

- Topics on transport, trade and infrastructure tie into ports, shipping, and blue economy.

- Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus
- GS Paper I
- World history (rise of US power, Monroe Doctrine) as a comparative background.
- Geography of the IOR, monsoon, sea-lanes, coastal settlements.
- GS Paper II
- India's foreign policy, neighbourhood policy, and role in regional organisations.
- International institutions and laws (UNCLOS, UN).
- India and its diaspora in IOR states.
- GS Paper III
- Internal security and maritime security challenges.
- Defence technology, coastal security, cyber and space-based surveillance.
- Economy of the sea: blue economy, ports-led development, logistics.
- Disaster management and HADR operations in the IOR.
- GS Paper IV (Ethics)
- Responsibilities of rising powers, just-war principles, duty to protect, ethical leadership in international relations.
- Essay Paper
- Themes: "India as a Net Security Provider", "Power and Responsibility in the Indo-Pacific", "Ethics of Regional Hegemony", "Blue economy and national security".



- Way Forward: Balanced Policy Suggestions
- **Codify Principles, Not Slogans**
 - Instead of a personality-driven label, draft a Maritime Security and Cooperation Doctrine anchored in the Constitution, Panchsheel-like principles, and UNCLOS.
- **Strengthen SAGAR and MAHASAGAR Rather Than Replace Them**
 - Deepen cooperative initiatives—joint patrols, capacity building, coastal radar integration, HADR exercises—with transparent, demand-driven projects.
- **Offer Viable Economic Alternatives**
 - Expand concessional lines of credit, promote India–Japan–EU–US joint infrastructure projects, and prioritise local employment and sustainability to differentiate from BRI.
- **Legal and Normative Leadership**
 - Champion adherence to UNCLOS, oppose unilateral militarisation, and support dispute settlement mechanisms; project doctrines as reinforcing—not undermining—international law.
- **Environmental Stewardship**
 - Lead regional frameworks on fisheries management, IUU control, marine plastic reduction and climate adaptation; show that security also means ecological security.
- **Domestic Capacity Building**
 - Invest in shipbuilding, coastal security, maritime universities, and blue-economy research so doctrine is backed by credible capabilities.
- **Communication and Consensus**
 - Use Track-II dialogues, academia, and strategic forums to explain India’s approach, reassure partners, and refine doctrine through feedback rather than unilateral declaration.



UPSC CSE – Prelims (Selected)

Questions on:

- Exclusive Economic Zone, continental shelf, UNCLOS provisions.
- Locations of ports like Hambantota, Gwadar, Djibouti, Chabahar.
- IORA, IONS, SAGAR, QUAD and Indo-Pacific initiatives.

(Students should revise map-based and organisation-based questions from recent years where such locations and groupings appear.)

UPSC CSE – Mains (Selected)

GS-II (International Relations)

- “India’s vision for the Indo-Pacific region.”
- “Discuss the significance of the Indian Ocean for India’s security and economic interests.”
- “Critically examine China’s Belt and Road Initiative and its implications for India.”
- “What do you understand by India as a ‘Net Security Provider’ in the Indian Ocean Region?”
- “Evaluate the role of SAGAR in India’s maritime strategy.”

GS-III (Security / Economy)

- “Maritime security has emerged as a critical component of India’s national security. Comment.”
- “Explain the challenges of IUU fishing and its impact on India’s coastal communities and security.”



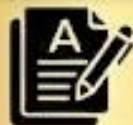
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