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1. In Tamil Nadu, governor overstepped bounds of constitutional morality (THE INDIAN EXPRESS)
2. UAE-Israel ties have deeper historical roots (THE TRIBUNE)
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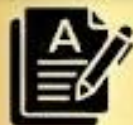
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In Tamil Nadu, Governor's delay did not do justice to the verdict

HE IS representative not of a party; he is representative of the people as a whole of the state. It is in the name of the people that he carries on the administration," said BR Ambedkar about the governor's role. The Supreme Court (SC) had quoted this statement in *Nabam Rebia* (2016).

The BJP was formed on April 6, 1980, with a claim that it would be "a party with a difference". But the governors appointed by its government have time and again proved they are the same as their counterparts appointed by Congress. Increasingly, they seem not to have much respect for the text of the Constitution, its spirit or even constitutional morality.

Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar's decision not to invite the leader of the single largest party to form the new government for days after the results is a grave example of this trend. No constitution's text covers every eventuality that may emerge in the course of a nation's politics. When a constitution is not explicit on a particular matter, constitutional conventions evolve and are accepted and followed. John Stuart Mill had called these conventions "unwritten maxims of the constitution." William Anson termed them "constitutional customs". British jurist Ivor Jennings said that constitutional conventions are important as "they provide the flesh which clothes the dry bones of the law".

The Indian Constitution, despite being the lengthiest in the world, in Article 164(1) states only that the "Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor" and the min-

istry under Article 164 (2) "shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly" — not to the governor. This is why the SC has consistently held in a catena of cases that the majority must be tested on the floor of the House and not the Lok Bhavan. In cases where no party gets the clear majority, the governor has to simply satisfy himself as to whether the person staking a claim to chief ministership will be able to win the vote of confidence. He is to be guided by the constitutional conventions in cases of a fractured mandate.

This is not the first time in India that an electorate has not delivered a majority to a single party or coalition. But the TVK's 108 seats do give a very clear sense of Tamil Nadu voters' mandate. They rejected both the incumbent DMK government, which, interestingly, had performed well on several economic and social parameters, as well as the AIADMK.

We had seen a number of governments at the Centre and in states that did not have a majority in the House. There have been a number of instances when the leader of the single largest party was invited to form the government and prove his majority. The BJP often got opportunities through this convention. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's first NDA government in 1996 was formed because he was the leader of the single largest party in the Lok Sabha with just 161 seats, and the NDA tally was 187 — far short of a majority. He resigned on the 13th day, delivering a powerful speech during the no-confidence motion. In 2018, Karnataka



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

The Lok Bhavan's communication on May 7 that the Governor is not satisfied with Vijay's claim shows not only a partisan and undemocratic attitude but also a lack of understanding of the nature of a vote of confidence

Governor Vajubhai Vala invited the BJP's B S Yediyurappa to form the government despite a post-poll alliance between Congress and the JD(S), and the BJP government eventually failed the subsequent confidence test in the House, which was advanced to 36 hours by the SC.

In the Tamil Nadu assembly, with a strength of 234 seats, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) led by film star-turned-politician C. Joseph Vijay has 108 seats. With no pre-poll alliance getting a majority, per convention, the governor should have invited Vijay to form the government, as he alone has staked the claim and the DMK and AIADMK have thus far publicly ruled out an alliance between them, rather than delay as much as he did. With Congress first extending the support of its five MLAs and the Left parties and others criticising the governor's actions and following suit, Vijay seems to have the numbers. In *S.R Bommai* (1994), the apex court did talk of pre-poll alliances, post-poll alliances and the single-largest party hierarchy. In the present case, the TVK has a post-poll alliance with Congress and is the

single largest party. Therefore, it has a rightful claim to be invited to form the government.

Due to the governor's unprecedented delay in inviting the TVK, there are reports suggesting that arch-rivals DMK and AIADMK started a conversation about a possible alliance. However, since both have been rejected by the people, such an alliance would be unethical and a negation of constitutional morality and democratic

norms. The Justice Punchhi Report on Centre-State Relations (2010) categorically stated that the discretion provided to the governor under Article 164 is very limited. In *Raghukul Tikak* (1979), the Supreme Court said that the governor's discretion must be "dictated by reason, activated by good faith and tempered by caution and should not appear to be arbitrary or fanciful". In *Rameshwar Prasad* (2006), the SC said governors should refrain from misusing their positions for partisan politics.

Lok Bhavan's communication on May 7 that the governor is not satisfied with Vijay's claim shows not only a partisan and undemocratic attitude but also lack of understanding of the nature of a vote of confidence. To be CM, one does not need an "absolute majority" — 50 per cent plus one of the total strength of the House. A confidence or no-confidence motion is passed by a "simple majority" — 50 per cent of those present and voting. In several such motions, some parties decide to abstain, which reduces the majority mark. A TVK government too, may survive.

"The good governors should have a broken leg and keep at home," said Miguel de Cervantes in *Don Quixote*. These are the constitutional ideals under which a governor had a faint presence, like a full moon at midday. His primary role as a sagacious counsellor was "to be consulted, to warn and to encourage". Alas, we now rarely get such governors.

The writer is the vice-chancellor of Chanakya National Law University, Patna. Views are personal

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Constitutional Morality:**

A foundational principle that goes beyond literal constitutional compliance. It means abiding by the values, spirit, and underlying ethics of the Constitution—such as justice, fairness, and democratic accountability—even when the text is silent. For instance, a governor who refuses to invite the single largest party to form a government may technically not violate any explicit clause, yet the decision can subvert the democratic mandate and the norm of collective responsibility to the legislature.

- **Constitutional Convention:**

Unwritten rules that emerge through sustained political practice and become binding in spirit. Think of them as the “unwritten maxims” (John Stuart Mill) or “flesh covering the dry bones of law” (Ivor Jennings). An example is the convention that the leader of the single largest party is invited first to form a government after a hung verdict. Though not codified, such conventions stabilise governance and give predictability to constitutional processes.

- **Floor Test:**

A constitutionally mandated procedure where the chief minister proves majority support on the floor of the legislature through a vote of confidence. It is not a test of the governor’s satisfaction but of the legislature’s trust. The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that the majority must be tested inside the House, not inside the Raj Bhavan, upholding the core premise of collective responsibility to the Assembly.

- **Simple Majority vs Absolute Majority:**

An absolute majority is 50%+1 of the total membership of the House. A confidence vote, however, is decided by a simple majority—half of the members present and voting. If some legislators abstain, the number falls, making it easier to prove confidence. This distinction is often poorly understood by constitutional functionaries who mistakenly demand an absolute majority before allowing a government to be sworn in.

- **Single Largest Party:**

In a hung assembly, the political party that wins the highest number of seats but falls short of a clear majority. Constitutional convention suggests that the governor first calls upon its leader to explore government formation, especially if a post-poll alliance provides sufficient support, as this reflects the voters’ implied preference.

- **Governor’s Discretion:**

Under Article 163, the governor can act in certain matters without or against the aid and advice of the council of ministers. However, this discretion is not absolute; it must be “dictated by reason, activated by good faith, and tempered by caution” (Raghukul Tilak, 1979). In government formation, the governor’s role is to appoint a person who, in his assessment, is most likely to command the confidence of the House—an assessment that must be guided not by political inclination but by objective parliamentary realities.

- **Collective Responsibility:**

Article 164(2) stipulates that the council of ministers is collectively responsible to the state legislative assembly. The governor does not possess a parallel power to determine that responsibility; it is the House alone that tests and sustains the executive. This foundational principle makes the floor test the only democratic mechanism to validate a claim to form the government.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis:**

The governor's role in government formation must be strictly channeled through constitutional conventions and the principle of legislative trust, not personal or partisan satisfaction. When a governor delays inviting the single largest party, questions the claimant's majority without a floor test, and communicates dissatisfaction from the Raj Bhavan, it damages constitutional morality and democratic norms.

- **Key Points and Evidence:**

- **Precedents in Favour of Convention:**

History shows that single largest party has often been invited, even with precarious numbers. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 1996 government rested on a mere 161 seats (NDA 187). He was invited, formed the government, and eventually lost a no-confidence motion—exactly how floor test dynamics should work. Similarly, in Karnataka in 2018, despite a post-poll Congress-JD(S) alliance, the governor invited the single largest party (BJP) which later failed the confidence test. The Supreme Court advanced the floor test to 36 hours, underlining that the House, not the Raj Bhavan, decides the majority.

- **The Governor's Erroneous Approach:**

Demanding an "absolute majority" before swearing-in shows a misunderstanding of parliamentary arithmetic. A confidence motion requires only a simple majority of members present and voting. Stalling the invitation allows political manoeuvres that can produce unethical, post-result alliances between parties rejected by the electorate—negating the people's mandate.

- **Judicial Guidance:**

In S.R. Bommai (1994), the apex court established a hierarchy: pre-poll alliance, then single largest party, then post-poll alliance. The governor must objectively assess who is likely to enjoy the House's confidence, not impose his subjective yardstick. In Nabam Rebia (2016), the court quoted Ambedkar to emphasise that the governor is a representative of the people of the state as a whole, not of a party.

- **Counterarguments and Rebuttal:**

Some defend the governor's caution by arguing that sworn-in governments might indulge in horse-trading to secure a majority later. However, the Supreme Court has already prescribed that confidence must be demonstrated on the floor, with stringent anti-defection law provisions acting as a deterrent. Delaying formation on suspicion alone violates the principle that the governor's discretion must be limited and reasoning transparent. The Punchhi Commission (2010) explicitly stated that the governor's discretion under Article 164 is "very limited" and should never be a veil for partisan ends.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Context:**

The governor's office under the Government of India Act, 1935, wielded substantial discretionary authority, often used in the imperial interest. The colonial legacy left a template where the governor could override popular representatives.

- **Constituent Assembly Debates:**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar envisioned a governor who would be "representative not of a party; he is representative of the people as a whole of the state... in the name of the people, he carries on the administration." The Assembly designed the governor's role on the parliamentary model—nominal head, acting on ministerial advice, with limited discretionary pockets. Yet, the drafters kept Articles 163 and 164 slightly ambiguous to accommodate unforeseen contingencies.

- **Post-Independence Milestones:**

- **Early Decades:** Governors often exercised genuine discretion in states where the Congress dominated, and conflicts were minimal. The erosion began when non-Congress governments arose, and governors were seen as central agents.

- **Samsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974):** The Supreme Court clarified that the governor ordinarily acts on the aid and advice of the council of ministers except in spheres expressly left to discretion.

- **Raghukul Tilak (1979):** The court ruled that discretion must be "dictated by reason, activated by good faith and tempered by caution."

- **S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994):** A watershed judgment that outlawed arbitrary dismissal of state governments and mandated that the majority be tested on the floor of the House. It also outlined the priority order for government formation: pre-poll alliance, single largest party, post-poll coalition.

- **Rameshwar Prasad (2006):** The apex court warned governors against misusing office for partisan politics.

- **Nabam Rebia (2016):** Reiterated Ambedkar's vision and held that the governor's powers, including summoning the assembly, must conform to constitutional morality, not subjective whims.

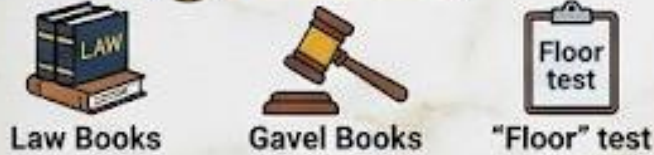
- **Punchhi Commission (2010):** Recommended that the governor should be an eminent person from outside the state, appointed after consultation with the chief minister, and have a fixed tenure. It stressed minimal discretion in government formation.

- **Recent Flashpoints:** Karnataka 2018, Maharashtra 2019, and other states saw governors' decisions challenged, with the Supreme Court repeatedly ordering floor tests, reinforcing the Bommai principles.

- Thus, from the imperial overhang to the current struggle between convention and partisan discretion, the governor's role has evolved, but the tension between constitutional text and political practice remains central.

CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE: THE GOVERNOR'S ROLE IN FRACTURED MANDATES & CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY

KEY TERMS



GOVERNOR'S POSITION



KEY ARGUMENTS



GOVERNOR'S POSITION



Nominal vs. Real Executive
 - Nominal constraint
 - Using the constitution



Democratic Distinction Principles
 - Agent of Union or State?
 - Agent of Union or State for the Government's state:

CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY vs. POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP



Sagacious Counsellor
 Ideal to present impartially in sagacious counsellor, who presides in the constitution



Party Representative
 Party Representative has criticism of party in present criticism to commission of party Representative

THE FLOOR TEST PRINCIPLE

The Floor Test entails principles of **Present and Voting** and **Simple Majority** in the Assembly Hall



HISTORICAL ISSUES



JUDICIAL FINDINGS

- Bommai:** Summaries of the premises of the Governor annularize the constitutional mandates, seems last performance on governance law mandates
- Nabam Rebia:** Governor ensure protection of judicial mandates, general handling, participation analysis in which to elicit or develops of constitutional invests inclusion morality
- Punchhi:** Governor is severely harassed the situation of Governor mode transfer in Extension to assume the latest varieties in media to Bommai.

WAY FORWARD

- Neutral Appointments:** Neutral appointments and general non-partisan appointments.
- Codified Guidelines:** Codified appointment, es. Governor, state, concerns or and appointments.
- Binding Conventions.**

- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Underlying Logic:**

Parliamentary democracy rests on the principle that the executive is accountable to the legislature, not to an appointed head. A governor who substitutes his satisfaction for the House's trust fractures this chain of responsibility. The logical foundation is that only the elected representatives can certify who enjoys confidence—this is the “flesh” that constitutional conventions provide to the “dry bones” of Article 164.

- **Philosophical Foundations:**

- **Ambedkar's Vision:** The governor as a non-partisan elder statesman, a “sagacious counsellor” whose role is “to be consulted, to warn and to encourage.” He is a link, not a master. This aligns with the ideal of constitutional morality, which demands that power be exercised in the spirit of the Constitution, not merely within its letter.

- **Mill and Jennings:** John Stuart Mill's “unwritten maxims” suggest that a constitution's stability depends as much on its uncodified norms as on its text. Ivor Jennings claimed that conventions make a constitution workable, providing the organic norms that give life to rigid legal structures. The governor's obligation to follow the single-largest-party convention is not legal pedantry but a philosophical commitment to democratic predictability.

- **Doctrine of Responsible Government:** The ethical thread is that a government must be responsible to the House. Any external interference that delays or distorts this responsibility undermines the very morality of representative governance. The governor's discretion is a narrow safety valve, not a license to override the people's mandate.

- **Broken Leg Ideal:** The metaphor from Cervantes' Don Quixote—that good governors should “have a broken leg and keep at home”—symbolises a minimal, symbolic role. In constitutional philosophy, a governor should be seen, not assertively heard, like a full moon at midday—faint presence, steady, unobtrusive.

- Thus, the demand is for a governor who acts on reason, remains institutionally neutral, and respects the unwritten compact that parliamentary confidence is the sole currency of democratic legitimacy.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social dimension**

- Perceived manipulation of mandates can alienate citizens, especially younger voters already sceptical of politics.
- Minority and regional communities may see partisan gubernatorial actions as attempts to sideline their choices, affecting social cohesion.

- **Political dimension**

- Governor's office becomes a site of Centre–state contestation, intensifying cooperative federalism into competitive or even confrontational federalism.
- Frequent hung assemblies mean that whichever party masters gubernatorial leverage gains disproportionate bargaining power.

- **Legal dimension**

- Key constitutional articles implicated: 153–164, 174–175, 356; read with judicial precedents like S R Bommai, Nabam Rebia, Rameshwar Prasad.
- Each controversial case adds to case law and may eventually lead to formal guidelines or constitutional amendments.

- **Ethical dimension**

- Core issues: impartiality, conflict of interest, loyalty to Constitution vs loyalty to appointing authority.
- Constitutional morality demands that governor's personal or party preferences never override the procedural fairness owed to all political actors.

- **International dimension**

- Parliamentary democracies like the UK, Canada, Australia have similar roles (monarch, Governor General) where conventions tightly restrain discretion.
- Comparative lessons: once conventions solidify and are respected by all, controversies significantly decrease.

- **Economic dimension**

- Prolonged political uncertainty in states can delay budgets, welfare decisions, investment clearances, and project implementation.
- Investors and rating agencies look for stability; repeated hung verdict crises managed poorly can raise state-specific political risk.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**

- **Class 11 – Indian Constitution at Work**

- Chapters on “Constitution as a Living Document” and “Federalism” directly relate to governor’s role, Centre–state relations, and constitutional morality.
- Sections on “executive at state level” and “conventions” can be read with this issue.

- **Class 11 – Political Theory**

- Chapters on “Democracy”, “Liberty, Equality, Justice”, and “Rights” provide normative grounding for arguments about people’s mandate and institutional fairness.

- **Class 12 – Politics in India Since Independence**

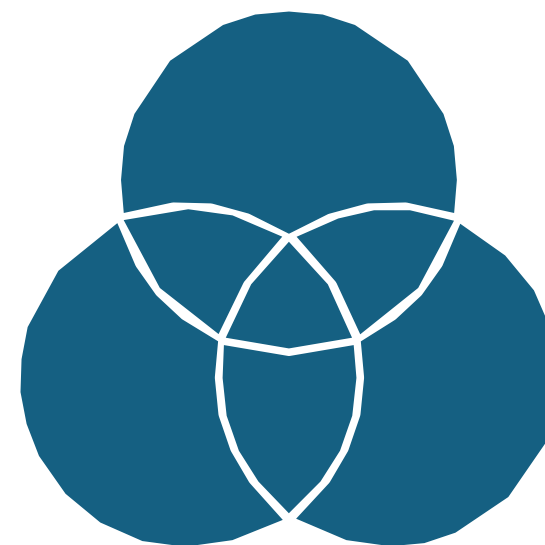
- Chapters on “The Crisis of Democratic Order”, “Regional Aspirations”, and “Rise of Coalition Politics” explain background of Article 356 misuse and coalition era governor controversies.

- **Class 12 – Contemporary World Politics**

- Comparative democracy and constitutionalism sections help relate Indian gubernatorial practice to global experiences in parliamentary systems.

- **Class 9/10 – Democratic Politics I & II**

- Basic chapters on “Working of Institutions”, “Democratic Rights”, and “Federalism” give foundational understanding of roles of President, PM, governors, and CMs.



Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus

GS Paper 2

- “Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.”
- “Separation of powers between various organs, dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.”
- “Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.”
- “Important aspects of governance, transparency, accountability.”

GS Paper 1

- Post-independence consolidation and reorganisation, particularly around Centre–state relations and use/misuse of Article 356.

GS Paper 3

- Indirectly linked through impact of political stability on economic growth, investments, and governance outcomes.

GS Paper 4 (Ethics)

- “Ethics in public administration.”
- “Accountability and ethical governance.”
- “Probity in governance: information sharing and transparency in government.”

Essay Paper

- Themes like “constitutional morality”, “federalism”, “institutions vs individuals”, “democracy beyond elections”.

Optional subjects

- Political Science & International Relations: Indian government and politics; constitutional bodies; federalism; executive.
- Public Administration: Union–state relations, role of constitutional and extra-constitutional authorities in administration.
- Law optional: Constitutional law, separation of powers, judicial review over gubernatorial action.

Way forward

Codification of government-formation guidelines

- Parliament or Inter-State Council could endorse a clear, public order of preference for invitation in hung houses:
 - Pre-poll alliance majority, 2) Single largest party with assured post-poll support, 3) Post-poll coalition with majority, 4) Others.
- This reduces ambiguity and scope for manipulation.

Time-bound floor tests

- Once a plausible claim is made, governor should convene the assembly and hold a floor test within a short, specified period.
- Supreme Court and Election Commission norms can together standardise this practice.

Reform of governor appointment process

- Consider a collegium-style or bipartisan consultation mechanism (PM, CMs, Opposition leaders) for appointing governors.
- Fixed, security-of-tenure norms and clear grounds for removal can reduce perceived political dependence.

Enhancing transparency of Raj Bhavan decisions

- All key decisions (why X invited over Y, why delay, why a particular date for floor test) should be explained in written, reasoned orders.
- Such reasons should be publicly accessible, aiding accountability and judicial review if necessary.

Internal codes of conduct for governors

- Adopt a national “Code of Constitutional Conduct” for governors, emphasising neutrality, restraint, non-partisan public communication, and respect for elected governments.
- Training/orientation programmes for governors at inauguration can reinforce these norms.

Strengthening legislative oversight and public debate

- State assemblies and Parliament can hold structured debates on the role of governors and pass resolutions outlining expectations.
- Academic, media and civil society discourse around constitutional morality can create soft pressure for better conduct.

UPSC Mains – GS 2

- 2018: “Whether the Supreme Court Judgment (July 2017) can settle the political tussle between the Lieutenant Governor and elected government of Delhi? Examine.”
- 2016: “Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.” (constitutional morality linkage)
- 2014: “Discuss Section 66A of IT Act, with reference to its alleged violation of Article 19 of the Constitution.” (rule of law and constitutionalism)
- 2013: “Recent directives from Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to private oil marketing companies not to raise prices of diesel, kerosene and LPG have been criticised by economists. Do you agree with this view? Discuss.” (federal and institutional roles, indirectly linked through governance).

UPSC Mains – GS 1 / Post-independence

- 2013: “Critically examine the use of Article 356 of the Constitution in the working of Indian polity.”

UPSC Mains – GS 4 (Ethics)

- 2019: Question on “What do you understand by Constitutional morality?” with reference to role of civil servants.
- 2017: Questions on neutrality and non-partisanship of civil servants (analogous to governors).

Essay Paper

- Repeated themes like “Cooperative federalism”, “Constitutionalism vs populism”, “Real test of democracy lies beyond elections”, etc., have appeared over years, where this issue is directly relevant.

UAE-Israel ties have deeper historical roots



VIVEK KATJU
FORMER SECRETARY, MINISTRY
OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RESPONSIBLE sections of the western media have reported that Israel has deployed its Iron Dome and Iron Beam anti-missile defences in the UAE during this period of intense armed hostilities, currently paused, in the Gulf. Along with the equipment, military personnel have also been sent to the Arab Gulf country. These systems have been sent, for the first time, by Israel outside its territories. Neither Israel nor the UAE have denied the reports; hence, there is no reason to doubt their veracity.

The US, under the Trump administration, brokered the normalisation of UAE-Israeli ties in 2020. This was under the rubric of the Abraham Accords. Under their agreement, Israel and the UAE established diplomatic, commercial and security ties. Observers are tracing the deployment of the Iron Dome and the Iron Beam systems to the normalisation of

Israel-UAE ties. However, the reasons lie deeper in history.

The implacable enmity between Israel and Iran goes back to the beginning of the Khomeini Revolution in 1979. In the past 47 years, Iran has refused to recognise Israel's right to exist. That was a position taken by all the Arab states until Egypt recognised Israel in 1978, under Anwar-us-Sadat, in the Camp David Accords. The Arab states considered it a sell-out, as did Khomeini. This was different from the Shah of Iran's approach to Israel; the Shah fled Iran in January 1979. Khomeini returned to the country in February that year and soon took it in his iron grip. That system has continued under the Vilayat-e-Faqih framework.

The UAE's animosity towards Iran has historical roots. It arose from the traditional cultural superciliousness of Persians towards the Arab bedouin and the disdain with which the Shah treated them. This was exhibited when he occupied the Greater and the Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa just days before the UAE was formed in December 1971. The Tunbs were disputed between Iran and Ras al Khaimah and Abu Musa between Sharjah and Iran. The Iranian action further embittered relations, but the extent and persistence of negativity became clear when in early 1997, the UAE's



MEDIATOR: The US brokered the normalisation of UAE-Israeli ties in 2020 with the Abraham Accords.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (and now Foreign Minister) Abdullah bin Zayed conveyed an astonishing position to India's then External Affairs Minister IK Gujral. I know this personally and it would be timely to disclose it in more detail than he has done earlier.

Gujral visited Tehran and decided to spend a few hours in Abu Dhabi to meet his counterpart on his way back to Delhi. In Tehran, apart from bilateral ties, he focussed on the situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban had captured Kabul some five months before his visit.

Both Iran and India along with Russia were assisting the anti-Taliban alliance. While an exchange of views on Palestine took place, the situation in the

Gulf and Iran-Gulf relations were not on the agenda; there was no need for them to be so.

After the Abdullah-Gujral meeting had gone on for some time, after discussions on bilateral ties, the former asked to meet the latter alone. All officials present, including me, left the chamber. Gujral and Abdullah were together for around 20 minutes. Gujral came out and looked troubled. When some of the accompanying officials were alone with him and could talk to him in confidence, they asked what had happened.

His words are embedded in my memory. He said that Abdullah had cautioned him on Iran and then had added these words: "We can imagine

ourselves to be in the same trenches with Israel against Iran? In the context of the times, this was a bombshell.

While it was known that Sheikh Zayed, UAE President and Abu Dhabi ruler, as well as some rulers of the six other UAE sheikhdoms did not have positive feelings for Iran, the possibility of their making common cause with Israel against Iran had never been contemplated in Delhi. A little under three decades later, Israel and the UAE have made common cause against Iran and how!

The UAE has moved away in its approaches to society and diplomacy from other Arab Gulf states in recent years. A substantial degree of antipathy has emerged between Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ), the current Abu Dhabi ruler. UAE senior officials have openly complained that none of the other Arab Gulf states came to their country's support when it was facing a far higher degree of missile and drone attacks by Iran since the beginning of the present conflict.

This is not far from the facts. In a kind of response, the UAE left OPEC and OPEC+. Having the sixth largest oil reserves and producing over 3 million barrels per day of oil, the UAE is a significant factor in the hydrocarbons world. It will try

to chart its own path, but OPEC+ countries will continue to dominate the oil markets. It is likely that the UAE will get more elbow room for taking independent decisions on its oil production, but it will have to align itself on other issues with OPEC+.

MBZ adopted a more liberal social policy, allowing other faiths to open their places of worship. At the same time, Dubai became one of the world's important financial centres and developed its tourism industry. In taking these steps, the UAE abandoned the exclusivist approaches of Wahhabi Islam and moved in unprecedented directions.

While MBS has also softened the rigours of Wahhabism in society, he has not, and indeed cannot, follow MBZ's example. The House of Saud is in the vanguard of Wahhabism. Will MBS and other Gulf rulers now subtly preach that MBZ has gone too far?

It is important that Indian analysts in government and outside extend their study of the Arab peninsula to its theological moorings, the tribal roots of its societies and politics and its internecine quarrels which impact the policies of its countries. The lesson from these studies will reveal that it will be shortsighted for India to give primacy to one state as it is doing today.

It is shortsighted for India to give primacy to one Arab peninsula state, as it is doing today.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Iron Dome:** A short-range air defence system developed by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries. It detects incoming rockets, artillery shells, and mortars, calculates which projectiles will hit populated areas, and intercepts only those threats. It reduces collateral damage and conserves interceptors. For example, it was used extensively to shield Israeli cities from Hamas rocket salvos. The system is mobile and can be adapted to different threat environments.
- **Iron Beam:** A complementary directed-energy weapon (high-power laser) designed to intercept rockets, mortars, drones, and anti-tank missiles at a much lower cost per shot than Iron Dome. Still in advanced testing and limited deployment, it uses a fibre laser to heat and destroy targets. Its first operational deployment outside Israel, if confirmed, would signal confidence in the technology and a shift toward laser-based defence exporting.
- **Abraham Accords:** A series of normalization agreements brokered by the United States in 2020, under which the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan established formal diplomatic, economic, and security ties with Israel. They broke with the decades-old Arab League consensus that recognition of Israel should follow a resolution of the Palestinian question. The accords created a new strategic axis in West Asia, opening avenues for trade, technology transfer, tourism, and defence cooperation.
- **Vilayat-e-Faqih:** The "Guardianship of the Jurist" doctrine, institutionalized in Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution by Ayatollah Khomeini. It vests ultimate political and religious authority in a senior Shia cleric (the Supreme Leader). This framework underpins Iran's theocratic state structure and justifies clerical oversight over all branches of government, the military, and foreign policy, including the non-recognition of Israel.
- **Greater Tunbs, Lesser Tunbs, and Abu Musa:** Three islands in the eastern Persian Gulf near the Strait of Hormuz. Iran occupied them in November 1971, just days before the UAE was formed on 2 December 1971. The Tunbs were claimed by Ras al-Khaimah, and Abu Musa by Sharjah. The dispute remains unresolved and continues to fuel UAE-Iran mistrust, symbolizing perceived Iranian expansionism.
- **OPEC and OPEC+:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) comprises 13 major oil-producing nations coordinating petroleum policies. OPEC+ includes 10 additional non-OPEC oil-exporters, notably Russia. Decisions on production quotas directly affect global crude prices. The UAE's withdrawal from OPEC+ signals a desire for independent oil policy, with implications for energy diplomacy.
- **Wahhabism:** A puritanical reform movement within Sunni Islam founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the 18th century, central to the Saudi state's legitimacy. The UAE has gradually distanced itself from its strict social codes by permitting other faiths' places of worship and encouraging tourism, in contrast to Saudi Arabia's cautious, albeit real, social liberalization under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core thesis:** The reported deployment of Israeli Iron Dome and Iron Beam systems to the UAE is not merely an outcome of the 2020 Abraham Accords. It is rooted in a prolonged, historically conditioned convergence of UAE and Israeli threat perceptions regarding Iran. The article argues that deeper historical grievances—the 1971 island occupation, Persian cultural superiority, and post-1979 ideological hostility—drive current defence alignment.

- **Key points:**

- Israeli air defence systems and military personnel have allegedly been sent outside Israeli territory for the first time, marking a qualitative shift in security cooperation.
- Neither Israel nor the UAE denied the reports, lending weight to their veracity.
- The US-brokered normalisation provided the diplomatic cover, but substantive integration is propelled by mutual animosity toward Iran.
- The UAE's historical grievance over the Tunbs and Abu Musa occupation is a persistent irritant.
- Abdullah bin Zayed's 1997 remark to then Indian foreign minister I.K. Gujral that the UAE could "imagine ourselves to be in the same trenches with Israel against Iran" shows that this alignment was contemplated decades ago.
- UAE's departure from OPEC+ and its liberal social policies are part of a broader strategic repositioning, distancing itself from Saudi-led consensus while cultivating autonomy.
- The article warns Indian policymakers against over-prioritising one Gulf state (implicitly Saudi Arabia or UAE) and urges deeper understanding of tribal, theological, and internecine dynamics.

- **Counterarguments :**

- Other Gulf states may accuse the UAE of going too far, breaking Arab solidarity and Wahhabi norms.
- Saudi Arabia's MBS cannot fully replicate MBZ's social model due to the House of Saud's vanguard role in Wahhabism.
- The sustainability of such alignment is questionable given volatile regional dynamics and potential Iranian retaliation.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1971:** The Shah of Iran maintained cordial, de facto ties with Israel, viewing it as a peripheral ally against Arab nationalism. The Shah's Iran also projected cultural superiority over Arab Gulf societies.
 - **November 1971:** Imperial Iran seized Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa days before the UAE's formation. This planted deep resentment in Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and the emerging federation.
 - **1978-79:** Camp David Accords led to Egyptian recognition of Israel. The Arab world, and soon revolutionary Iran, condemned it as a sellout. The Shah fled Iran in January 1979; Ayatollah Khomeini returned in February, establishing Vilayat-e-Faqih.
 - **1979 onwards:** Iran became the vanguard of anti-Israel rejectionism, supporting groups like Hezbollah, while Gulf Arab states publicly maintained Israel's illegitimacy without Palestinian statehood.
 - **1990s:** UAE's quiet unease with Iran grew. In early 1997, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abdullah bin Zayed privately told India's I.K. Gujral that the UAE could align with Israel against Iran. This indicated a pragmatic break from pan-Arab solidarity.
 - **2011-2020:** Geopolitical shifts (Arab Spring, Iran nuclear deal, Yemen war, Qatar blockade) pushed UAE and Saudi Arabia toward closer security ties with the US and Israel. In 2020, UAE signed the Abraham Accords.
 - **2023-2026:** Escalating Iran-Israel shadow war, Houthi attacks on UAE (2022), and direct Iranian strikes fueled the UAE's quest for advanced air defence. Reports of Iron Dome/Iron Beam deployment in the UAE emerged in early 2026 during an intense Gulf conflict, now paused.
 - **Present:** The deployment, if confirmed, signals a formalised Israeli-UAE defensive alliance against Iran, moving beyond diplomatic normalisation into kinetic security integration.
-



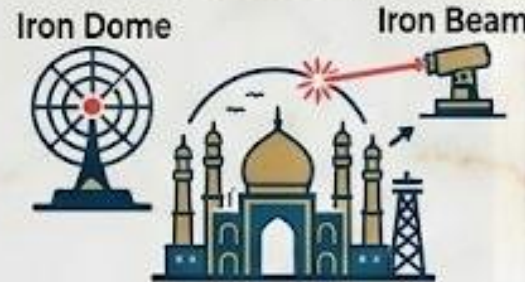
AXIA
IAS ACADEMY

AXIA COMPETITIVE EXAM CENTRE

**WEST ASIA
STRATEGIC REAL
REALIGNMENT:
CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

**1997: Coded UAE-India Disclosure
- "Same Trenches with Israel"**

ABRAHAM ACCORDS (2020)
- Strategic Trust Deployment



ISRAEL
(PRAGMATIC ALLY)

ABRAHAM ACCORDS (2020)
- Strategic Trust Deployment

LAND FOR PEACE
→
- PEACE FOR PEACE

**SHARED EXISTENTIAL
THREAT PERCEPTION**



**1978:
CAMP DAVID ACCORDS**
- Break in Arab Unity



UAE
(INDEPENDENT PATH)

POST-WAHHABISM:
Social Pluralism

EXITING OPEC+
Economic Autonomy

**EXITING OPEC+
BOUNDARIES:**
Economic Autonomy

MBZ vs. MBS

1979: IRANIAN REVOLUTION
- Hostility to Israel/US



IRAN
(IDEOLOGICAL THREAT)

VILAYAT-E-FAQIH

**LIBERAL VS.
CONSERVATIVE
WAHHABISM**

FRAGMENTED GCC

INDIAN STRATEGIC BALANCING



**DE-HYPHENATED
POLICY:**
Avoid taking
primacy



**DEEPEN
THEOLOGICAL/TRIBAL
UNDERSTANDING:**
Predict, don't react



**I2U2 (Indo-Abrahamic)
FOR MARITIME
STABILITY**



**TECHNOLOGY
COOPERATION**
(Missile Defense)



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Realism in International Relations:** The article's argument is grounded in realist assumptions. States are rational actors seeking security in an anarchic system. Shared threat perception (Iran) drives alliance formation irrespective of ideological differences or historical enmity (Arab-Israeli divide). The balance of power logic explains why UAE and Israel gravitate together: both see a revisionist Iran.
- **Historical institutionalism:** Deep-rooted historical grievances and identity narratives shape policy. Iranian occupation of islands created a path-dependent antagonism that persists across generations, making rapprochement difficult. UAE's moves reflect lock-in effects from 1971.
- **Clash of Civilizations nuance:** While not explicitly Huntington, cultural superciliousness (Persian versus Arab) and religious schism (Shia theocracy versus Wahhabi Sunni) provide a quasi-civilizational undertone that strengthens threat perception.
- **Bounded rationality and signalling:** Abdullah's 1997 statement privately conveyed a possible policy direction that seemed unthinkable publicly. It shows states often test ideas discreetly before acting. The UAE's gradual public shift—first tolerance, then Abraham Accords, now defence integration—follows a pattern of incremental de-tabooing.
- **Constructivism:** Identity and norms matter. UAE's social liberalisation and embrace of multifaith worship construct a new national identity that allows it to partner with a Jewish state without domestic unrest. Changing norms redefine what is "acceptable" in Arab-Islamic discourse.
- **Pragmatism over ideology:** The philosophical shift reflects a move from pan-Arabism and Islamic solidarity to raison d'état. The UAE prioritizes survival and prosperity over abstract ideological commitments to the Palestinian cause.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social**

- The UAE's modernization model combines social liberalization, globalized urban life, and regime-managed pluralism. This creates a different social backdrop from older exclusivist narratives in the region.
- Yet social liberalization does not remove geopolitical insecurity; modern cities can be highly open economically and highly vulnerable strategically at the same time.

- **Political**

- The issue shows the rise of pragmatic authoritarian statecraft: regime survival, strategic hedging, and elite-driven diplomacy dominate decision-making.
- It also reflects a transition from pan-Arab symbolism to state-centric calculations.

- **Legal**

- Core legal dimensions include sovereignty, territorial dispute resolution, arms transfers, and rules governing external deployment by invitation.
- The three-islands dispute is especially relevant for international law, peaceful dispute settlement, and ICJ/arbitration debates.

- **Ethical**

- Is it ethical for states to prioritize immediate security over earlier ideological commitments? The answer is contested: realism says yes, while moral-political critiques may see it as selective principle.
- Another ethical issue is proportionality and regional civilian security, because hard security bargains can widen conflict even when intended as deterrence.

- **International**

- The issue highlights how West Asia is shaped by middle-power agency, not only by the United States. Even though the U.S. brokered the Abraham Accords, local states are now driving the operational content of new alignments.
- It also demonstrates that normalization can produce new regional security geometries directed at shared threats.

- **Economic**

- Energy markets, shipping routes, defence technology trade, insurance, tourism, and financial services all intersect here. The UAE's globalized economy makes regional stability an economic necessity.
- Reported OPEC exit adds another dimension: the UAE may seek more freedom over output and national economic strategy, though broader market realities still constrain it.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 Political Science**
- **Contemporary World Politics:** chapters on the end of bipolarity, new centres of power, regional conflicts, and security are directly relevant because this issue combines regional realignment, security dilemmas, and foreign policy pragmatism. The Israel-UAE-Iran triangle is an excellent applied example of changing power equations.
- **Politics in India Since Independence:** useful indirectly for understanding India's foreign policy adaptation in a changing international environment.
 - **Class 11 Political Theory**
- Chapters on justice, equality, freedom, rights, and political thought help in discussing the ethical tension between national interest and normative commitments such as solidarity, sovereignty, and peace.
 - **Class 12 History themes**
- Themes connected to decolonization, emergence of new states, and conflict in West Asia help students understand how colonial withdrawal and border-making left enduring disputes such as the island issue.
 - **Class 10 Contemporary India / Economics**
- Basic treatment of global interdependence, resources, and economic development helps connect energy routes, oil dependency, and strategic geography in simple conceptual terms.
 - **Class 11 Geography**
- Physical location of the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, desert urbanization, and maritime chokepoints are highly relevant for map-based understanding.



Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus

General Studies Paper 1:

- *World History*: Post-World War II West Asian politics, Arab-Israeli conflict, Iranian Revolution, Camp David Accords, Gulf wars, evolution of regional alliances.
- *Effects of globalization on Indian society* – Indian diaspora in Gulf, remittances, cultural exchanges.

General Studies Paper 2:

- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests*: Abraham Accords, OPEC+, GCC, India-Israel, India-UAE, India-Iran relations.
- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*: UAE-Israel defence alignment impacts India's energy security, diaspora safety, and strategic autonomy.
- *Important international institutions, agencies and fora*: OPEC, UN Charter provisions.

General Studies Paper 3:

- *Defence technology and indigenization*: Iron Dome and Iron Beam as examples of advanced missile defence, potential lessons for India's BMD.
- *Security challenges and their management in border areas*: linkages to India's coastal and border defence against drones and missiles.
- *Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security*: Iran-linked proxies, lessons for India's security.

General Studies Paper 4 (Ethics):

- *Ethical concerns in international relations*: Moral dilemmas of normalization vs. Palestinian rights, arms transfer ethics, AI in warfare.
- *Case studies*: Could be used to discuss ethical dimensions of secret diplomacy and security pacts.

Essay Papers:

- Themes: "Geopolitics of energy security", "Balancing ethics and national interest in foreign policy", "Realism vs. idealism in international relations", "Technology as a double-edged sword in warfare".



- **Way Forward**

- India should follow a **multi-vector Gulf policy**. It must deepen ties with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Israel and Iran without appearing captured by one bloc.
- Second, India should institutionalise West Asia expertise. Diplomatic training must include Persian-Arab rivalry, Sunni-Shia politics, tribal structures, Islamic jurisprudence, maritime chokepoints and sovereign wealth fund strategy.
- Third, India must protect its diaspora. Evacuation planning, labour welfare, insurance systems and embassy outreach should be updated for sudden Gulf escalation.
- Fourth, India should strengthen energy resilience through strategic petroleum reserves, diversified crude sourcing, renewable transition and rupee-based or long-term energy contracts.
- Fifth, India should support de-escalation. Its credibility lies in speaking to all sides: Israel, Iran, Gulf monarchies, the US and regional institutions.
- Sixth, India should expand maritime security in the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Red Sea, as energy and trade routes are now strategic lifelines.



- **UPSC Mains – GS Paper 2**

- **2023:** “Indian diaspora has scaled new heights in the West. Describe its economic and political benefits for India.”
- **2022:** “India’s relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back. Discuss.”
- **2021:** “The newly tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China’s ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede existing partnerships?”
- **2020:** “Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times. Discuss.”
- **2019:** “The time has come for India and Japan to build a strong contemporary relationship, one involving global and strategic partnership.”
- **2018:** “India’s relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back. Discuss.”
- **2017:** “Indian diaspora has an important role to play in Southeast Asian countries’ economy and society. Appraise.”
- **2015:** “Increasing interest of India in Africa has its pros and cons. Critically examine.”

- **UPSC Mains – GS Paper 3**

- **Energy Security Theme:** Questions on energy security, oil dependence, strategic reserves and external shocks are repeatedly relevant though not always West Asia-specific.
- **Internal Security Theme:** Questions on cyber security, drones, terrorism and emerging military technologies connect with missile defence and regional conflict.

Don't Put InvITs, REITs on the MAT



Amitabh Kant

Infrastructure creation is central to India's economic policy. This, even as global capital flows have become more selective. India must mobilise long-term capital at scale, both domestic and global, through efficient financial structures.

India's listed business trusts have emerged as a credible bridge between long-duration savings and income-generating assets. They have also provided an effective route for monetisation of operational infra. India has 5 listed REITs and more than 24 listed InvITs with an aggregate market capitalisation of around ₹4 lakh cr. This growth has been built on clear design principles.

► **Distribution discipline** Regulations require 90% of free cash flows be distributed from SPVs to the trust, and from trust to unit holders. This creates visibility of income and allows investors to treat these instruments as yield products.

► **Single-layer tax framework** Dividends from SPVs outside the new corporate tax regime are exempt at both trust and unit holder levels, while interest, rental income and capital gains are taxed in a defined manner. This ensures that the same cash flow is not taxed multiple times as it moves through the structure.

Earlier inefficiencies, including dividend distribution tax at the SPV level, were removed to improve returns and enable scale. Predictable taxation supports predictable cash flows, and predictable cash flows attract long-term capital.

Budget 2026 restructured treatment of minimum alternate tax (MAT) credits. It links utilisation of accumulated MAT credit to a transition to the new corporate tax regime, caps annual utilisation, and discontinues further accumulation of MAT credit beyond April. For most companies, this is a transition decision. For SPVs within REIT and InvIT structures, it creates a structural constraint.

If SPVs move to the new corporate tax regime to utilise accumulated MAT credit, dividends distributed by these SPVs become taxable in the hands of unit holders under the framework. This reduces yields and weakens positioning of these instruments as stable income products. If SPVs remain

outside the new regime to preserve dividend exemption, accumulated MAT credits may lapse, and future MAT liabilities may arise due to timing differences inherent in capital-intensive sectors.

The combined effect introduces uncertainty in distributable cash flows. This must be avoided. REITs and InvITs are now integral to India's infra financing strategy. Business trusts account for close to ₹10 lakh cr of assets under management and are expected to expand over the next few years. They attract long-horizon capital from pension funds, insurance companies, MFs and sovereign investors. They also enable monetisation by central and state public sector entities.

The objective to expand REIT formation by PSUs depends on maintaining stability of the underlying framework. Any change that affects yield predictability will increase the cost of capital



Pin down infra

and weaken investor participation. The issue is not the direction of reform but the design. India needs a financing architecture that supports scale, predictability and long-term participation.

Policy certainty is central to this. It lowers the cost of capital and enables deeper markets. Two design choices can address the issue.

● Allow business trust SPVs to remain outside the new corporate tax regime, while retaining the ability to carry forward and utilise accumulated MAT credits. This preserves existing entitlements and avoids disruption to yields.

● If transition to the new regime is required, retain the single-layer taxation principle by ensuring that dividend income remains exempt in the hands of unit holders. This aligns with the broader tax framework while maintaining competitiveness of these instruments.

India has taken a decade to build REITs and InvITs. The next phase will require expanding the asset pipeline, increasing domestic participation and using these structures to recycle capital at scale. India has the assets, investor interest and policy intent. Execution will depend on maintaining a stable and predictable framework.

The writer is former CEO, NITI Aayog

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts)** are like mutual funds for property. They pool money from many investors and invest in income-generating real estate—think office parks, malls, or warehouses. The rent collected flows back to investors as regular dividends. India currently has 5 listed REITs, and they have made commercial real estate investment accessible even to small savers.

- **InvITs (Infrastructure Investment Trusts)** follow a similar logic but for infrastructure assets like highways, power transmission lines, and pipelines. They allow you to own a fraction of a toll road and earn from the toll collections. With over 24 listed InvITs, they are becoming a mainstream instrument to recycle capital locked in operational projects.

- **SPVs (Special Purpose Vehicles)** are separate legal entities created to hold a specific asset or project. In a trust structure, the REIT or InvIT typically owns the SPV, and the SPV directly holds the underlying physical asset. This ring-fencing ensures that the income stream from one project is not contaminated by the risks of another.

- **Free Cash Flows (FCF)** represent the actual cash generated by the asset after meeting all operating expenses, maintenance, and mandatory capex. It is the real kitty available for distribution. The rule that 90% of this FCF must be passed on to unit holders ensures that investors see a true reflection of the asset's cash-generation capacity.

- **Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)** is a safety net introduced in the late 1980s to ensure that companies declaring high book profits but paying negligible tax due to various exemptions still pay a minimum tax. For capital-intensive infrastructure SPVs, the generous depreciation often reduces taxable income, but MAT kicks in. The tax paid under MAT generates a credit that can be used to offset future regular tax liability.

- **Single-layer taxation** means that the same rupee of income is taxed only once as it moves from the asset to the final investor. For REITs and InvITs, dividends received from an SPV that has opted to stay out of the new concessional corporate tax regime are exempt in the hands of the trust and again exempt in the hands of unit holders. This pass-through status is a carefully calibrated incentive.

- **Yield products** are investment instruments where the primary attraction is the periodic income they generate, much like the interest on a fixed deposit, rather than just capital appreciation. Predictability of this yield is the bedrock of their appeal to pensioners, retirees, and institutions with long-term liabilities.





- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis**

- India needs large-scale, stable, long-term infrastructure financing. REITs and InvITs have become important tools for mobilising domestic and global capital. However, uncertainty in tax treatment, especially around MAT credit and dividend taxation, can weaken investor confidence and reduce yield predictability.

- **Why REITs and InvITs Matter**

- They perform three important functions. First, they connect long-term investors with long-life infrastructure assets. Second, they allow governments and companies to monetise completed assets. Third, they recycle capital: once an operational asset is transferred to an InvIT, the original owner can use the released capital to build new infrastructure.

- **Strength of the Existing Framework**

- The present framework works because of predictability. Investors know that cash flows will be regularly distributed. They also understand how different income streams are taxed. This gives REITs and InvITs the character of stable yield instruments.

- **Central Concern**

- The restructuring of MAT credit creates a dilemma for SPVs. If they shift to the new corporate tax regime to use MAT credit, dividends may become taxable for unit holders. If they remain outside the new regime, accumulated MAT credits may lapse. In both cases, investor returns may be affected.

- **Policy Concern**

- The issue is not opposition to tax reform. The real concern is design consistency. Infrastructure financing needs stability. Even a technically small tax uncertainty can increase the cost of capital because investors price future risk into present investment decisions.

- **Counterargument**

- The government may argue that a simplified corporate tax regime improves efficiency and reduces exemptions. However, business trusts have a special public-policy role. They are not ordinary companies; they are infrastructure financing platforms. Therefore, they may need a carefully designed transitional arrangement.

- **Historical evolution**

- **Pre-independence to 1991**

- In the colonial period and early decades after Independence, infrastructure financing in India relied mainly on the state, public borrowing, and departmental/public utility models rather than market-linked pooled trusts. This reflected the developmental-state approach and limited private capital markets.
- After 1947, infrastructure remained dominated by public sector enterprises and budgetary support, consistent with planned development and command-and-control economics.

- **1991 reforms to 2014**

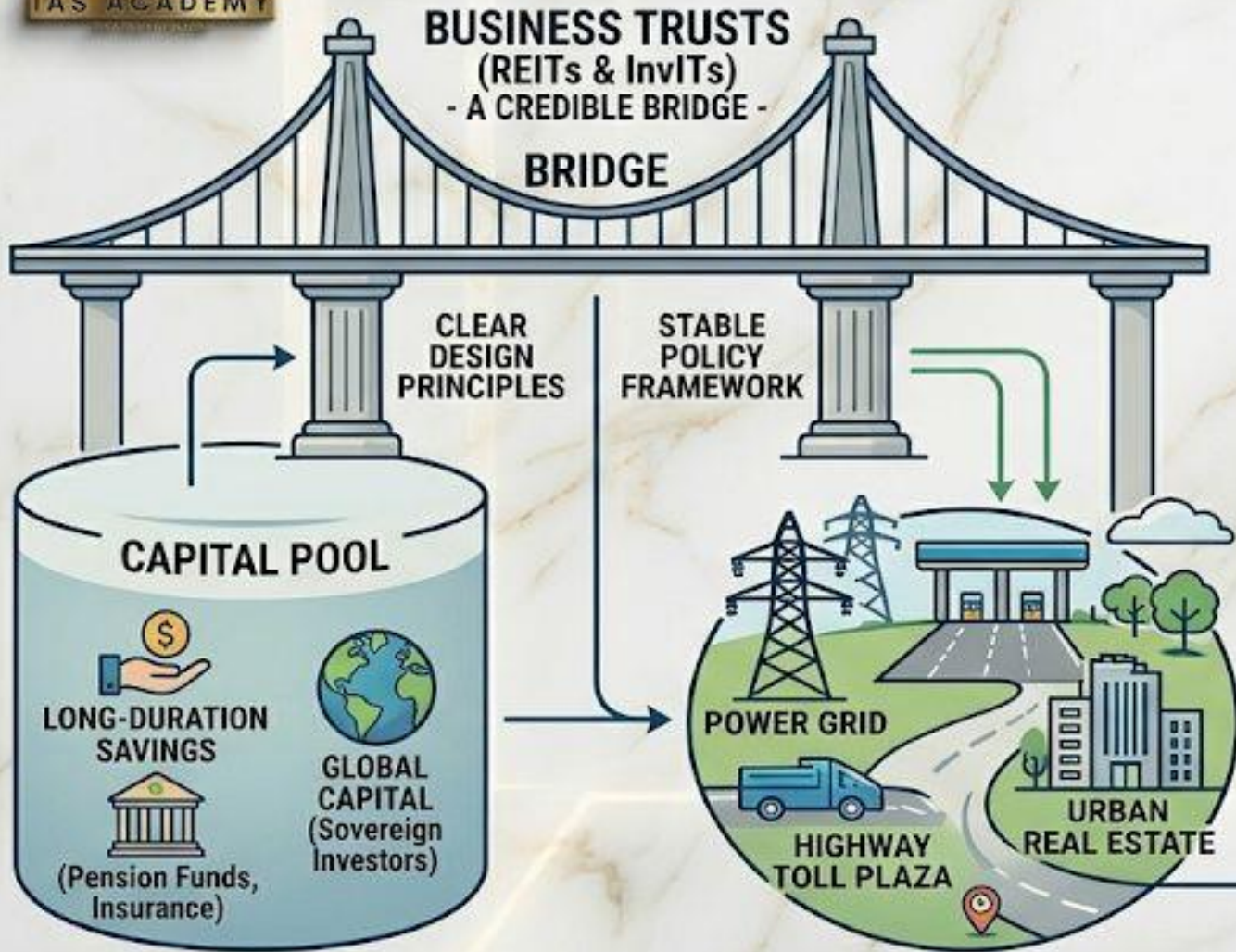
- Economic liberalisation after 1991 opened space for private participation in roads, ports, telecom, power, and urban infrastructure, but financing remained difficult because projects were capital-intensive, long-gestation, and exposed to regulatory risk.
- India gradually shifted from pure public finance to PPP models, project finance, take-out financing ideas, and later institutions for infrastructure funding.
- A major challenge persisted: how to monetise operational assets and attract patient capital without overburdening banks. This is the broader context in which business trusts became relevant.

- **2014 onwards**

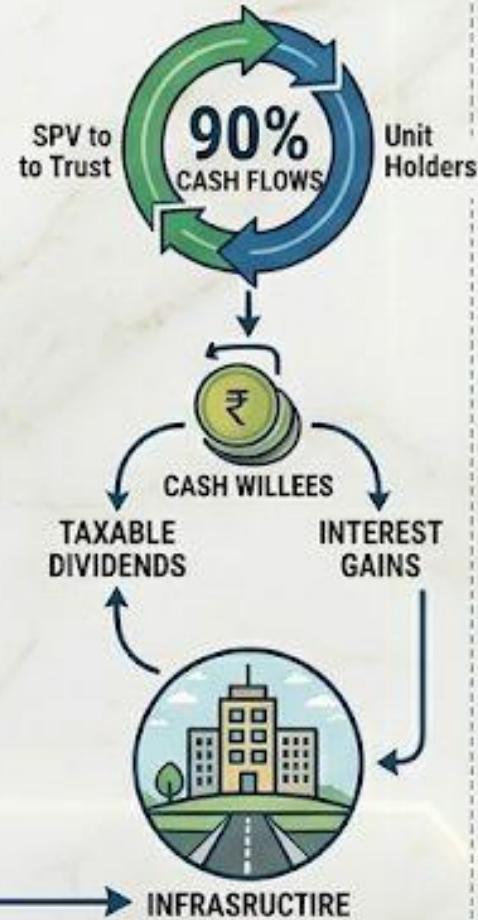
- SEBI notified the REIT and InvIT regulations in 2014, creating formal trust-based instruments for income-generating real estate and infrastructure assets.
- By 2016-17, SEBI and other regulators were already treating REITs/InvITs as a distinct or hybrid asset class rather than pure debt or equity, recognizing their special risk-return profile.
- Over time, India removed earlier tax inefficiencies and improved institutional participation, which helped listed trusts gain credibility as monetisation platforms. The SEBI framework emphasized high distribution, listing, governance, and underlying asset quality.
- In 2023, SEBI standardized NDCF computation and reaffirmed the 90% minimum distribution at trust and SPV/holdco levels, improving transparency and comparability.
- Budget 2026 marks the next important phase by simultaneously encouraging infrastructure and REIT-based asset recycling while changing MAT rules, thereby reopening the policy debate on trust taxation and yield stability.



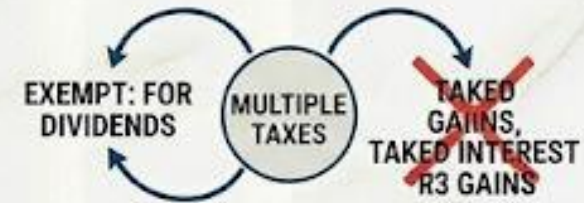
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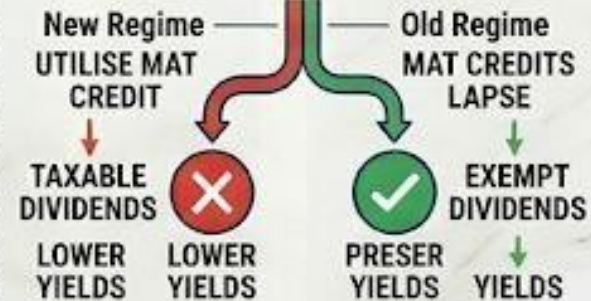
DESIGN PRINCIPLES DISTRIBUTION DISCIPLINE



TRANSITION CHALLENGES SINGLE-LAYER TAX FRAMEWORK



MAT CREDIT DILEMMA



POLICY STABILITY EFFECT





- **Logical and philosophical base**

- **Economic logic**

- Infrastructure assets are long-life, cash-generating, and relatively illiquid in physical form; hence they need financial wrappers that transform illiquid assets into liquid, investible securities.
- REITs and InvITs do this by converting rent or user-charge revenue streams into market-traded income units, which aligns the needs of developers, governments, and investors.
- The underlying logic is intermediation efficiency: savings should flow to productive assets through institutions that reduce information asymmetry, tax friction, and governance uncertainty.

- **Philosophical foundations**

- At a deeper level, the issue reflects the philosophy of the **developmental state using markets as instruments**, not replacing the state entirely but complementing public investment with rule-based private participation.
- It also rests on the principle of **policy credibility**: when the state creates an investment structure, it should avoid mid-course uncertainty that alters the reasonable expectations of investors.
- Another philosophical layer is **fairness in taxation**. The single-layer taxation idea reflects the belief that tax should fall transparently and proportionately, not accumulate invisibly across layers of the same economic transaction.

- **Epistemological angle**

- From an epistemological perspective, investors allocate capital based on measurable, rule-bound expectations of future cash flows. If law, tax, and regulation become unpredictable, the knowledge base for valuation weakens.
- Thus, the debate is not only about tax rates but about the reliability of state signals in a market economy.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social**

- Better infrastructure financing can improve transport, logistics, urban services, warehousing, and energy access, indirectly supporting jobs, regional integration, and quality of life.
- Wider participation through financial markets may democratize ownership of income-generating assets, though benefits still depend on retail awareness and protection.

- **Political**

- Infrastructure remains politically salient because it visibly signals state capacity and development delivery. Budget 2026 places infrastructure within a broader growth and reform narrative.
- Business trusts also fit the political economy of asset monetisation, where governments seek fresh capital without immediate large-scale privatisation in the classical sense.

- **Legal**

- The issue involves securities regulation, trust law, company law, taxation, and delegated legislation. REITs/InvITs are trust structures under the Indian Trusts framework and SEBI regulations, but their cash-flow channels often pass through corporate SPVs.
- This layered legal architecture creates both flexibility and complexity, especially in taxation.

- **Ethical**

- Policy stability is an ethical concern because the state should not undermine legitimate investment expectations after encouraging participation through a defined structure.
- At the same time, tax neutrality and avoidance of unjustified concessions are also ethical imperatives, so any carve-out must be principled rather than lobby-driven.

- **International**

- Globally, long-term pension and sovereign capital often flows into stable infrastructure vehicles; SEBI's own documentation notes international practice of treating such products as a separate category in investment disclosures.
- In a world of selective global capital flows, India's competitiveness depends not only on returns but on legal certainty, transparent governance, and currency-risk-adjusted predictability.

- **Economic**

- This is the strongest dimension. Business trusts help recycle capital, reduce pressure on bank balance sheets, deepen capital markets, and connect savings with productive assets.
- If trust taxation becomes less efficient, financing costs may rise, valuation may compress, and infrastructure pipeline expansion could slow.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**

- **Economics**

- **Class XI Indian Economic Development:** Chapters on economic reforms, infrastructure, and development strategy help students understand why India needs alternative financing channels beyond the budget and banks.
 - **Class XII Macroeconomics:** Public finance, investment, savings, and financial intermediation provide the conceptual base for understanding long-term capital mobilisation.

- **Political Science**

- **Class XI Indian Constitution at Work:** Useful for linking taxation, regulatory institutions, and state-market relations.
 - **Class XII Politics in India Since Independence:** Helps place liberalisation, public sector reform, and state restructuring in historical context.

- **Geography and Society**

- **Class XII India: People and Economy:** Infrastructure, transport, and regional development chapters connect directly with the developmental outcomes financed through InvIT-like structures.
 - **Class XII Sociology texts on development themes:** Helpful for understanding unequal access, urbanisation, and development ethics.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**
- **GS Paper 2**
 - Linked with governance, regulatory institutions, transparency, public-private partnership, and government policy design. SEBI regulation and tax policy also connect with institutional governance.
- **GS Paper 3**
 - This is the strongest linkage. It directly relates to infrastructure, investment models, capital markets, resource mobilisation, government budgeting, taxation, and economic growth.
- **GS Paper 4**
 - Relevant to ethical governance, fairness in taxation, public trust, transparency in asset monetisation, and balancing investor interest with public welfare.
- **Essay Paper**
 - Possible themes include infrastructure as nation-building, policy certainty and development, public assets and private capital, and economic growth with social responsibility.
- **Prelims**
 - Relevant for factual understanding of REITs, InvITs, MAT, corporate taxation, SEBI, infrastructure financing, and asset monetisation.
- **Economics Optional**
 - Directly linked with public finance, investment, capital markets, infrastructure economics, taxation, and development strategy.
- **Public Administration Optional**
 - Relevant to new public management, public-private partnerships, regulatory governance, fiscal administration, and accountability.



- **Way Forward**
- **Preserve Policy Certainty**
- India should avoid sudden changes that affect the yield predictability of REITs and InvITs. Stable taxation is essential for long-term capital.
- **Protect Accumulated MAT Credits**
- SPVs within business trust structures may be allowed to carry forward and utilise accumulated MAT credits even if they remain outside the new corporate tax regime.
- **Retain Single-Layer Taxation**
- If SPVs transition to the new corporate tax regime, dividend income should remain exempt for unit holders to avoid multiple taxation of the same cash flow.
- **Create a Special Transitional Framework**
- A separate transition window for business trust SPVs can prevent disruption while preserving the broader corporate tax reform objective.
- **Strengthen SEBI Oversight**
- Disclosure norms, valuation standards, related-party transaction rules, and investor grievance mechanisms should be strengthened.
- **Expand Domestic Investor Base**
- Pension funds, insurance companies, provident funds, and retail investors should be encouraged through awareness, risk disclosure, and suitable investment limits.
- **Improve Asset Pipeline**
- More operational assets from roads, railways, ports, power transmission, logistics, urban infrastructure, and renewable energy can be brought into REIT/InvIT structures.
- **Balance Monetisation with Public Interest**
- Asset monetisation should be transparent, competitively valued, and publicly accountable. Citizens must see it as capital recycling, not distress sale.

- **UPSC CSE Mains — GS Paper 3**
- **2023:** Explain the role of public-private partnerships in infrastructure development. What are the challenges in making PPPs effective in India?
- **2022:** Why is public expenditure management important for fiscal discipline and economic growth?
- **2021:** Investment in infrastructure is essential for more rapid and inclusive economic growth. Discuss in the light of India's development experience.
- **2020:** Explain the meaning of investment models. Discuss the different investment models used in infrastructure development in India.
- **2019:** Enumerate the indirect taxes which have been subsumed in GST in India. Also comment on the revenue implications of GST.
- **2018:** Explain the difference between capital budget and revenue budget. How do these affect public finance?
- **2017:** Among several factors for India's potential growth, savings rate is the most effective one. Do you agree?
- **2016:** Justify the need for FDI for the development of the Indian economy. Why is there a gap between MoUs signed and actual FDIs?
- **2015:** The nature of economic growth in India in recent times is often described as jobless growth. Do you agree?
- **2014:** Explain how private-public partnership arrangements are useful in infrastructure projects.
- **UPSC CSE Mains — GS Paper 2**
- **2022:** The Gati Shakti Yojana needs meticulous coordination between government and private sector to achieve the goal of connectivity. Discuss.
- **2020:** Regulatory institutions are important for economic governance. Discuss with suitable examples.
- **UPSC CSE Mains — GS Paper 4**
- **2021:** What do you understand by probity in governance? Discuss its importance.
- **2019:** Explain how transparency and accountability are essential for good governance.



A watershed moment in India's defence posture

Operation Sindoor commenced at 1:05 a.m. on May 7, 2025, with a surgical, high-intensity destruction of selected terrorist infrastructure. This strike was a direct and decisive response to the cowardly Pahalgam carnage orchestrated by cross-border terrorists on April 22, 2025. This operation represents a paradigm shift in India's politico-military mindset and doctrine, marking a watershed moment in its approach to national security.

New era Indian doctrine

India's historical posture of "reactive restraint" provided a strong rationale for a "dossier approach", in which military inaction was often portrayed as extraordinary restraint and was frequently encouraged and lauded by the West. "What if" loops about attacking terror targets in a nuclear-armed adversary provided the final blow to India's decision-makers. Post Operation Sindoor, the "zero tolerance" policy declared by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was pivoted further and reinforced, whereby any act of cross-border terrorism would be considered an "act of war".

This reflects a leadership that possesses both the strategic resolve to act and the absolute confidence in the armed forces to deliver retribution. Despite the political risks, this extraordinary resolve to tackle terror head on – and the refusal to submit to nuclear blackmail and external pressure drew new red lines.

Operation Sindoor defined a new chapter in India's defence evolution too. While on transition to integration and restructuring, this Operation tested the ground realities of the three services – the Indian Air Force (IAF), the Indian Navy and the Indian Army. Post Pahalgam, the forces were tuned to expect a clear-cut political directive for action, which came in an unambiguous form and was perhaps stronger than what the services had anticipated. The services were given a free hand.

The resultant Indian strikes on nine terrorist targets were exceptionally well-integrated across the three services, achieving total success despite a fully alert Pakistan. The choice of Bahawalpur, and Muridke in Pakistan as targets was unthinkable. Pakistan and the world woke up to realities of the "new normal". Pictures and videos of the massive destruction at these terror hubs, and the sheer scale and success of the strikes, were stunning.

The highly calibrated and intelligent Indian response over the next two days was executed well, calmly but firmly. Pakistan clearly misread



R.K.S. Bhaduria

Former Air Chief Marshal and served as Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force

India's resolve. On May 9 and 10, when the Pakistan Air Force attempted to strike some of India's critical high-value assets, the Indian Air Force countered it in near real time with waves of airstrikes hitting II bases across Pakistan, including Nar Khan, Sargodha, Murid and Bholar. The level of precise targeting and extent of damage achieved could not have been imagined by Pakistan. The global defence analytical community acknowledges this as one of the most defining and concise actions against a nuclear-armed nation.

Military audaciousness at its best

This total, integrated and calibrated response, characterised by masterful control of the escalation ladder, reflects the seamless synergy between India's civil and military institutions. In my opinion, India's achievements could not have been better. After 88 hours of Operation Sindoor, by noon on May 10, Pakistan was reeling from massive destruction at II bases by the IAF.

Karachi was nervously monitoring Indian naval deployments poised for action, while aggressive Indian Army operations along the Line of Control and the International Border had rendered drone attacks unviable. A robust, networked air-defence system, including the S-400 missile system had completely denied airspace not only over Indian territory but also deep inside Pakistan. Pakistan had no choice but to rush and request a ceasefire.

Given the dynamics and complications of escalation control under a nuclear overhang, India's Chief of Defence Staff and the Service Chiefs deserve high praise for the ferocious targeting on May 10 and the brilliant seizing of the escalation opportunity to coerce a termination. This was military audaciousness at its very best.

The Indian armed forces responded in full measure to the political mandate, leaving no doubt regarding the nation's capacity for rapid, high-impact operation. The sheer scale and speed of India's action on May 10 was watched with awe across the country.

The announcement of the ceasefire was too sudden for the public at large. You cannot blame the people asking for more. One cannot view these developments with emotion. Having achieved all objectives and the scope of action on May 10, the termination decision was perfectly timed.

Operation Sindoor's ongoing status carries a powerful strategic signal. Undoubtedly, the

primary signal is for terrorists to remain in hiding and for their backers to desist. The message also extends to the Pakistani citizenry – a stark and constant reminder of the reckless involvement of part of their military leadership. In the age of global digital transparency and expert strategic analysis, the truth of these events cannot be shielded from their people for long. They must now confront the realities of a military regime camouflaged by a political facade and "regime" change should be on their minds.

Accelerate indigenous defence growth

Ongoing operations have implications for India as well. The defence forces would need to maintain a high state of readiness to act. After the opening round of Operation Sindoor, the expectations are high. I am sure the services are working proactively to deliver. An equally important implication is for the defence industry to ramp up in real terms to achieve Atmanirbharta. The focus must be to "Innovate, Design, and Manufacture" at scale.

The government has focused hugely on reforms to energise the public and private industry in defence, aerospace, space, cyber and Artificial Intelligence domains. The stellar performance of indigenous systems during Operation Sindoor has invigorated India's innovation and startup ecosystem. I

have always maintained that the real responsibility for being the "agent of change" rests with the Defence Research and Development Organisation laboratories, Defence Public Sector Undertakings, and, to some extent, even on large industry players already in the system. They no longer have the option to delay and must immediately focus on truly integrating the entire private sector, including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and startups, into an indigenous ecosystem through a "whole-of-nation" approach. There is an urgent need to capitalise on this golden period of governance and reforms, and the unpredictable geopolitical environment only reinforces the need to double down on true Atmanirbharta.

Ultimately, the "Modi redefines" regarding cross-border terrorism are permanent. This new normal is irreversible and will define India's strategic mindset for the foreseeable future. The nation demands nothing less, and the populace would stand firmly behind the architects and executors of India's national security. My salute to everyone involved in the success of Operation Sindoor.



India's strategic doctrine has evolved sharply after Operation Sindoor

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Cross-border terrorism** means terrorist violence planned, financed, trained, or supported from across an international border. In India's context, it usually refers to terror networks operating from Pakistan or Pakistan-occupied territories and targeting civilians, security forces, or strategic assets in India.
- **Reactive restraint** refers to India's older strategic posture where, even after major terror attacks, India often avoided direct military retaliation to prevent escalation. This approach projected maturity but also risked making terrorism appear low-cost for the sponsor state.
- **Dossier approach** means collecting evidence and presenting it diplomatically to the international community instead of immediately using military force. It works when global pressure is effective, but it becomes weak if the sponsor state remains protected by denial, delay, and nuclear blackmail.
- **Zero tolerance policy** means that terrorism is treated not as a routine law-and-order issue but as a direct national security threat requiring political, diplomatic, military, financial, and technological response.
- **Act of war doctrine** implies that a major terror attack sponsored or enabled by another state may be treated as aggression by that state itself. This blurs the artificial distinction between "terrorist actors" and "state backers".
- **Escalation ladder** refers to the gradual increase in intensity during a conflict — diplomatic protest, limited strike, air operation, naval mobilisation, missile use, wider war, and so on. Good strategy means climbing the ladder only as much as necessary and stopping at the right moment.
- **Nuclear blackmail** means using the threat of nuclear weapons to prevent another country from responding to terrorism or conventional aggression. India's new posture attempts to create space for limited conventional action below the nuclear threshold.
- **Surgical strike** refers to a precise, limited military operation against selected targets, designed to punish or deter without triggering a full-scale war.
- **Integrated tri-service operation** means coordinated action by the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Such integration improves speed, surprise, intelligence-sharing, targeting accuracy, and escalation control.
- **Air defence network** refers to radars, missiles, command systems, and aircraft that detect and neutralise enemy drones, missiles, and aircraft. Systems like S-400 represent long-range denial capability.
- **Atmanirbhar defence** means reducing dependence on foreign weapons by strengthening indigenous design, research, manufacturing, testing, and production ecosystems.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The central argument is that India has entered a new security doctrine where cross-border terrorism will invite direct, calibrated, and punitive response. The older approach of merely gathering evidence, exercising restraint, and waiting for international pressure is presented as insufficient against a state-backed terror ecosystem.
- A second important argument is that political will and military capability must move together. A state may possess armed strength, but without political clarity, it cannot act decisively. Similarly, political intent without operational preparedness creates empty rhetoric. The operation shows the fusion of clear political mandate and professional military execution.
- The third argument is about escalation control. The response was not described as emotional revenge but as a carefully measured punishment. The objective was not total war, regime destruction, or territorial conquest, but deterrence through visible costs imposed on terror infrastructure and military assets.
- Another substantive point is the role of tri-service coordination. The operation is projected as a test of India's ongoing defence reforms, especially integration among the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Such synergy is vital for future warfare where air defence, cyber systems, drones, missiles, naval pressure, and ground operations must function together.
- The economic-industrial argument is also significant. Military success cannot be sustained by imported weapons alone. A doctrine of proactive deterrence requires a domestic ecosystem of research, innovation, startups, MSMEs, public sector units, private industry, artificial intelligence, cyber systems, aerospace capacity, and supply-chain resilience.
- A possible counterargument is that aggressive responses may increase the risk of miscalculation between nuclear-armed neighbours. Another concern is that public emotion may demand more action than strategy permits. Therefore, the doctrine must remain firm but controlled, bold but not reckless.





- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- During the colonial period, India did not have an autonomous national security doctrine. Defence policy was shaped by British imperial interests, frontier security, and the protection of colonial trade routes rather than Indian strategic priorities.

- After Independence, India initially adopted a defensive and idealistic security outlook. The trauma of Partition, the Kashmir conflict of 1947-48, and the desire to avoid militarism shaped early thinking. India relied heavily on diplomacy, international law, and moral legitimacy.

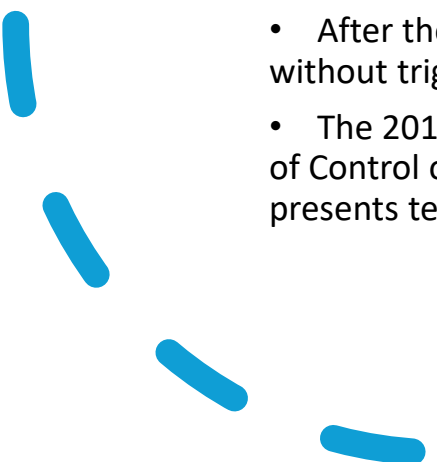
- The 1962 war with China exposed weaknesses in military preparedness and strategic assessment. It pushed India towards defence modernisation. The 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan showed that conventional military strength could reshape regional outcomes, especially in the creation of Bangladesh.

- From the late 1980s and 1990s, terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir transformed India's security challenge. The issue was no longer only conventional war but proxy war, infiltration, radicalisation, and externally backed militancy.

- The 1998 nuclear tests changed the strategic environment. India and Pakistan became overt nuclear powers. Pakistan attempted to use this nuclear cover to support proxy war while deterring Indian retaliation. The 1999 Kargil War showed that limited conventional conflict was still possible under a nuclear shadow.

- After the 2001 Parliament attack and the 2008 Mumbai attacks, India faced the dilemma of how to punish terrorism without triggering full-scale war. The response remained largely diplomatic and coercive but restrained.

- The 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot airstrikes marked a shift. India showed willingness to cross the Line of Control or strike terror targets beyond immediate border areas. The newer doctrine builds on this trend and presents terrorism as a trigger for direct punitive response.



STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION: INDIA'S NEW NATIONAL SECURITY DOCTRINE

Diagram A: "Reactive Restraint" Doctrine
(PRE-OPERATION SINDOOR)



Diagram B: "Zero Tolerance" Policy
(POST-OPERATION SINDOOR)



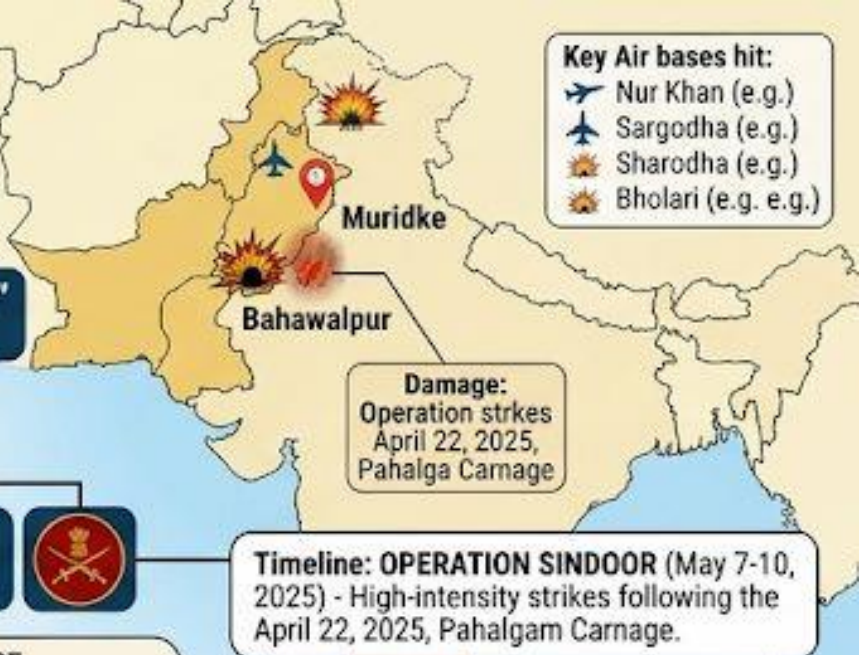
ROAD TO ATMANIRBHARATA (Self-Reliance)



PILLARS OF THE "NEW NORMAL" (88-HOUR CAMPAIGN SUCCESS)



FUTURE IMPLICATIONS:
Institutionalizing Jointness, Permanent "Modi Redlines," Indigenization is Vital for India to be a "Leading Power"



Timeline: OPERATION SINDOOR (May 7-10, 2025) - High-intensity strikes following the April 22, 2025, Pahalgam Carnage.



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Logical Premise – Deterrence by Punishment:** The underlying logic is that if an enemy is assured of immediate, overwhelming, and intolerable retaliation for an act of cross-border terrorism, it will be deterred. This shifts from “denial”-based conventional deterrence to a more visceral “punishment” model under the nuclear shadow.

- **Game Theory and Signaling:** The doctrine relies on credible commitment. By publicly declaring zero tolerance and then executing Operation Sindoor, India resolves the classic “cheap talk” problem. The enemy must now update its belief about India’s willingness to escalate.

- **Philosophical Foundation – Just War and Proportionality:** The action ties into the just war tradition: just cause (response to carnage), right intention (dismantling terror hubs, not territorial conquest), proportionality (surgical, not genocidal), and last resort (exhaustion of diplomatic options). The refusal to absorb violence as “ordinary” restores the moral duty of the state to defend its citizens.

- **Kautilyan Realism:** The doctrine echoes Kautilya’s concept of a “vijigishu” (would-be conqueror) who uses all four upayas—sama, dana, bheda, danda—with danda (punishment) applied decisively when the enemy becomes a matsyanyaya (big fish eating small fish). It also aligns with the mandala theory, where the immediate neighbour is the natural enemy, and strength must be projected to ensure security.

- **Assumptions:** The logic assumes that (a) Pakistan’s military establishment is rational and sensitive to costs; (b) India can control escalation with high precision; (c) nuclear weapons will not automatically be used in response to conventional punishment; and (d) the international community will tacitly accept the new normal. These are contestable but form the philosophical backbone.

- **Epistemological Shifts:** The article challenges the “nuclear inevitability” myth—that any military action against a nuclear-armed state must lead to nuclear war. It replaces it with an empirical-pragmatic claim: nuclear deterrence works only if the adversary believes that non-nuclear transgressions will be met with non-nuclear punishment of an unbearable scale, below the nuclear threshold.

- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **Social Dimension**

- National security responses create a sense of collective confidence and unity. Citizens feel reassured when the state appears capable of protecting them. However, emotional nationalism must not become hatred against internal communities. A mature society distinguishes between terrorists, sponsor states, and ordinary people.

- **Political Dimension**

- The doctrine strengthens the image of decisive leadership. It also raises the standard for future governments because once red lines are declared, the state is expected to enforce them. Political consensus on national security is essential; otherwise, military action may become trapped in partisan debate.

- **Legal Dimension**

- India's response must be framed within the right of self-defence, sovereignty, and protection of citizens. Domestically, Parliament, executive authority, armed forces' rules of engagement, and accountability mechanisms remain important. Internationally, proportionality and necessity are key.

- **Ethical Dimension**

- The ethical test is whether force is used to prevent future harm, not merely to satisfy public anger. The targeting of terror infrastructure is more defensible than indiscriminate retaliation. Civilian protection must remain central.

- **International Dimension**

- The doctrine signals to the world that India will not outsource its security to global sympathy. It also tells adversaries that nuclear weapons cannot provide unlimited cover for terrorism. However, India must continue balancing military firmness with diplomatic credibility.

- **Economic Dimension**

- Security has a cost. Sustained readiness, advanced weapons, indigenous manufacturing, and defence research require high investment. But insecurity also has economic costs: disrupted tourism, investor anxiety, border instability, and higher insurance and logistics costs.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**

- **Class 12 Political Science – Contemporary World Politics (Chapter: Security in the Contemporary World):** Discusses traditional and non-traditional threats, deterrence, and the concept of cooperative security. Operation Sindoor illustrates how states respond to non-state actor threats using traditional military means, challenging the neat binary.
- **Class 12 Political Science – Politics in India Since Independence (Chapter: India's External Relations):** Covers India's relations with Pakistan, the Kashmir issue, and the role of nuclear weapons. The hypothetical operation is a direct extension of the post-1998 nuclear and proxy-war dynamic, showing evolution from the "peace process" to coercive diplomacy.
- **Class 11 Political Theory (Chapter: Nationalism):** The article's appeal to national pride, territorial integrity, and the state's duty to protect citizens links to theories of nationalism and sovereignty.
- **Class 10 History – India and the Contemporary World II (Chapter: The Making of a Global World):** While not directly on security, the economic aspects of globalisation and supply chains for defence manufacturing can be connected.
- **Class 12 Economics – Indian Economic Development (Chapter: Infrastructure):** The call for indigenous defence industry touches upon industrial infrastructure, MSMEs, and the shift from public sector dominance to public-private partnership, which is a core theme.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**

- **GS Paper 1:** *History of the world* – evolution of warfare, Cold War deterrence, and nuclear strategy. *Indian Society* – impact of terrorism and militarisation on social fabric, communalism.

- **GS Paper 2:** *India and its neighbourhood relations* – Pakistan, cross-border terror, diplomacy vs. force. *Bilateral, regional and global groupings* – implications for SAARC, Quad, SCO. *Governance* – civil-military relations, defence reforms, CDS. *Parliament and State Legislatures* – accountability in war decisions.

- **GS Paper 3:** *Internal Security* – challenges from cross-border terrorism, role of state and non-state actors. *Defence Technology* – indigenisation, Atmanirbhar Bharat, DRDO, defence startups. *Disaster Management* – not directly, but managing the aftermath of strikes. *Cyber Security* – cyber dimension of modern warfare. *Indigenisation of Technology* – dual-use tech, MSMEs.

- **GS Paper 4:** *Ethics and Human Interface* – just war theory, retribution vs. forgiveness, moral dilemmas of collateral damage. *Probity in Governance* – transparency in military operations, concept of “free hand” and accountability. *Aptitude and Foundational Values* – courage, fortitude, integrity in leadership.

- **Essay:** Potential themes – “Is Zero Tolerance the Answer to Cross-Border Terrorism?”; “Atmanirbhar Defence: Hype or Reality”; “Restraint Is Not Always a Virtue”; “War and Peace in the Nuclear Age”.

- **Optional Subjects:**

- *Political Science and International Relations:* Nuclear doctrine, deterrence theory, India-Pakistan conflict, regional security complex, India’s strategic culture.
- *History:* Evolution of warfare, post-independence India’s security policy.
- *Sociology:* Social consequences of militarism, national identity.
- *Defence Studies (if any):* Doctrinal shifts, tri-service integration, escalation dominance.

- **Way Forward**

- **Institutionalise the Doctrine with Checks:** Codify the “zero tolerance” policy into a National Security Doctrine approved by Parliament, ensuring democratic legitimacy while preserving operational secrecy. This balances executive swiftness with legislative accountability.
- **Strengthen Intelligence and Tech Capabilities:** Invest heavily in multi-INT (HUMINT, SIGINT, GEOINT) fusion, space-based sensors, and autonomous systems to ensure near-perfect target identification and minimise civilian harm. A dedicated tri-service Special Operations Command can institutionalise surgical strike capabilities.
- **Accelerate True Atmanirbharta:** Move beyond positive indigenisation lists to a “whole-of-nation” innovation ecosystem with direct government-industry-academia partnership. Simplify procurement, offer assured long-term contracts, and create defence-tech clusters to integrate MSMEs and startups, reducing bureaucratic barriers.
- **Prepare for All Permanents of Escalation:** While adopting an audacious posture, also develop robust diplomatic off-ramps and crisis communication channels with Pakistan (like the hotline) to prevent unintended spirals. No-first-use ambiguity, not recklessness, must underpin nuclear doctrine while credibly signalling that conventional punishment will not stop at an arbitrary line.
- **Regional and Global Consensus Building:** Engage major powers proactively, sharing evidence of terror infrastructure to build a legitimate narrative. Use forums like SCO, BRICS, and UN to advocate a global convention on cross-border terrorism that permits proportionate punitive action, thereby shaping international law, not just national policy.
- **Holistic Counter-Terrorism Approach:** Complement kinetic strikes with soft-power measures—deradicalisation programmes, track-two dialogues, and economic incentives for peace—so that the stick is balanced by a visible carrot. The goal is long-term stability, not punitive glory.
- **Societal Resilience:** Prepare domestic opinion for both success and costs. Transparent, non-jingoistic communication can preserve public trust and prevent unrealistic expectations, ensuring that the doctrine remains sustainable even when operations do not go as perfectly as the hypothetical scenario suggests.

UPSC CSE Mains (GS Papers):

GS Paper 2

- “India’s neighbourhood policy faces multiple challenges. Discuss with reference to Pakistan and cross-border terrorism.” (Often asked in various forms)
- “How has India’s approach to dealing with Pakistan changed from ‘strategic restraint’ to ‘offensive defence’?”
- “Critically examine the role of the Chief of Defence Staff in fostering jointness among the armed forces.”
- “Discuss the constitutional and legal framework governing the deployment of Indian armed forces in response to cross-border terrorism.”

GS Paper 3

- “Cross-border terrorism poses a serious challenge to India’s internal security. What are the strategic options available without crossing the nuclear threshold?” (2017, 2019 variations)
- “Evaluate the progress of Atmanirbhar Bharat in the defence sector. What more needs to be done to achieve self-reliance?” (2021, 2022)
- “How can India achieve technological independence in defence production through the ‘whole-of-nation’ approach?”
- “Discuss the role of integrated theatre commands in enhancing India’s combat capabilities.”

GS Paper 4

- “Is it ethical for a state to retaliate disproportionately to acts of terrorism? Justify your answer with reference to just war theory.” (Case study format)
- “A nation’s security demands often conflict with democratic values. Comment with recent examples.”

UPSC CSE Essay Papers:

“The Nuclear Dilemma: Can Deterrence Guarantee Peace?” (2019)

“Atmanirbhar Bharat: A Myth or Reality in the Defence Sector” (2021)

“Restraint Is the Prudence of the Wise, or the Cowardice of the Timid?” (2018, similar philosophical theme)

“In War, There Are No Unwounded Soldiers.” (Can be linked to psychological-societal impact)



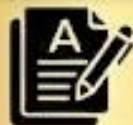
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