

AXIA IAS ACADEMY



**DAILY NEWS
ANALYSIS**



APRIL 21



**CONSISTENT
COMPREHENSIVE
AND CREDIBLE**



**UNIQUE AND BEST IN
QUALITY**





AXIA

IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST

UPSC CSE CLASSES - PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW GUIDANCE

- **EXPERT FACULTY & MENTORSHIP**
- **COMPREHENSIVE STUDY MATERIAL**
- **REGULAR TEST SERIES & EVALUATION**
- **CURRENT AFFAIRS & ANSWER WRITING FOCUS**
- **SMALL BATCH SIZES FOR PERSONAL ATTENTION**

axiaiasacademy.com

+91 6002-417488

Malayalam blockbuster film reignites debate over the purported ill-effects of Ayurvedic medicines

A.S. Jayanth

KOZHIKODE

The portrayal of a character in the blockbuster Malayalam movie *Vaazha 2: Biopic of a Billion Bros* has reignited the debate over the purported ill-effects of Ayurvedic medicines.

The character, played by actor Bijukkuttan, dies of liver cirrhosis after consuming an overdose of 'arishtam' – a herbal decoction – for a long time.

A section of Ayurveda practitioners have said that it was part of a "propaganda" against the traditional Indian system of medicine.

Though some of the functionaries of the Ayurveda Medical Association



A promotion still from *Vaazha 2: Biopic of a Billion Bros*. It has reportedly collected over ₹200 crore since its release on April 2.

of India (AMAI) recently said they would take legal recourse if the "misleading scenes" were not removed, AMAI State president Vishnu Namboothiri said an official decision in this regard was yet to be taken.

"There are both positive and negative messages in

that movie. The character succumbs to liver cirrhosis apparently after consuming 'arishtam' without a doctor's prescription for a long time. This can also send a message that any medicine should be taken only based on a certified doctor's prescription. How

long and how much you are consuming it are also important," he says.

But he pointed out that it could also play into the hands of those who wanted to "destroy Ayurveda" by creating a "negative image" about it to help certain "monopolistic medical companies."

Support to filmmakers

Meanwhile, hepatologist Cyriac Abby Philips, who has been challenging the efficacy of Ayurvedic medicines through social media, has offered support to the filmmakers. In a post on X, Mr. Philips offered his "complete and highest level of academic expertise and support to the makers

of the movie" if they are forced to fight a legal case.

Mr. Philips cited a number of peer-reviewed studies to claim that the "analysis of Ayurvedic herbals, classical formulations, proprietary herbals as well as traditionally prepared ones have consistently shown alcohol, liver toxic heavy metals and organ damaging adulterants."

Savin S.A., director of the movie, said the production company would issue a response over the issue if needed, he said.

The movie, a sequel to *Vaazha: Biopic of a Billion Boys*, has reportedly collected over ₹200 crore since its release on April 2.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Arishtam:** A traditional Ayurvedic formulation involving the fermentation of herbal decoctions. The natural fermentation process produces self-generated alcohol, which acts as a preservative and a solvent for active ingredients.
- **Hepatotoxicity:** The property of a substance (chemical or herbal) to cause damage to the liver.
- **Liver Cirrhosis:** A late-stage scarring (fibrosis) of the liver caused by many forms of liver diseases and conditions, such as hepatitis and chronic alcoholism/toxicity.
- **Decoction:** A method of extraction by boiling herbal or plant material to dissolve the chemicals of the plant.
- **AYUSH:** An acronym for the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy. It represents India's formalized traditional medicine sector.
- **Pharmacovigilance:** The science and activities relating to the detection, assessment, understanding, and prevention of adverse effects or any other medicine-related problem.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Scientific Critique**

- The primary argument against unregulated Ayurvedic consumption is the presence of heavy metals (like lead, mercury, and arsenic) and "liver toxic botanicals." Critics argue that "natural" does not inherently mean "safe," and that the lack of rigorous, double-blind clinical trials for many classical formulations poses a public health risk.

- **The Traditionalist Defense**

- Ayurvedic practitioners argue that the system is holistic and time-tested. They contend that adverse effects often stem from **misuse** (self-medication or incorrect dosage) rather than the medicine itself. There is also a defensive stance regarding "medical propaganda," where practitioners feel traditional systems are unfairly targeted by "monopolistic" modern medical interests.

- **The "Prescription" Middle Ground**

- A significant point of agreement exists: **Self-medication is dangerous.** Even within the Ayurvedic community, leaders emphasize that duration and dosage are critical and must be supervised by a certified practitioner.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence:** Ayurveda was the primary healthcare system until the British introduced the Allopathic system (Western medicine). The 19th century saw a decline in state support for traditional systems.
- **Post-Independence (1947–1970s):** Committees like the **Bhore Committee (1946)** and **Chopra Committee (1948)** debated the integration of systems. Ayurveda was preserved but often relegated to "rural" or "alternative" status.
- **The 1970s & WHO:** The Alma-Ata Declaration (1978) encouraged the use of traditional medicine practitioners in primary healthcare.
- **The 2014 Shift:** The elevation of the Department of AYUSH to a full-fledged **Ministry** marked a period of aggressive promotion and "mainstreaming" of traditional medicine.
- **Modern Era (2020–Present):** The COVID-19 pandemic saw a surge in the use of Ayurvedic "immunity boosters," leading to increased clinical scrutiny and a rise in "Integrated Medicine" debates.

- **Way Forward**

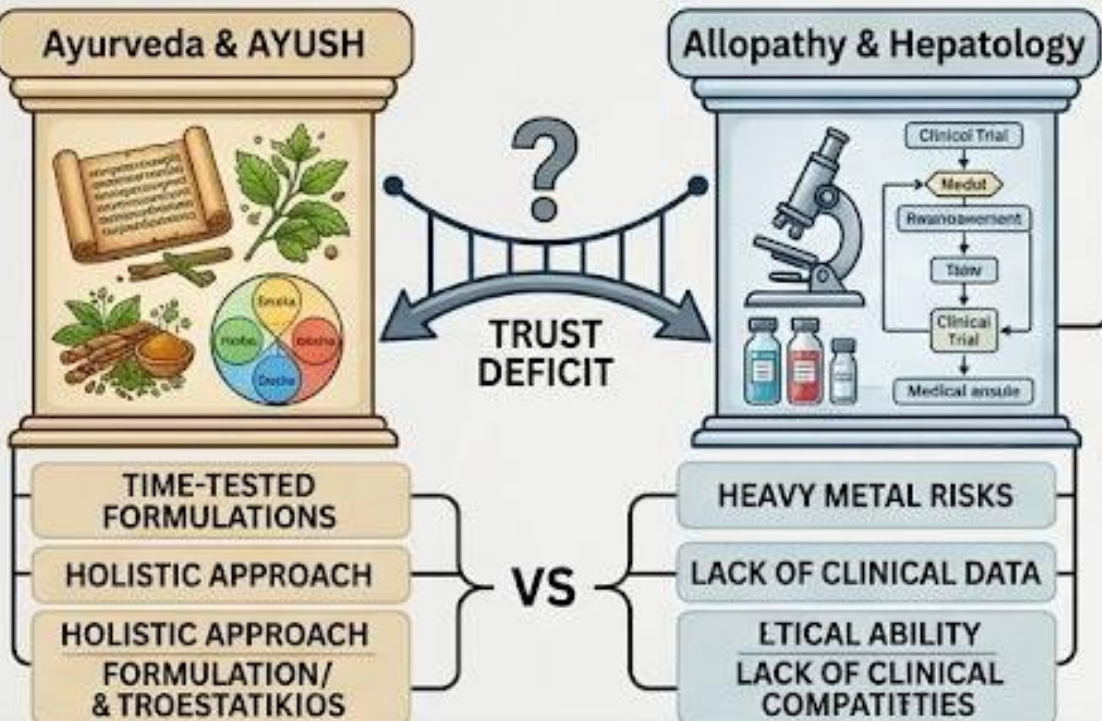
- **Mandatory Heavy Metal Testing:** All Ayurvedic products must undergo third-party testing for lead, mercury, and arsenic before reaching the market.
- **Bridge Education:** Integrating basic toxicology into Ayurvedic training and basic Ayurvedic concepts into Allopathic training to reduce the "trust deficit."
- **Strict Labeling:** *Arishtams* should carry warnings about alcohol content and the risks of long-term consumption without supervision, similar to "Schedule H" drugs in Allopathy.
- **Strengthening Pharmacovigilance:** The "AYUSH SURAKSHA" program needs better funding to track and report adverse drug reactions (ADRs).

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

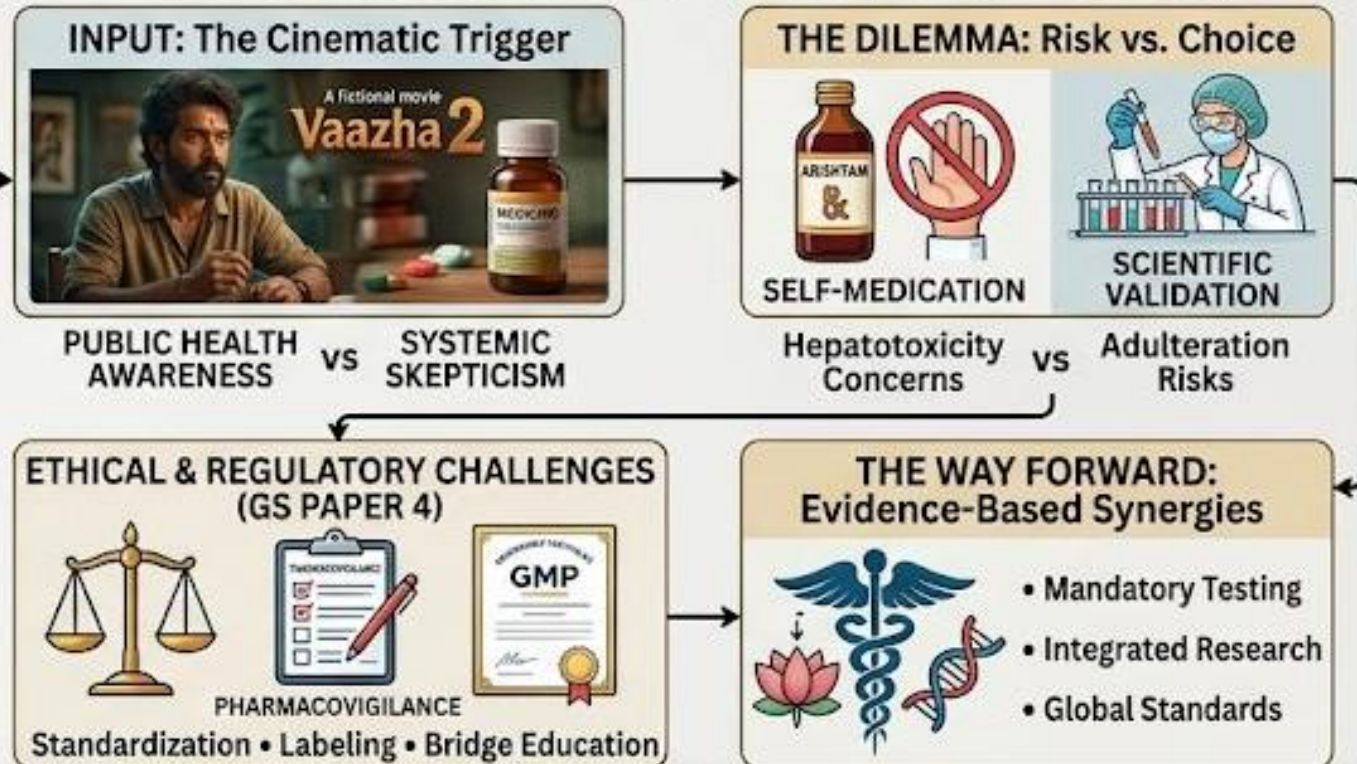
- **GS Paper 2 (2020):** "The product of the AYUSH system of medicine is gaining popularity... What are the challenges in its integration with the modern system of medicine?"
- **GS Paper 3 (2018):** "How is S&T deeply entrenched in the daily life of a common man? Discuss the changes brought by it in the field of health."
- **GS Paper 2 (2014):** "The pulse polio program in India is a success story... Why has it been difficult to achieve the same in other areas like nutrition and traditional medicine?"

DEBATE AXIS:

Traditional Systems vs. Evidence-Based Medicine



CRITICAL PATH TO INTEGRATION (GS PAPER 2 & 3)



BEST SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- GS 2: HEALTH POLICY
- GS 3: SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT
- GS 4: MEDICAL ETHICS

CONTACT: +91 6002-417488
WEBSITE: axiaiasacademy.com

Digital arrest scams are a crime against human dignity, says CJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Monday flagged digital arrest scams as the "most disturbing" and lethal among cyber crimes which not only result in merely financial loss to victims but also a "blistering sense of violation".

The CJI said such cyber crimes must not be seen as mere economic offences but an offence against human dignity.

"Victims frequently speak of embarrassment, hesitation, and even repression. Many do not report the offence, fearing stigma or disbelief. In doing so, the crime achieves a second, more insidious effect: it completely isolates the victim," Chief Justice Kant said, as he delivered the 22nd D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture, organised by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on 'Challenges of Cyber Crime: Role of Police and Judiciary'.

Noting that his Bench was *suo motu* in cognisance of digital arrest



Chief Justice Kant delivering the 22nd D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture, organised by the CBI on 'Challenges of Cyber Crime: Role of Police and Judiciary', SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

scams, the Chief Justice said the worst thing about the crime was that individuals were psychologically coerced into compliance through fabricated claims of legal authority.

In fact, the Chief Justice had expressed his exasperation while on the Bench of the court hours earlier, saying digital arrest scams continue undaunted as demonstrated by the fact that the Judiciary, the Executive, and multiple agencies had turned their combined forces against the bane.

The Chief Justice also

said that nearly 28 lakh cybercrime complaints had been registered in the past one year. In a span of two years, 2024 and 2025, citizens had collectively lost close to ₹44,000 crore to cyber fraud.

Since 2022, the Home Ministry has clocked over 2.41 lakh complaints related to digital arrest scams alone, involving losses of approximately ₹30,000 crore.

"This is not merely a domestic concern. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has observed that nearly 15% of the adult

population globally has been exposed to or fallen victim to cybercrime attempts... Barely 10% of the defrauded amount could be traced or recovered," Chief Justice Kant pointed out.

He said victims were chosen randomly, but carefully profiled by scammers through meticulous data harvesting.

The CJI said that while the perpetrators operated as integrated enterprises, the institutional response in India had been "fragmented and sequential".

"While the crime is executed with speed and coordination, the response unfolds in stages, creating a gap that is often exploited by hardcore professional criminals," the Chief Justice said.

He suggested measures such as real-time information sharing frameworks, "briefly pausing" fund transactions to foreign accounts to verify the account holders, and integrated command structures capable of coordinating responses across sectors and agencies.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Digital Arrest:** A psychological scam where fraudsters pose as law enforcement (CBI, Customs, Police) via video calls. They claim the victim is involved in a crime (like drugs or money laundering) and "arrest" them digitally by forcing them to stay on camera for hours or days until they transfer money.
- **Suo Motu Cognizance:** A Latin term meaning "on its own motion." It refers to a court taking up a case on its own without any complaint being filed, usually when a grave injustice or public interest issue is observed.
- **Data Harvesting:** The process of gathering large amounts of personal data from the internet, social media, or leaked databases to create detailed profiles of potential victims.
- **Financial Action Task Force (FATF):** An intergovernmental body that sets international standards to prevent money laundering and terror financing.
- **Psychological Coercion:** Using fear, authority, and isolation to manipulate a person's willpower, forcing them to act against their own interests.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Core Thesis**

- Cybercrime has transitioned from a simple economic offense to a deep-seated assault on **human dignity and mental integrity**. The "digital arrest" represents the pinnacle of this shift, utilizing psychological warfare rather than just technical hacking.

- **Key Evidence & Points**

- **The Scale of Loss:** Between 2024 and 2025, Indian citizens lost approximately **₹44,000 crore** to cyber frauds. Digital arrests alone accounted for roughly ₹30,000 crore since 2022.
- **The "Second Effect":** Beyond financial loss, the scam creates a "blistering sense of violation." Victims feel a sense of stigma and isolation, which often leads to under-reporting.
- **Fragmented Institutional Response:** While criminals operate as "integrated enterprises" (seamless coordination), the state's response is "sequential" (slow, step-by-step, and siloed), allowing criminals to stay ahead.
- **Recovery Rates:** A dismal recovery rate of only **10%** of defrauded funds highlights the inefficiency of current tracking mechanisms once money enters the global banking layer.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-2000s:** Cybercrime was limited to simple "phishing" emails and localized server hacks.
- **IT Act, 2000:** India's first major legislative step to provide legal recognition for electronic transactions and define cyber offenses.
- **The Digital Revolution (2016 onwards):** Post-demonetization and the Jio-revolution, millions of first-time internet users entered the ecosystem without adequate digital literacy.
- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** This served as a catalyst for "Cybercrime 2.0," moving from simple OTP frauds to sophisticated social engineering like fake COVID relief funds and, eventually, digital arrests.
- **Present Day (2024-2026):** Transition from individual "hackers" to organized, transnational crime syndicates using AI and Deepfakes.

- **Way Forward**

- **The "Golden Hour" Strategy:** Just as in medical emergencies, the first hour after a fraud is critical. Banks must have a "Kill Switch" accessible to victims to freeze funds immediately.
- **Digital Literacy 2.0:** Moving beyond "don't share OTP" to educating the public about legal procedures (e.g., "Police never arrest anyone via Skype/WhatsApp").
- **International Cooperation:** Strengthening the "Budapest Convention" style alignments to ensure cross-border digital evidence sharing.
- **AI-Enhanced Policing:** Using predictive analytics to identify patterns of data harvesting before the scam calls begin.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC Mains (2022, GS3):** "What are the different elements of cyber warfare? Have threats, to India's internal security, increased in the recent past?"
- **UPSC Mains (2021, GS3):** "Discuss the different types of cybercrimes and the measures required to be taken to fight the menace."
- **UPSC Mains (2020, GS3):** "What is the Cyber Dome Project? Explain how it can be useful in controlling cybercrimes in India."



AXIA
IAS ACADEMY
RISE ABOVE THE REST

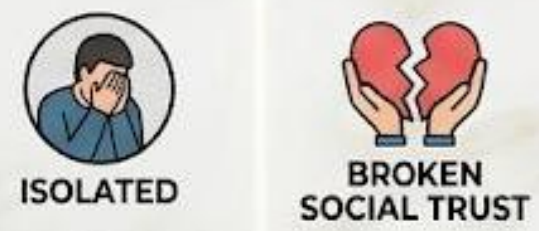
ANALYSIS: CJI SURYA KANT ON DIGITAL ARREST SCAMS



ECONOMICS & DATA CYBERCRIME LANDSCAPE (2024-2025)



SOCIAL & ETHICAL IMPACT



OFFENCE AGAINST HUMAN DIGNITY - NOT MERE ECONOMIC OFFENCE.

WAY FORWARD & POLICY REFORMS



FOR MORE INFORMATION & ENQUIRIES:

WEBSITE: axiaiasacademy.com
CONTACT: +91 6002-417488

India's forests could nearly double carbon storage by 2100, study finds

The findings, published in *Environmental Research: Climate*, involved researchers from Indian institutes; biggest increases in vegetation carbon are projected in desert and semi-arid zones across Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, study says

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

India's forests could store nearly twice as much carbon by the end of this century as they do now if current greenhouse gas emission trends continue, according to a new modelling study published this week in the journal *Environmental Research: Climate*.

The findings, involving researchers from multiple Indian institutes, present a granular forecast of how climate change will reshape the country's forest carbon stocks. Significantly, they diverge in important ways from official estimates compiled by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) - the official source of tree and forest cover data in India.

For this study, the authors used modelling to peer into the future and found that vegetation carbon biomass rises by 35% under a low-emissions future, 62%



Wake-up call: Climate change is silently rewriting every sector, including our forests, say scientists. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

under a medium-emissions pathway, and as much as 97% under a high-emissions, fossil-fuel-intensive scenario by 2100. Till about 2030, all of the scenarios project roughly the same quantities of vegetation after which they diverge sharply - the steepest acceleration occurring after 2050.

The projected increases are driven primarily by two interacting forces: ris-

ing precipitation and elevated atmospheric CO₂. Higher rainfall, projected across much of India under all emissions scenarios, translates to more moisture available for trees to grow. Simultaneously, more available carbon dioxide means enhancing photosynthesis and water-use efficiency. Rainfall effects appear with a lag of roughly two years under low and medium emis-

sions, extending to about four years under the high-emissions scenario to account for the fact that forests do not respond instantly to a single wet year, and that woody biomass accumulates slowly over time.

"Climate change is not just about rising temperatures - it is silently rewriting every sector, including our forests," said lead author Fathima Fitha. "Even where gains appear, they may mask deeper stresses, raising concerns about the stability of today's dense forests and the risk of releasing large stores of carbon. Human pressures, land-use change, and extreme events such as wildfires, droughts, and heatwaves are intensifying these risks. If we undermine our forests today, we risk amplifying emissions tomorrow."

The largest relative increases are projected not in India's established forest heartlands but in its driest

margins. Desert and semi-arid zones across Rajasthan, Gujarat, western Madhya Pradesh, and adjoining dry interiors are expected to see vegetation carbon rise by more than 60% compared to historical levels under high emissions. The Trans-Himalayas, the Gangetic forest belt, and the Deccan Peninsula follow. The Western Ghats and the Himalayas - India's most biodiverse and ecologically significant forest zones - are projected to see comparatively smaller relative increases, constrained by ecological saturation and specific climatic pressures those regions face, the study shows.

The increase in vegetation doesn't mean that climate change is acting as a net good, the researchers warned, as the models do not capture disruptive forces such as deforestation, land conversion, fire, and pest outbreaks intensified by warming.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Carbon Biomass:** The total mass of organic matter in living organisms (trees, shrubs, etc.) that stores carbon. In forests, this is primarily the wood, leaves, and roots.
- **Emissions Pathways (RCPs/SSPs):** Scenarios used by climate scientists to project future greenhouse gas concentrations. A "high-emissions" pathway assumes continued heavy fossil fuel use, while "low-emissions" assumes aggressive climate action.
- **Vegetation Carbon Stock:** The absolute quantity of carbon stored within a forest's living tissue. This acts as a "sink," removing CO_2 from the atmosphere.
- **CO_2 Fertilization Effect:** The phenomenon where increased atmospheric CO_2 enhances the rate of photosynthesis in plants, potentially leading to faster growth, provided other nutrients and water are available.
- **Ecological Saturation:** A state where an ecosystem (like the Western Ghats) has reached its maximum capacity for growth or carbon storage due to limited space, nutrients, or light.
- **Water-Use Efficiency (WUE):** The ratio of carbon fixed (growth) to water lost through transpiration. Higher CO_2 levels allow plants to keep their stomata partially closed, reducing water loss while still absorbing carbon.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Core Thesis**

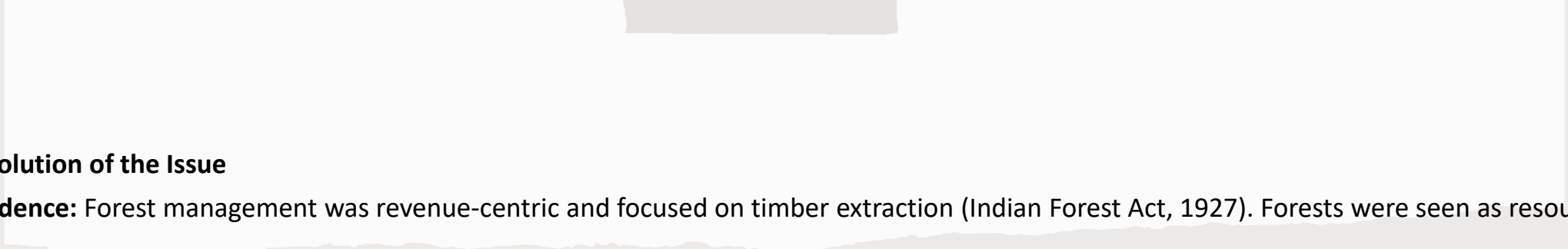
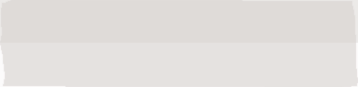
- The central argument is that climate change—specifically rising precipitation and CO_2 levels—could paradoxically lead to a massive surge in India's forest carbon stocks by 2100, though this "green growth" is fraught with instability.

- **Key Points of the Study**

- **Emissions-Linked Growth:** There is a direct correlation between the intensity of emissions and the volume of carbon stored. A high-emissions future could see carbon stocks nearly double (97% increase).
- **The 2030 Inflection Point:** Most scenarios track similarly until 2030, after which they diverge, with the most aggressive growth occurring post-2050.
- **Regional Variation:** The most significant relative growth is projected in arid and semi-arid regions (Rajasthan, Gujarat), while "saturated" biodiversity hotspots like the Western Ghats show slower growth.
- **Lagged Response:** Forests do not react to climate shifts immediately; there is a 2-to-4-year lag between increased rainfall and significant biomass accumulation.

- **Counterarguments and Risks**

- **The "Net Good" Fallacy:** Increased biomass does not equate to ecosystem health. Invasive species or "monoculture-like" growth driven by CO_2 can displace native biodiversity.
- **Vulnerability to Extremes:** While models show growth, they often fail to account for "disturbances" like wildfires, pests, and heatwaves that can turn a carbon sink into a carbon source overnight.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence:** Forest management was revenue-centric and focused on timber extraction (Indian Forest Act, 1927). Forests were seen as resources, not carbon sinks.
- **Post-Independence (1952 Policy):** The first National Forest Policy aimed at 33% forest cover, primarily for ecological balance.
- **1980s (Conservation Shift):** The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, shifted the focus toward preventing diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.
- **1987–Present (FSI Monitoring):** The Forest Survey of India began biennial mapping. In recent years, the focus has shifted toward "Carbon Stock" reporting as part of India's commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- **2015–2026 (NDC Targets):** India pledged to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

- **Way Forward**

- **Adaptive Management:** Shift from "static" conservation to "dynamic" management that anticipates regional shifts in vegetation.
- **Protecting Biodiversity Hotspots:** Since the Western Ghats and Himalayas are nearing saturation, they need "protection-first" policies, while arid zones need "restoration-first" policies.
- **Integrating Modeling with FSI:** The Forest Survey of India should incorporate climate-responsive modeling into its biennial State of Forest Reports (ISFR).
- **Strengthening Community Rights:** Empowering Gram Sabhas under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) to manage the local "carbon wealth" to ensure socio-economic equity.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC 2019 (GS3):** "Enumerate the indirect effects of climate change on the biodiversity of India."
- **UPSC 2018 (GS3):** "What is the CO₂ fertilization effect and how does it influence the global carbon cycle?" (Thematic link)
- **UPSC 2015 (GS3):** "The net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target is essentially a plan to balance the sources and sinks of carbon. Discuss."



AXIA
IAS ACADEMY

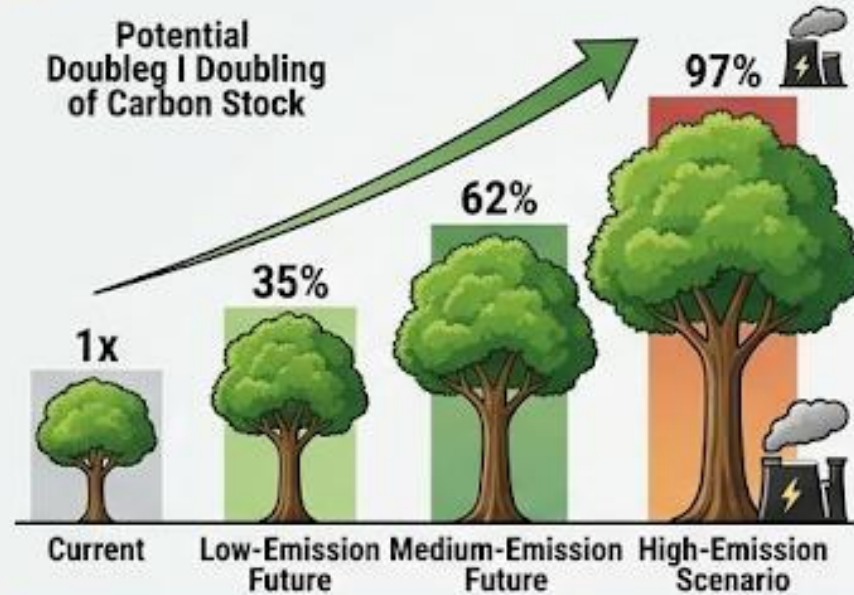
RISE ABOVE THE REST

AXIA COMPETITIVE EXAM CENTRE

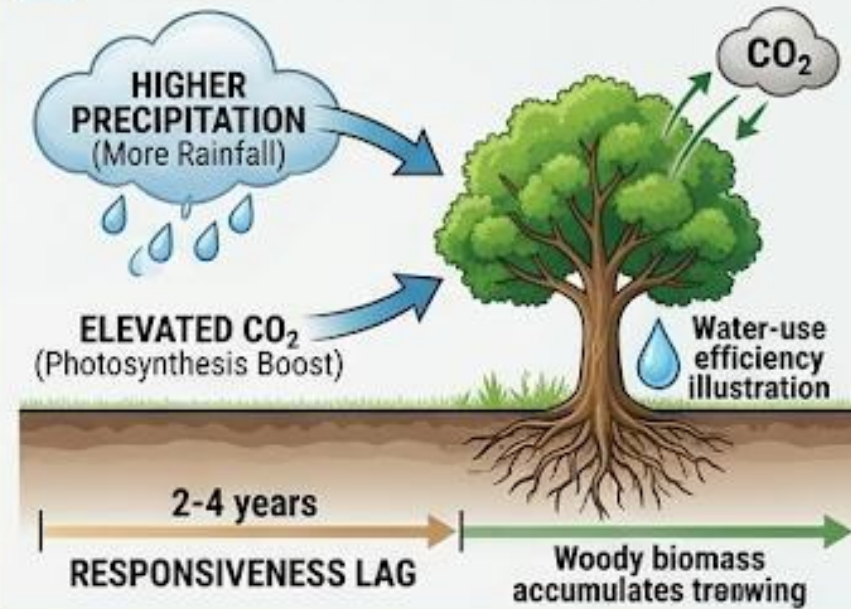
 axiaiasacademy.com

 +91 6002-417488

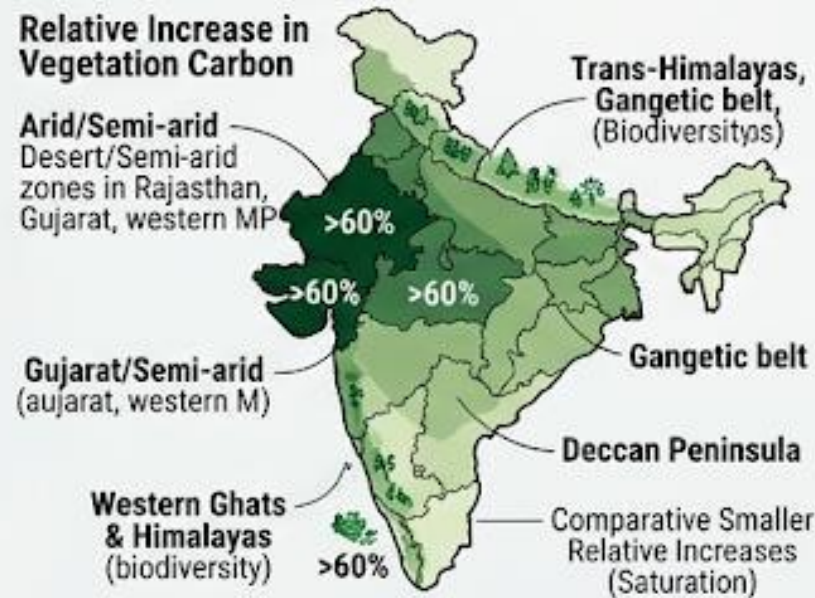
1 THE CARBON BOOM: INDIA'S FORESTS BY 2100



2 THE MECHANISMS OF GREENING



3 THE GEOGRAPHY OF CHANGE



4 RISKS & STRESSORS: BEYOND THE SURFACE



Doval's Riyadh visit on PM's instructions, part of govt. outreach to Gulf, says MEA

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval's surprise one-day visit to Riyadh was part of an outreach by the government amid a tense phase in the West Asian conflict, and took place, according to the Ministry of External Affairs, on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's instructions.

The NSA's visit was announced late on Sunday night by the MEA, at the end of his meetings with a number of senior Ministers. In Riyadh, Mr. Doval held talks with his counterpart, National Security Adviser Musaed Al-Alban. He also met Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, both princes in the Saudi royal family.

"On the directions of the Prime Minister, our outreach to countries in the Gulf continues," said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, describing the visit at



National Security Adviser Ajit Doval with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in Riyadh. ANI

a multi-ministerial briefing on Monday. "[Mr. Doval's] meetings were helpful to exchange views and review bilateral ties, and also exchange views on the regional situation and other issues of mutual interest," he added.

Mr. Doval's travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came a week after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (April 11-12), and Energy Minister Hardeep Puri's earlier visit to Qatar (April 9-10), and is understood to have been part of the go-

vernment's desire to shore up ties with India's major oil and gas suppliers amidst a possible energy crisis, as well as emphasise a more balanced approach towards the region during the war.

In a statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the talks between the Saudi Foreign Minister and Mr. Doval had reviewed areas of India-Saudi cooperation, "alongside a discussion of the latest developments in the regional situation and an exchange of viewpoints regarding it".

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **NSA (National Security Adviser):** The Prime Minister's primary advisor on national and international security. Unlike the Foreign Minister, the NSA often handles "back-channel" diplomacy and sensitive strategic negotiations.
- **Extended Neighborhood Policy:** A framework where India expands its strategic footprint beyond its immediate borders (SAARC) to include regions like the Gulf, Central Asia, and SE Asia.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India's policy of making independent decisions in foreign affairs without being tethered to any specific power bloc (e.g., maintaining ties with both Israel and Iran/Saudi Arabia).
- **Bilateral Ties:** Political, economic, or cultural relations between two sovereign states.
- **Energy Security:** The uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price. Given India imports over 80% of its crude oil, the Gulf is the linchpin of this security.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis revolves around **proactive crisis management** and **strategic balancing** in a volatile West Asian landscape.
- **High-Level Crisis Diplomacy:** The visit, ordered directly by the PM, underscores that when regional tensions rise, India moves beyond routine diplomatic channels to high-level security dialogues.
- **The Energy Imperative:** Amidst a potential energy crisis triggered by regional conflict, India is shoring up its "energy bridges." Meetings with the Saudi Energy Minister indicate a focus on price stability and supply chain resilience.
- **De-hyphenation and Balance:** India is signaling a balanced approach. By engaging Saudi Arabia and the UAE shortly after regional escalations, New Delhi ensures it isn't seen as leaning too heavily toward any one side in the West Asian conflict.
- **Regional Stability as a National Interest:** The security of millions of Indian expatriates and the stability of trade routes (like the Red Sea) are paramount, making the "regional situation" a domestic concern for India.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1990s (Ideological Phase):** India's policy was largely pro-Arab, influenced by the Cold War and the need to counter Pakistan's influence in the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation).
- **Post-1991 (Pragmatic Shift):** Economic liberalization forced India to view the Gulf as an economic partner. The "Look West" policy began to take shape.
- **2006 (Delhi Declaration):** King Abdullah's visit to India was a watershed moment, elevating the relationship to a "Strategic Partnership."
- **Post-2014 (The Hyper-Engagement Era):** Under the current administration, ties have shifted from "Buyer-Seller" to "Strategic Investors." The "Link West" policy has seen unprecedented visits by the Indian PM to Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar.

- **Way Forward**

- **Institutionalize the Dialogue:** Move beyond ad-hoc "surprise visits" to a regularized NSA-level security framework with the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council).
- **Economic Diversification:** Rapidly implement the IMEC corridor to move beyond the "oil-only" narrative.
- **Diaspora Safety Protocols:** Develop a coordinated regional contingency plan for the evacuation or protection of Indian citizens in case the conflict scales.
- **Soft Power:** Leverage cultural ties and the "Yoga/Bollywood" influence to deepen the partnership beyond the elite ministerial level.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC 2023 (GS 2):** "The India-UAE Partnership is a model for India's growing ties with the Middle East. Discuss."
- **UPSC 2017 (GS 2):** "The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic diplomacy. Examine."
- **UPSC 2015 (GS 2):** "The long-sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalized nations has disappeared on account of its new found role in the emerging world order. Elaborate."

WEST ASIA CRISIS: DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH TO RIYADH

A MASTERCLASS FOR UPSC PREPARATION



1. STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

A) High-Level Crisis Management

- direct PM instructions
- Doval's shuttle diplomacy
- back-channel talks

B) The Energy Security Pivot

- shoring up supplies with major oil/gas partners like KSA, Qatar, UAE

C) Deepening Ties

- moving from 'Buyer-Seller' to 'Strategic Partners'
- Link West policy



2. DE-HYPHENATION & STRATEGIC BALANCE

A) Multi-alignment Policy

- balancing ties with KSA, Iran, Israel
- independent choices

B) International Stature

- positioning India as a global de-escalator, Vishwa Bandhu



India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)



3. KEY CHALLENGES & RISKS

A) Geopolitical Balancing Act

- KSA-Iran rivalry
- Israel-Palestine issue

B) Diasporas Welfare

- 8.5 million Indians
- Remittances safety

C) Economic Stability

- Volatile oil prices
- supply chain resilience



Potential 'choke point'



4. UPSC SYLLABUS & PREPARATION

A) GS II (International Relations, Neighborhood, Global Groupings)

B) GS III (Energy Security, Security Management)

C) Essay & Optional (Themed approach, multi-dimensional analysis)

- Class 12 Pol Sci: contemporary world politics
- Class 12 Pol Sci: contemporary world politics
- Class 12 Pol Sci: economics politics
- Class 12 Pol Sci: nomittad politics
- Class 12 Pol Sci: nomitary politics

Key PYQs:

- PYQS: Indians foressting in engagement (2020)
- PYQO: Innittance emewement (2023)
- PYQO: Presliden Industrial depesures (2004)
- PYQO: Reernursd Indian in t:moasoment (2028)
- PYQO: Ont rieflestarast management (2023)

Long UPSC prep cycles take a toll on aspirants' mental health

The psychological experience of preparing for UPSC examinations differs from other competitive examinations, including JEE for IITs and NEET for medical education, because aspirants typically prepare for the exam for several years, which leads to chronic rather than short-term stress

Rohini Singh
Senior Feature Writer

For lakhs of young Indians, the national civil services examination is not just a test, it becomes part of who they are. More than 10 lakh aspirants take the examination every year. Many spend several years preparing, often relying on coaching institutes such as Delhi and Hyderabad.

Not only around a thousand positions are offered, the examination is among the world's most competitive. Experts are convinced that the protracted, high-stakes process also instils aspirants' sense of self.

For many aspirants, preparation is marked by long hours of study and constant anxiety about outcomes. One aspirant who prepared anxiously said the uncertainty is worse than the workload. "It's bigger than the workload. It's bigger than the not performing to my full potential despite constant effort."

Hidden psychological cost

Facing the qualifying exam for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) comes with a sustained form of psychological strain. In a 2014 study involving UPSC aspirants, Mythra Fatima, PhD scholar and senior research fellow at the University of Lucknow's Department of Psychology, found that 70% of aspirants reported moderate to severe distress. "The presence of uncertainty whether one will qualify, the vast syllabus, loss of forgetting, and the ever-changing exam patterns all contribute," she said, "and aspirants will doubt, or wilted, often have negative questioning whether they are capable or simply wasting their time." "Prolonged studies don't have the same stress. I understand aspirants struggle to afford courses or materials, have work-part-time, reduction in study time," Ms. Fatima said.

Years of repeated failures also erode self-confidence, leading to avoidance and isolation that affect psychological health. She pointed to delayed answer keys, unpredictable paper patterns, and the need to reappear just at structural stresses.

According to independent psychiatrist A.S. Mishra, such prolonged identification erodes the aspirant's personal wellbeing. "Aspirants often fight to anchor their sense of self worth about society around the examination."

Chronic stress, burnout

The psychological experience of preparing for the UPSC examination differs from other competitive examinations, including the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for IITs and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical education. This is because aspirants typically prepare for the UPSC exam for several years, which leads to chronic rather than short-term stress.

According to Dr. Mishra, such prolonged preparative shifts aspirants from an acute phase to a persistent background state of cognitive load, decision fatigue, and reduced memory. He also said prolonged uncertainty can produce "chronic anticipatory stress", where aspirants attempt to do more and more, despite the individual's sense of control and also contribute to emotional exhaustion.



UPSC aspirants wait outside an examination centre as they arrive to appear for the UPSC preliminary exam. In Jaipur, in March 2024, on

Arshad Pathak, a psychiatrist in Lucknow, also said long-term preparation drives learners with chronic stress and burnout. Prolonged uncertainty can lead to "anticipatory anxiety and chronic fatigue". However, he noted that the impact is bidirectional - a distress state in some people and positive mental health in others - and that early support can mitigate adverse outcomes.

Protracted uncertainty is particularly challenging for young adults in their 20s, a phase typically associated with career formation and financial independence. When many years in this stage of life are instead devoted to a single exam, the stress can become intensely personal.

Why the distress endures

Psychology alone can't explain the toll that preparing for the UPSC exam takes. Dr. Arshad Pathak argued that the appeal of the civil services is rooted in India's social structure, where the bureaucracy has long held authority and prestige and families widely pressure the services to be a path to upward mobility.

South Asian University sociologist Anandita Das said that the aspiration is the colonial legacy of India's civil services. After independence, the prestige that came with a member of the civil services, including the high status, job security, housing, and pensions, remained intact. "Civil services are part of the power class," she said.

The opening for government jobs didn't decline even in the post-liberalisation era even as the private sector "blossomed". "Service sector jobs, despite high salaries, do not match up in terms of stability, pension perks, prestige, power, and prestige," Dr. Pathak said.

The pattern of institutional advertisements where civil services took highly, often the media's role in valuing successful aspirants, or the way that reinforced the state's status in the collective imagination.

The aspirant's sense of control and also contribute to emotional exhaustion. Early support could help reduce the burden.



The pressure of uncertainty whether one will qualify, the vast syllabus, that of forgetting, and the ever-changing exam patterns all contribute to chronic stress.

Such sustained stress can contribute to burnout.

Pathak and Prasad are dedicated to coaching institutes, libraries, and bookshelves, forming a parallel education ecosystem. Among them, coaching institutes - while they are central to the ecosystem - remain largely unexamined in shaping or mitigating psychological distress. The aspirant's quest earlier said, "coaching centres benefit financially from prolonged preparation cycles. There is no accountability, no oversight."

Within the ecosystem, aspirants form tightly knit peer groups and share relevant materials, attend lectures together, and discuss current affairs late into the night. While these networks offer support, they can also intensify pressure through constant comparison. As Dr. Pathak said, the in-group solidarity is also shaped by a sense of collective responsibility.

"UPSC aspirants already consider themselves as part of the white group which holds the administrative and the nation state," he explained. "They believe other career pathways are 'non-professional' while civil services are the ones who decide the fate of other professionals in many ways."

This shared imagination of a status, prestige factors, she added, can also help aspirants navigate the hardships that come with prolonged preparation.

Inside the system

Psychologists have stressed that while ambition and persistence are valuable, aspirants must also acknowledge the structural role of prolonged uncertainty. Access to counselling, peer support, and realistic

career guidance could help reduce the burden.

Harshvardh Chatterjee, director general of the Institute of Longitudinal Learning in Management, New Delhi, said that while many aspirants spend years preparing, doing so reflects individual choice rather than a highly operational system, rather than a purely systemic failure. However, he acknowledged that structural changes can still result in significant personal loss of time and effort.

In this, he suggested better evaluation, more frequent preliminary exams, diversified selection, and open talent and graduate programmes aligned with public administration.

Dr. Fatima said more research needs have been descriptive. They have identified problems, not solutions. She also argued that the scale of aspirant needs extending and suggested encouraging youth research other professions or strategies.

Dr. Mishra added that preparation could, over time, take a multidirectional turn in some cases, particularly when it loses flexibility and proportionality. "The individuals include persistent distress, neglect of alternative roles, inability to measure goals, and competitive examination driven by fear of stagnation," he said.

At the same time, sociologists argue that the popularity of the civil services stems from the administrative system in India's employment landscape. Dr. Pathak said the UPSC ecosystem "mirrors India's developmental inequalities". Being IAS has a much better job, the national sector offers little security, and there is a major skill gap.

For many graduates, particularly from smaller cities, the civil services then means one of a few career options seen as both prestigious and secure.

While UPSC is an independent system, journalists in Lucknow, Khabardhar Bhargava said. Dr. Harshvardh Singh is based, Lucknow Public College of Professional Studies, Lucknow. @harshvardhsingh1

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Identity Fusion:** A psychological state where an individual's personal identity becomes inextricably blurred with a group or a goal (the UPSC). Success or failure of the goal is perceived as the success or failure of the "self."
- **Chronic Anticipatory Stress:** A long-term state of tension caused by the constant expectation of a future event (the exam results) whose outcome is uncertain.
- **Parallel Education Economy:** A shadow economy consisting of coaching centers, private hostels, and bookstores that thrives alongside the formal university system, often operating with little regulation.
- **Power Elite:** A term (coined by C. Wright Mills) referring to a small group of people who control the dominant institutions of a society. In India, the bureaucracy is seen as a core part of this elite.
- **Cognitive Load & Decision Fatigue:** The mental exhaustion resulting from the sheer volume of information processed (syllabus) and the constant small choices one must make (what to read, how to schedule) over years.
- **Social Upward Mobility:** The transition of an individual or family from a lower socio-economic layer to a higher one.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Psychological Thesis**

- The core argument is that the UPSC CSE is no longer just a career choice but a **psychological ordeal**. The "prolonged uncertainty" of the exam creates a unique form of distress compared to exams like JEE or NEET, which are usually one-off attempts at a younger age.

- **The Sociological Root**

- The "dream" persists because of structural realities in India:
- **The Prestige Gap:** Even high-paying private sector jobs lack the "state power" and social standing associated with being a District Magistrate.
- **The Security Paradox:** In an informalized economy, the "cradle-to-grave" security of a government job remains the ultimate rational choice for the middle class.

- **The Economic Angle**

- There is a "bidirectional" impact. While the ecosystem provides support (peer groups), it also commodifies the aspirant's struggle through coaching centers that benefit financially from "repeater" cycles.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence (Covenant Civil Services):** Established by the British to maintain the "Steel Frame" of the Empire. Entry was restricted, and it was the ultimate symbol of colonial authority.
- **Post-1947 (The Sardar Patel Vision):** Reconstituted as the All India Services. It retained colonial perks (bungalows, status) to ensure stability during the transition to a republic.
- **1990s (Liberalization):** Despite the rise of MNCs and IT jobs, the "Lal Batti" (Red Beacon) culture remained a dominant social aspiration, especially in the Hindi Heartland (UP/Bihar).
- **2010s-Present (The Coaching Explosion):** Digitalization and the shift to hubs like Rajinder Nagar/Mukherjee Nagar transformed preparation into a multi-billion dollar industry, intensifying the "herd mentality."

- **Way Forward**

- **The 2-Year Rule:** Encouraging a cultural shift where candidates limit full-time preparation to 2 years, treating subsequent attempts as part-time endeavors.
- **Psychological Buffer:** Government-funded counseling centers in education hubs like Old Rajinder Nagar.
- **Exit Portals:** Creating a "Lateral Entry" or "Preferential Hiring" for UPSC veterans (those who reached interviews) in PSUs or corporate roles to value their knowledge base.
- **Diversifying Aspirations:** Investing in the "Startup India" and "Skill India" ecosystems so that the "Power Elite" status is shared with innovators and creators, not just administrators.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC 2017 (GS 2):** "Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India." (Can be adapted to Mental Health for aspirants).
- **UPSC 2020 (GS 4):** "The current internet expansion has infused a different set of cultural values which are often in conflict with traditional values." (Relates to the digital coaching culture).
- **UPSC 2016 (Essay):** "Innovation is the key determinant of economic growth and social welfare." (Counter-argument to the obsession with administrative roles).



AXIA
IAS ACADEMY

ANALYSIS: THE U.S. HEMISPHERIC SHIFT & LATIN AMERICAN ANTI-IMPERIALIST RESURGENCE

ON BEHALF OF AXIA IAS ACADEMY

U.S.-LATIN AMERICA POLICY TIMELINE (1900-PRESENT)



MULTI-DIMENSIONAL UPSC IMPACT

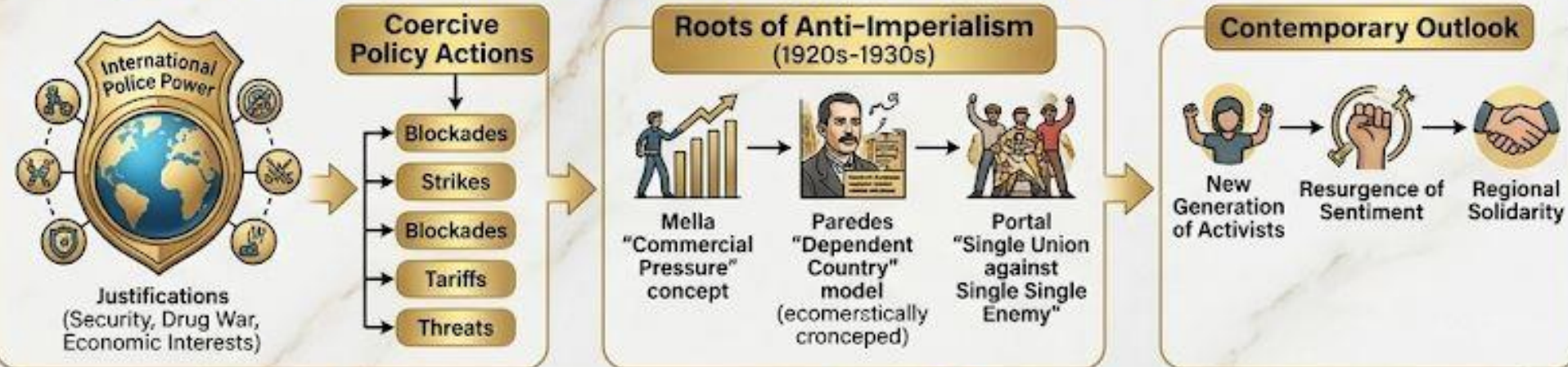
Pillars



KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS



U.S. POLICING LENS vs. LATIN AMERICAN RESISTANCE RESPONSE





Sundarbans is the largest contiguous mangrove forest in the world. <https://www.istock.com>

Sundarbans may be less blue than it seems

Yasudewan Mukherjee

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Kolkata, have reported that microplastics could interfere with the natural food web and alter the carbon budget of the Bay of Bengal.

An microplastic's weather and break down, they found dissolved organic carbon into the water, the microbes living on the plastic also create "allochthonous" carbon, the term reported in a paper due to be published in the May 2020 issue of the *Journal of Hazardous Materials Advances*.

The authors conducted a year-long study to understand how small plastic particles move through the ecosystem and how they might interfere with natural carbon cycles.

The Sundarbans is the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest. Because it sits at the confluence of major rivers like the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, a large amount of waste generated upstream is also carried into the delta.

As microplastics break down in water, they release dissolved organic carbon, which can be food for bacteria to grow and multiply much faster than they would naturally

While scientists have known that the area is polluted, they have lacked detailed information on how microplastics behave in the surface water across different seasons and how much carbon they contribute to the environment.

Between October 2019 and October 2020, the IISER Kolkata collected water samples twice a month from three locations near Sagar Island in the Sunderban estuary, then used advanced laboratory techniques to identify the types of plastic and observe how the particles were breaking down.

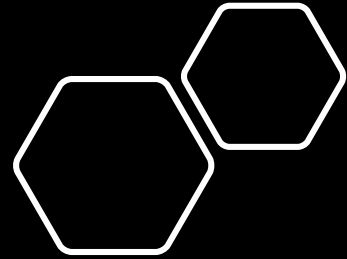
This way, the team discovered a high concentration of microplastics, ranging from about 6 particles per liter to over 56 particles per liter. These levels were around 40% higher during the monsoon season because, the researchers concluded, heavy rainfall washed plastic waste from the land and urban areas into the estuary. In these months, they also found a surge in what they called "coloured fragments" — flaky, ribbon, weathered pieces of plastic being stirred by surface runoff.

Around half of the plastics were fibres, likely from textiles, followed by fragments. The most common materials were polypropylene, which is used in packaging, and polystyrene, polycarbonate, used to make water bottles.

High resolution imaging revealed that the microplastics were not clean but had cracks, pits, and grooves, suggesting that they were breaking down into even smaller nanoparticles. The researchers also found photodegradation, which are complex communities of bacteria and microbes living on the surface of the plastic.

Crucially, because the plastics are roughly 10% carbon, they were acting as a "local carbon reservoir", the researchers wrote in their paper. As microplastics break down in water, they release dissolved organic carbon, which can be food for bacteria to grow and multiply much faster than they would naturally. The bio-film growing on the plastic were producing carbon of their own, called allochthonous carbon.

Mangroves are blue-carbon ecosystems, meaning they are efficient at capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. However, the authors added, the introduction of carbon in the form of plastic could further disrupt local climate. Microplastics in the Sundarbans are now a significant part of the ecosystem's carbon cycle.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Microplastics:** Plastic particles less than 5mm in size. They are categorized as *primary* (manufactured small, like microbeads) or *secondary* (broken down from larger items like bottles or nets).
- **Plastisphere:** A term used to describe the ecosystem of microbes, algae, and bacteria that colonize plastic debris in water. It essentially creates a "new" habitat that can harbor pathogens or invasive species.
- **Blue Carbon:** Carbon captured by the world's ocean and coastal ecosystems (mangroves, seagrasses, salt marshes). These are far more efficient at sequestration than terrestrial forests.
- **Biogenic Carbon:** Carbon produced or derived from living organisms (in this case, the microbes living on the plastic), as opposed to fossil-fuel-based carbon.
- **Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC):** The fraction of organic carbon that passes through a filter. In the Sundarbans, the leaching of DOC from plastics provides an unnatural "buffet" for bacteria, disrupting the base of the food web.
- **Weathering:** The physical and chemical breakdown of plastics due to UV radiation, mechanical wave action, and microbial activity.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis is that **microplastics have evolved from being mere pollutants to becoming active participants in the carbon cycle**, potentially destabilizing the Sundarbans' role as a "carbon sponge."
- **The Seasonal Surge:** The study highlights that the monsoon acts as a "flush," with heavy rains transporting plastic from urban centers like Kolkata and the upper Ganga-Brahmaputra basin into the estuary, increasing concentrations by 40%.
- **The Carbon Reservoir Paradox:** Plastics are ~90% carbon. When they degrade, they don't just disappear; they convert into DOC and biogenic carbon. This creates a "novel carbon reservoir" that was never part of the natural mangrove equilibrium.
- **Ecosystem Interference:**
 - **The Food Web:** Excess carbon promotes rapid bacterial growth, which can alter the microbial balance, potentially affecting the higher trophic levels (fish, crustaceans).
 - **Efficiency Loss:** While mangroves naturally store CO₂, the presence of plastic-derived carbon might make the soil/water system "saturated" or less efficient at sequestering atmospheric CO₂.
- **Material Identity:** The dominance of fibers (textiles) and fragments (PP/PET) points toward household waste and the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector as the primary culprits.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-Independence/Early Post-Independence:** Limited use of synthetic polymers; waste in the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta was primarily organic.
- **1970s–1990s (The Plastic Boom):** Advent of the "Sachet Revolution" and increased use of PET and Polypropylene in India. Plastic waste management was non-existent in municipal planning.
- **2011–2016:** Introduction of **Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules**. Emphasis moved from just littering to "Extended Producer Responsibility" (EPR).
- **2022–Present:** India's **Ban on Single-Use Plastics (SUP)** and the G20's focus on "Circular Economy." However, the IISER study proves that "legacy plastic" (old, weathered fragments) remains a persistent threat.

- **Way Forward**

- **Catchment-Scale Management:** Treat the entire Ganga basin as a single unit for plastic filtration.
- **Upstream STPs:** Mandate micro-filters in municipal sewage plants to catch fibers from laundry.
- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Enhance mangrove restoration to counteract the "efficiency loss" caused by plastic carbon.
- **Blue Economy Policy:** Integrate microplastic monitoring into the "Deep Ocean Mission" and "Integrated Coastal Zone Management."

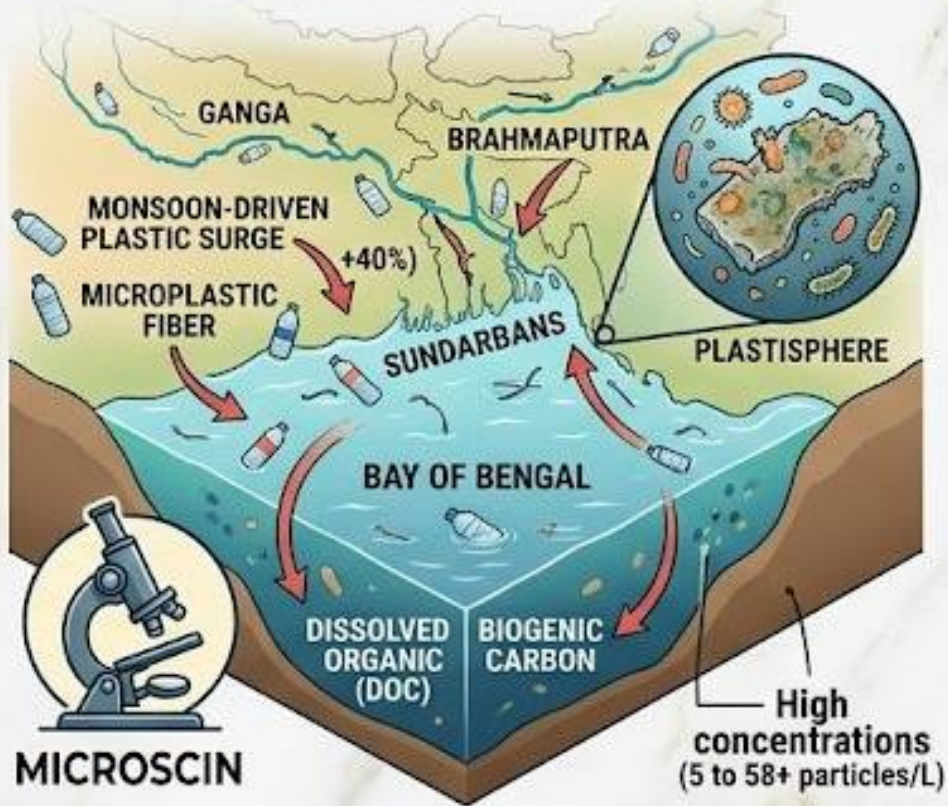
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC 2019 (GS-III):** "Can strategy of coastal zone management, if carried out properly, help in protecting the human settlements from inundation and other hazards...?"
- **UPSC 2018 (GS-III):** "What is the economic significance of the 'Blue Economy' for a country like India?"
- **UPSC 2021 (Prelims):** Question on "Microbeads" and their environmental impact.
- **APSC 2022 (Mains):** "Discuss the impact of plastic pollution on the marine ecosystem with special reference to the Bay of Bengal."

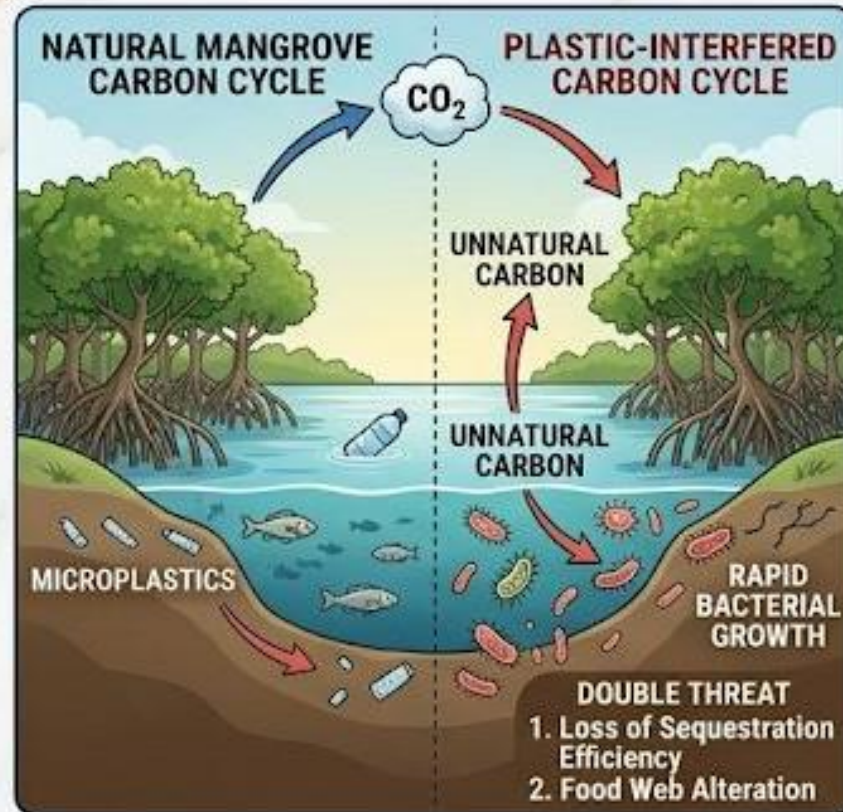


THE SILENT DISRUPTION: MICROPLASTICS IN THE SUNDARBAN CARBON CYCLE

THE BAY OF BENGAL: A NOVEL CARBON RESERVOIR?



HOW IT ALTERS THE ECOSYSTEM



MATERIAL COMPOSITION & IMPACT

PLASTIC TYPES



Fibers ~50%
Fragments ~50%

MATERIALS



Polypropylene (PP)
PET

KEY UPSC TAKEAWAYS

- Biogeochemical Cycle Disruption
- "Anthropocene" Epoch Markers
- Transboundary Waste Management
- Ethical & Legal Implications (Art. 21)
- Blue Carbon vs. Net Zero

U.S. power, Latin American resistance

The U.S.'s increasingly aggressive and coercive approach in Latin America echoes earlier periods of intervention and garish diplomacy; this stance is likely to fuel a resurgence of anti-imperialist thinking and resistance across the region

WORLD FOCUS

Tom Wood

In Latin America, as in other parts of the world, the second Donald Trump administration has adopted an increasingly aggressive policy. From drone strikes on purported drug traffickers to increased tariffs on imports, and from the blockade on fuel shipments and threats of invasion to Cuba to the January 7 military invasion into Venezuela, the U.S.'s more coercive approach to its hemisphere neighbours makes an earlier period of U.S. foreign policy.

Many commentators have found echoes of the 1980s capture of Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega to the kidnapping of American President Nicolas Maduro. Others highlighted the longer history of U.S. interventions in Latin America, stretching back through the Cold War. That includes the Nixon administration's support for the 1973 coup against Salvador Allende in Chile or the CIA sponsored removal of Guatemala's elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, in 1954.

It is a history of early 20th century Latin America, I believe the Trump administration's approach to Latin America more closely resembles an earlier pattern of U.S. policy. Between 1900 and the mid 1930s, U.S. forces intervened in one Latin American country after another. This practice was often justified by the Roosevelt Corollary, President Theodore Roosevelt's addition to the Monroe Doctrine. It came of "chronic wrongdoing" Roosevelt said in 1904, the U.S. would not feel compelled to exercise an "international police power" in defence of U.S. interests.

But eventually few Latin American respondents to the U.S. starting its dominance in the early 20th century, may feel some lessons for the present day. One of the major sub-effects of the U.S. as a global great power was an upsurge of resistance and anti-imperialist thinking in the region's political life.

The roots of anti-imperialism
In the 30 years after Roosevelt asserted the U.S.'s right to intervene across the hemisphere, U.S. forces occupied Cuba three times – in 1898-99, 1901, and 1917-20. They also occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934 and the Dominican Republic from 1919 to 1924. In Nicaragua, the U.S. deployed the Marines from 1912 to 1933 and then again from 1933 to 1934, ending a counter-revolution in which it used aerial bombardment for the first time.

Across much of the region, then, this was a time when the U.S. was quick to react to force, underpinned by its economic heft. Latin America's economic recovery.

In the era of external intervention accompanied with a period of remarkable political ferment, which I describe in my recently published book, *Political Awakening*.

In one place after another, from Buenos Aires to Mexico City and from Havana to Lima, movements sprung up that put forward sharp critiques of U.S. power. Many of them grew out of student organisations in the late 1930s, while others drew on the rising strength of labour unions and newly formed labour political parties.

In 1932, total workers in the Mexican state of Veracruz formed the *Comité Único*. From the outset, they set their focus on direct intervention with international ones, and they argued that



In Havana, protesters carrying a flag reading 'Trump, Latin America is not yours', as demonstrators oppose U.S. actions in Venezuela. (AP Photo)

there was a compelling reason for this, as the league put it, "the interventionism is not the result of a mixed sentiment for empty phrases... but of the need to take preventive measures, to reduce material aid to the enemy," which they identified as "the imperialism of North America."

Many of Latin America's radical movements at this time were inspired by the recent example of the Mexican Revolution. The new Mexican Constitution of 1917 had nationalised the country's land and natural resources, putting it on a collision course with U.S. companies and investors.

Others still were inspired by the global experiments of the Russian Revolution. This, of course, included armed bands now communist parties across the region. But at the time, many others in Latin America saw the Bolsheviks as part of a global anti-imperialist movement.

Mexico City as an activist hub
My book explores the key role Mexico City played as a gathering point for these diverse political tendencies.

There included groups ranging from Mexican peasant leagues to the American People's Revolutionary Alliance, an anti-imperialist movement founded by Peruvian exiles. Many of these organisations converged under the umbrella of the anti-imperialist League of the Americas. Founded in Mexico City in 1928, it soon had chapters in a dozen other countries across the region.

Between them, these movements brought into focus the spread of U.S. power. As the Cuban student leader and communist Julio Antonio Mella said in 1931 – at a time when his country was highly dependent on the U.S. but hardly sovereign – the U.S. was doing it "with the same eagerness, if largely without their direct consent of territories, though it had promised the Cubans to do so by their 1902

constitution a provision allowing it to intervene in the island at will.

In Mexico City, the U.S. was clearly an enemy, one that mainly exercised its dominance through commercial or financial pressure. For this, the *diplomacy* and *diplomats* were as central as U.S. power as the halls of government in Washington, DC.

The Ecuadorian, an Ecuadorian doctor who founded the country's socialist party in 1926, a new tactic was required to capture Latin American countries' revolutionary potential. Formerly sovereign, they were not colonies at all, but they were economically and politically subordinated in Washington and Wall Street – "dependent countries," as he phrased it in 1926.

But the Peruvian poet Miguel Portal, a leading member of the anti-imperialist American People's Revolutionary Alliance, U.S. dominance played out differently in the case of Latin America's

in a series of lectures he gave in Puerto Rico to the Dominican Republic in 1926. Portal divided the region into two areas. While countries such as Argentina or Brazil were mainly able for U.S. investment, Mexico and the Caribbean were regularly subordinated to military force. Or, as Portal put it, "this imperialist means, no doubt."

Portal concluded her lecture with a phrase that combined her analysis of U.S. dominance with a resurgent appeal to unity: "We have a single and good enemy: let us form a single and good cause."

United States of resistance?

So while there was one Latin American and imperialist foe that could give us, there were also profound divergences between them. This included questions of strategy as well as questions of principle. What role should there direct consent of territories, though it had promised the Cubans to do so by their 1902

proving he? And what kind of state should emerge from it?

Over time, these differences broadened into deep rifts that pitted revolutionaries against defensive reformers, internationalists against nationalists, and pro-Soviet against anti-communists. These disagreements played an important role in Latin America's politics over the rest of the century. While many of these rifts became especially prominent during the Cold War, they developed out of earlier divisions over how best to counter U.S. dominance.

The anti-imperialist upsurge of the 1930s and '40s was formative for a generation of Latin American radicals, several of whom entered political life during these years went on to play key roles in major events of the 1960s.

For example, Raúl Hues, who served as foreign secretary for Cuba's revolutionary government from 1959 to 1976, was first politicised in the island's anti-imperialist movements of the 1930s.

The men and women whose political views were formed in the interwar period carried those ideas forward into the Cold War era. In important ways, the 1930s and 1940s laid the groundwork for later and better known radical movements.

Put it, if course, not always prodigious. It is impossible to predict what the long-term consequences of radical U.S. policy in Latin America will be, especially given the rightward tilt that is currently unfolding across the region.

But looking at the region's anti-imperialist traditions, there points to one possible outcome: The U.S.'s newly aggressive stance will, sooner rather than later, fuel a resurgence of anti-imperialist sentiment as the organising principle for a new generation of activists.

THE GIST

The approach resembles an older pattern of U.S. policy justified by the Roosevelt Corollary and the exercise of an "international police power".

Activists like Ernesto Guevara, from student organisations, labour unions, and other political parties and formed shape a pattern of U.S. power.

Over time, these divergences broadened into deep rifts that pitted revolutionaries against defensive reformers, internationalists against nationalists, and pro-Soviet against anti-communists, shaping politics in the region.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Monroe Doctrine (1823):** A foundational U.S. policy stating that any intervention by European powers in the politics of the Americas is a potentially hostile act against the U.S.
- **Roosevelt Corollary (1904):** An extension of the Monroe Doctrine. It asserted the U.S. right to intervene in Latin American nations to "stabilize" their economic affairs if they were unable to pay their international debts or were guilty of "chronic wrongdoing."
 - *Example:* U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic to manage its customs houses.
- **Gunboat Diplomacy:** Foreign policy that is supported by the use or threat of military force.
 - *Example:* Sending naval vessels to a country's coast to influence its internal political decisions.
- **Sovereignty:** The supreme power or authority of a state to govern itself without outside interference.
- **Anti-Imperialism:** Opposition to the political, economic, or cultural dominance of one country over another. In Latin America, this often targets U.S. hegemony.
- **Economic Dependency:** A situation where the economies of certain countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis**

- The current aggressive U.S. posture toward Latin America—characterized by sanctions, incursions, and threats—is not a new phenomenon but a return to the early 20th-century "International Police Power" era. This "gunboat diplomacy" historically backfires by creating a unified, radical anti-imperialist front.

- **Key Points**

- **The "New" Aggression:** The article cites modern examples like drone strikes on traffickers, fuel blockades on Cuba, and incursions into Venezuela as echoes of the past.
- **Historical Mirroring:** Today's policy is less like the Cold War (which focused on ideological containment) and more like the 1900–1930 period of "policing" for U.S. commercial interests.
- **Resistance as a Side Effect:** U.S. interventionism acts as a catalyst for political ferment. It transforms local grievances into a unified internationalist movement.
- **The "Dependent Country" Paradox:** Thinkers like Ricardo Paredes identified that nations can be "formally sovereign" (having a flag and anthem) but "economically subordinated" (controlled by Wall Street).



Historical Evolution of the Issue

Period	Milestone/Policy	Key Characteristics
1823	Monroe Doctrine	"America for Americans"; aimed at keeping Europe out.
1904	Roosevelt Corollary	Transition from defensive to proactive intervention; "International Police Power."
1900–1934	The Banana Wars	Occupations of Haiti, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Dominican Republic to protect trade.
1930s–1940s	Good Neighbor Policy	FDR's attempt to shift away from military intervention toward cooperation.
1947–1991	Cold War Era	Support for coups (Chile 1973, Guatemala 1954) to stop communism.
2020s–Present	Neo-Interventionism	Return to unilateral force, tariffs, and blockades under the guise of security/anti-narcotics.

- **Way Forward**

- **Shift to Multilateralism:** The U.S. should utilize the OAS and the UN for dispute resolution rather than unilateral "police power."
- **Economic Partnership over Sanctions:** Moving from blockades to "near-shoring" and collaborative investment to address the root causes of migration and unrest.
- **Respecting "Radical Sovereignty":** Acknowledging that Latin American nations have the right to nationalize resources (like Lithium or Oil) without facing regime change.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Re-establishing the "Good Neighbor" spirit—focusing on mutual security interests like climate change and pandemic response rather than drone strikes.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Mains 2021 (GS2):** "The newly emerged world order has placed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in a position of challenges." (Theme: Evolution of Western military power).
- **Mains 2013 (GS2):** "The policy of 'hot pursuit' and 'pre-emptive strikes' has become a part of the international legal discourse."
- **Mains 2018 (GS1):** "Why Indochina was a focus of 20th-century struggle?" (Parallel theme: Resistance to imperialism).



AXIA
IAS ACADEMY

ANALYSIS: THE U.S. HEMISPHERIC SHIFT & LATIN AMERICAN ANTI-IMPERIALIST RESURGENCE

ON BEHALF OF AXIA IAS ACADEMY

U.S.-LATIN AMERICA POLICY TIMELINE (1900-PRESENT)



MULTI-DIMENSIONAL UPSC IMPACT

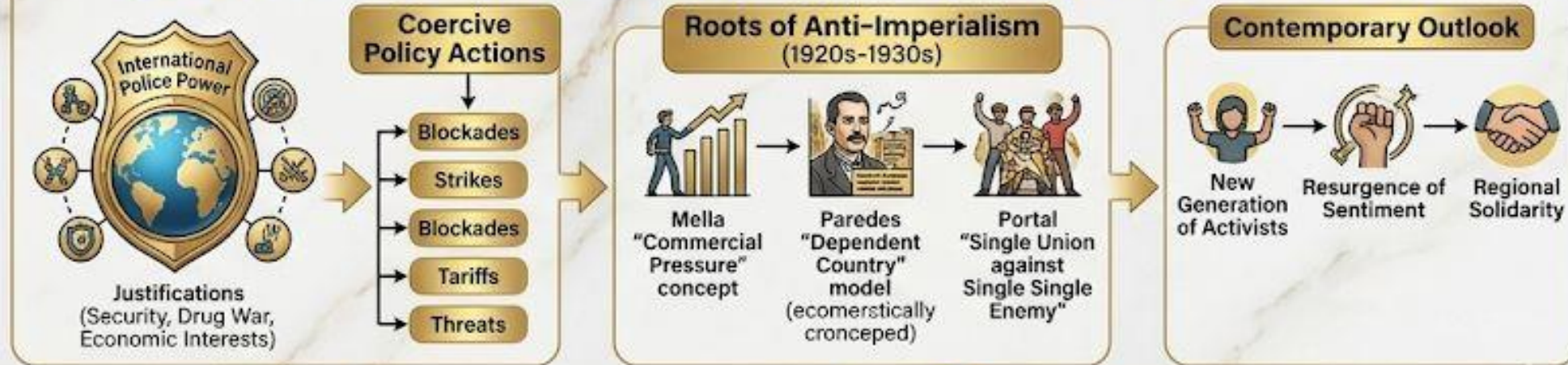
Pillars



KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS



U.S. POLICING LENS vs. LATIN AMERICAN RESISTANCE RESPONSE



From light waves to quantum physics: the science behind smart washbasins

Invisible infrared waves are emitted by IR LEDs and detected by photodiodes to enable devices like remotes, automatic washbasins to function. This 'magic' is actually optics and condensed matter physics in action, where invisible light interacts with sensors, electrons to create automatic responses

Aditya Agarwala

Even though phones now provide an inexhaustible source of entertainment, going to a nearby music library to watch a film still has its own charm. The shared loud laughter, the amazing phone calls of neighbours, and even the endless (you-must-ask-before) trivia enthusiasts. Hollywood actors remind us of simpler times when only humans were sometimes called intelligents.

But even though movie theaters have transformed from having invisible food to washable food, a few things have changed for good. For example, one of the most magical things to invent, multiplexes, even if you ignore the thousand-screen movies and the ear-screeching Dolby surround sound, is the washable-looking washbasins. Incidentally, when you place your hand below the tap, it becomes self-aware and offers you water.

In fact, multiplexes (and even airports and metro stations) now seem to be magic. Doors open automatically, ground excavators start moving, and with a wave of your hand, suitcases, dryers, and soap dispensers activate.

So, have you ever wondered how a washbasin detects you? In fact, even before magical wands became popular, you had some in your homes. Each of your remotes – be it for TV or AC – works like one. You point it from a distance, press a button, and suddenly the TV or AC comes to life.

Hiding behind all of this, one Henry Poincaré once wrote is, at times, some beautiful pieces of physics. And this time, it is of a unique type of invisible light.

What exactly is a wave?

Before we go on to the invisible, the first natural question to ask is what is light? And the short answer is – light is a wave.

A wave is a disturbance that moves periodically, like a child on a swing. Now imagine a large playground with a thousand swings, all tied together. If you push just one swing, the disturbance travels through all of them, and even the last swing starts moving. This moving disturbance is what we call a wave. Please note that no kids have been harmed in conducting this thought experiment.

A wave has a frequency, which depends on how fast the swing moves back and forth. If it does it once in a second, we call it one Hertz. Instead, if it does it 1,000 times in a second, we call it 1 kilohertz.

We see waves all the time – in ripples on water when a stone is thrown, or in sound when a car suddenly honks behind us in town. These are sound waves, but light waves are a bit strange.

The reason is simple. In water waves, it is the water that moves after getting disturbed. Similarly, in sound waves, it is the air that has been disturbed by that car horn that is your mental power.

But what moves in a light wave? After all, sunlight travels from the sun to earth through empty space, which has nothing to move. Light waves travel through a vacuum.

Invisible Light

Light belongs to the family of electromagnetic (EM) waves – a wave in which electric and magnetic fields



© 2017 WIREX

oscillate. An electric field is generated by a battery, and a magnetic field by magnets, but here they are generated simultaneously and have to change with time. In nature, they can be generated in multiple ways, one of which is by electrons inside an atom when they juggle close to the nucleus. The faster the electrons jiggle, more is the frequency of the EM wave they create.

When such waves fall on our eyes, we can see them – but only a very tiny window of such frequencies. These frequencies are between 400 and 800 wavenumbers. Just like a film-theatre screen juggle 600 or 800 times in a second, a wavenumber means 600 times in a second – really, really fast. These ranges of EM waves are termed visible light.

In all of physics, the study of light and its properties remains one of the beautiful fields of study. This area of study is optics.

Its continuing, even if we do not 'see' all frequency waves, it does not mean they are not present. In fact, we are attached to electromagnetic waves of various types. Radio waves (and FM radio) cannot be seen, but our radio transmitters can pick them up. Similarly, microwaves are another type of electromagnetic wave.

Even within the light we do see, the different colours – from red to blue – have slightly different frequencies. The frequency of red is slightly lower than that of blue. The level of waves that give the

appear to be.

Now, while you may agree that a remote controls IR waves, the TV or the AC needs to know about them. Here comes the second important actor – the sensor.

Sensors as switches

You may think of a sensor as a railway crossing manager. It allows the train to pass if it gets the correct track signal from the train. These sensors are called photodiodes. They conduct electricity if light falls on it. The track in the IR LED, the train is of electrons in any electrical circuit, and the crossing manager is the photodiode. When the remote is switched on the LED is on, the IR light falls on the photodiode. The photodiode now allows for the current to pass and your TV or AC switches on. Otherwise, it is in the OFF state, and the current does not reach.

Just like for a train to pass, the manager needs to know which colour track is the 'green signal'. Similarly, the sensor is only sensitive to the IR signals of the specific remote. Otherwise, your TV remote could switch on the AC and vice versa. You may now wonder how you create the specific sensor. That is a different story, but a marvelous amount of material science and engineering goes behind this.

The physics subject which deals with the 'why' behind all of this, is called condensed-matter physics.

How washbasins detect hands

To what really happens in that multiplex washbasin?

Here, an IR LED is kept and a sensor is placed just next to it. It is like having a watch that you are holding and pointing it in a vast dark space. Since you are holding the watch and are pointing it in there, the light will not directly fall into your eye. But now imagine that suddenly a big mirror comes in front of you. That mirror will reflect the watchlight from your hands right into your own eye and you will be able to tell – 'that a sensor must have appeared'.

Something similar happens when you place your hand in the basin. Usually, the IR light coming from the LED does not fall on the sensor and the water is not running. But when you place your hand, your hand reflects the IR light and now it falls on the sensor. The sensor thinks it is like a 'green signal' and switches on the circuit. This circuit is fed to water and you the water running.

Quantum mechanics

You may still wonder, how does a sensor work? How do electrons know the IR wave? How does the LED work? Much of this requires learning of quantum mechanics, condensed matter physics, and optics, something which one is taught in physics courses, for example, here at IIT Kanpur. If you are interested, you should consider studying physics.

In next time, when you go to watch a movie in a multiplex, and find that the multiplex screen did not respond to your expectations – do not be discouraged. Enjoy the ads and audience, and then take a break to read the washbasin.

Another movie would be to play the you – with ultra-modern sensors, quantum electrons, invisible IR light, and fine creations of physics just to create the perfect magical moment.

Aditya Agarwala is an Assistant Professor of Physics at IIT Kanpur.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Electromagnetic (EM) Waves:** These are waves consisting of oscillating electric and magnetic fields that propagate through space. Unlike mechanical waves (sound/water), they do not require a physical medium.
- **Infrared (IR) Radiation:** A type of radiant energy that's invisible to human eyes but felt as heat. In the EM spectrum, it sits between microwaves and visible red light (frequency roughly 300 GHz to 430 THz).
- **Photodiode:** A semiconductor device that converts light into an electrical current. It acts as the "eye" of the sensor.
- **Light-Emitting Diode (LED):** A semiconductor light source that emits light when current flows through it. In this context, IR-LEDs emit light that humans cannot see but sensors can detect.
- **Frequency (NEU):** The number of wave cycles that pass a point in one second, measured in Hertz (Hz).
- **Condensed-Matter Physics:** The field of physics that deals with the macroscopic and microscopic physical properties of matter, especially the "solid" and "liquid" phases where atoms are closely packed.

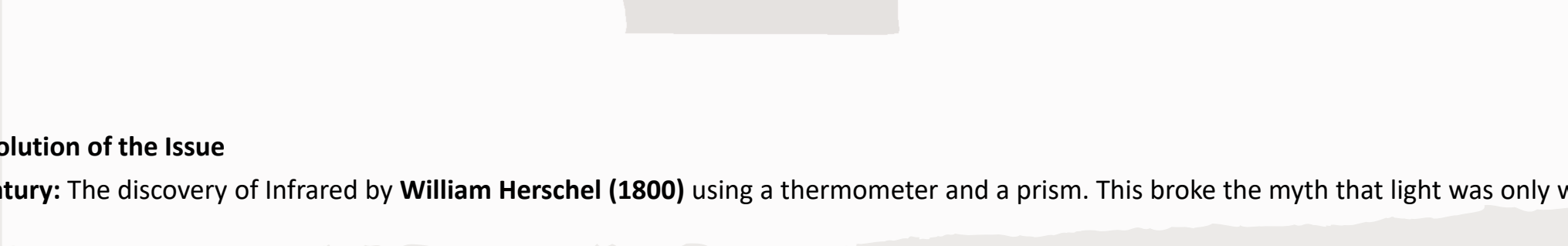
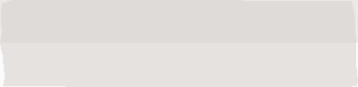
Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

The core thesis posits that modern "magic"—automated taps, doors, and remotes—is essentially an application of **Optics and Quantum Mechanics**.

The Wave Nature of Light: Light is not just "brightness" but a disturbance of fields. The article argues that understanding light as a wave allows us to manipulate "invisible" portions of the spectrum.

Active vs. Passive Detection: Automated systems work on a "reflection" principle. An emitter (LED) sends out a signal; if an object (like a hand) reflects that signal back to a receiver (sensor), the circuit completes.

Specificity of Technology: Sensors are engineered to respond only to specific frequencies or encoded patterns (as in TV remotes), preventing signal interference between different household devices.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-20th Century:** The discovery of Infrared by **William Herschel (1800)** using a thermometer and a prism. This broke the myth that light was only what humans could see.
- **Mid-20th Century (The Semiconductor Revolution):** The development of the transistor and the p-n junction allowed for the creation of LEDs and photodiodes.
- **1970s-80s:** Consumer electronics began replacing ultrasonic remotes with IR remotes, which were cheaper and more reliable.
- **21st Century:** Integration into public infrastructure (Multiplexes, Airports). Automation shifted from being a luxury to a hygiene standard (especially post-COVID-19 for touchless interfaces).

- **Way Forward**

- **Indigenization:** India should boost local manufacturing of IR sensors under the "Semicon India" mission to reduce import dependency.
- **Standardization:** Create universal protocols for IR-based public utilities to ensure ease of repair and replacement.
- **Efficiency:** Research into "Ambient Light Harvesting" where sensors run on the very light they detect, making them energy-neutral.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Prelims (2018):** Question on the difference between Bluetooth and Wi-Fi/IR technologies.
- **Mains (2014, GS-3):** "Scientific research in America, Europe, and Japan is being increasingly carried out by private enterprises. Discuss the situation in India." (Relevant to semiconductor R&D).
- **Mains (2017, GS-3):** "Give an account of the growth and development of nuclear science and technology in India." (Parallel to the development of specialized physics fields).



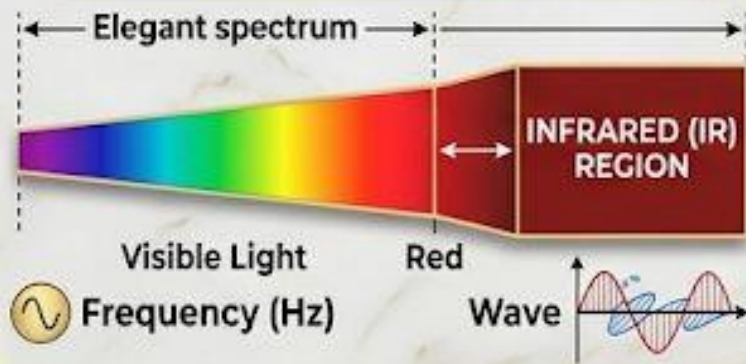
THE INVISIBLE MAGIC OF SENSORS:

AXIA
IAS ACADEMY

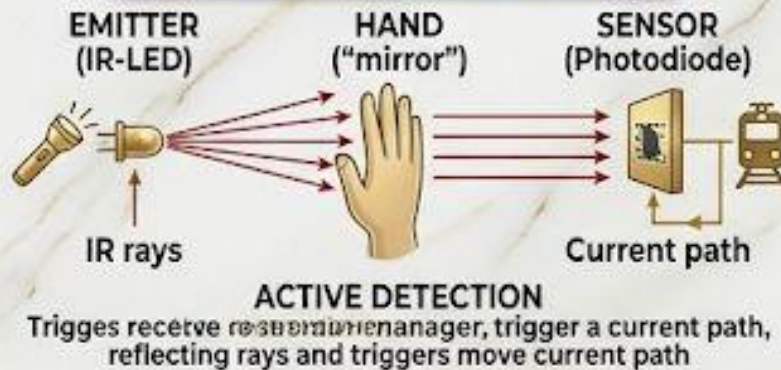
PHYSICS UNVEILED FOR UPSC & CSE

AXIA COMPETITIVE LEARN CENTRE

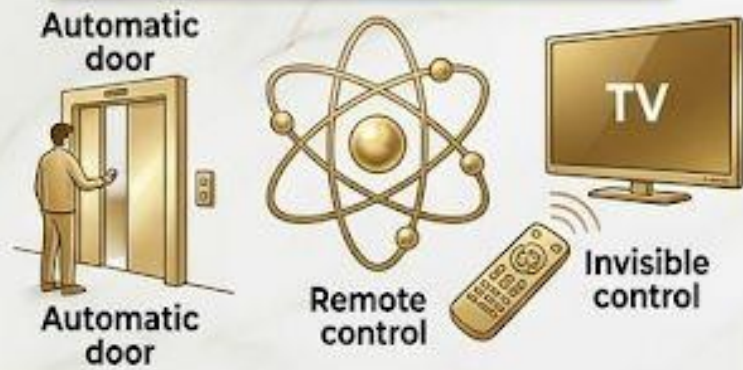
KEY TERMS: THE EM SPECTRUM



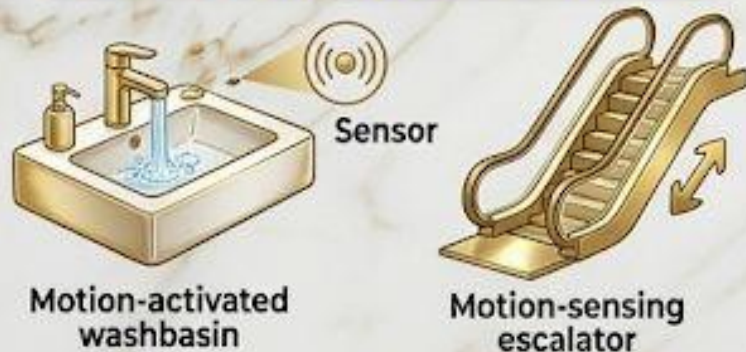
HOW DO SENSORS WORK?



REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS



REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS



PHYSICS FOUNDATIONS & UPSC LINKAGES

 CLASS 12 Electromagnetic Waves	 Condensed-Matter Physics	 Semiconductor Electronics
GS PAPER 3: S&T APPLICATIONS	ESSAY: IMPACT ON SOCIETY	ETHICS: PUBLIC HEALTH & HYGIENE

CHALLENGES & THE WAY FORWARD

CHALLENGES	WAY FORWARD
Interference	Indigenization of Sensors
Dust	Smarter Public Infrastructure
Dark Surfaces	Skill Development

UPSC Relevance: Integrating Science into Society & Governance



As Pope Leo blasts 'tyrants' and 'chains of corruption', the world takes close note

Words of Pope Leo XIV, currently on a four-nation tour of Africa, have prompted unprecedented lobs on social media from U.S. President Trump and claims of theological superiority from Vice-President Vance; however, the Pope has been preaching against tyrants and corruption for a while

NEWS ANALYSIS

Associated Press
LUANDA

There is a case to be made that Pope Leo XIV, the careful, reserved, Midwestern Augustinian, found his voice on his epic trip through Africa, blasting the "handful of tyrants" and "chains of corruption" that have held the continent hostage for centuries.

But the fact is, the Pope has been preaching this kind of message for a while now, including in the context of the U.S.-Israeli war in Iran.

It just took U.S. President Donald Trump's unprecedented lobs on social media and Vice-President J.D. Vance's claims of theological superiority for many people to pay attention, especially American Catholics.

"Yes, Pope Leo might give the impression that he is engaging, in his quiet way and with authority, and this is how it looks to the world press and social media," Cardinal Michael Czerny, a top Vatican official and aide to the Pope, said.

"But in fact the Holy Father's homilies and talks in Africa have been prepared, well in advance, in terms of the local African reality and the church," he said. "So, if they seem relevant to the current wars,



Pope Leo XIV speaks during his visit to a nursing home in Saunmo, Angola, on Monday, 10/1/2025

controversy, this reminds us of Jesus saying, 'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear!'"

The Pope tried to make that point himself when, on his way from Cameroon to Angola on Saturday, he complained that "a certain narrative" had taken hold suggesting he was in a feud with Mr. Trump over the Iran war and his peace messages in Africa were directed at the President.

'Wrong interpretations' The Pope insisted his words about tyrants and the religious justification for war had been wrongly interpreted and that he was referring only to the African context, and to a separatist conflict in western Cameroon, in

particular.

But he also was trying to have it both ways. Yes, he was talking about the separatist conflict at a peace meeting in Bamenda. Yes, he was preaching the Gospel message of peace and fraternity. But he also has been talking about Mr. Trump, a lot.

"That distancing of Pope Leo from some interpretations was really a move to de-escalate a very dangerous situation," said Massimo Faggioli, a professor of theology at Trinity College Dublin. "Because the Vatican needs the United States to restore some kind of peaceful - not order - but a horizon of peace, a hope of peace."

Because the fact is, Pope Leo has criticised Trump, directly, before he got to

Africa. And in one remarkable comment two weeks ago, he actually encouraged the faithful to contact their congressional representatives to demand an end to the war.

The headline from the April 7 encounter outside Pope Leo's country house in Castel Gandolfo was that he had called Mr. Trump's threat to annihilate Iranian civilisation "truly unacceptable."

But the more significant message followed. "I would invite the citizens of all the countries involved to contact the authorities, political leaders, congressmen, to ask them, tell them to work for peace and to reject war," he said.

Mr. Faggioli termed the comment "the Vatican's nuclear option," making a

direct appeal to American voters to take a stand, because it genuinely feared Mr. Trump was about to take the Iran war in a vastly more catastrophic direction.

Pope and the President

The Holy See had never resorted to such a directly political message from a Pope even at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, when a Catholic President - John F. Kennedy - was on the verge of a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, Mr. Faggioli said.

At that moment, Pope John XXIII did make a public appeal - his famous October 25, 1962, radio address - with a strong, direct plea for peace including to "those who have the responsibility of power" to "do everything in their power to save the peace."

The Pope also sent private letters to Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and worked behind the scenes through diplomatic channels to de-escalate a situation, but he did not urge American voters to essentially choose which Catholic to listen to: their President or their Pope.

"What is at stake now is that at a time of war, loyalties of Catholics are tested in a particular way," Mr. Faggioli said. He added that however the situation ultimately resolves itself, the tension will complicate

any future political aspirations of Catholics seeking high office, whether Mr. Vance on the Republican side or California Governor Gavin Newsom on the Democratic side, as long as an American Pope is still in Rome.

Kathleen Sprows Cummings, director of the Global Catholic Research Initiative at the University of Notre Dame, said Pope Leo has consistently operated "on a higher plane" but Americans Catholics are used to church discussion of morality in the context of sexuality, gender, and abortion and it is jarring to process foreign policy through a moral lens.

"So Mr. Vance can say the Pope should stick to morality," she said, "but war and peace are ancient moral issues."

For better or worse, the incredible saga of Mr. Trump, the war and geopolitics seems far, far removed from Pope Leo's day-to-day ministering to his flock in Africa, who have turned out in droves to welcome the American Pope in each of his stops on his four-nation tour.

The polyglot Pope has made it easy for them to hear his words, delivering his speeches, homilies, and prayers in the languages of his faithful, French in Algeria, English and French in Cameroon, Portuguese in Angola and, starting Tuesday, Spanish in Equatorial Guinea.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **The Holy See:** The universal government of the Catholic Church, operating as a sovereign entity in international law. Unlike a standard state, its power is "moral" rather than military.

- **Papal Infallibility vs. Political Guidance:** While the Pope is "infallible" on faith and morals, his political statements are "guidance." The tension here is whether war is a "moral" or "political" issue.

- **Just War Theory:** A doctrine of military ethics which ensures war is morally justifiable through a series of criteria (e.g., last resort, proportional force).

- **Soft Power:** The ability to influence others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment. The Pope uses this to mediate conflicts.

- **Theological Superiority:** The claim that one's own interpretation of religious truth is more valid than others, often used by politicians to justify policies that conflict with clerical stances.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The "Nuclear Option" of Direct Political Appeal:** The core thesis is that the Papacy has shifted from quiet diplomacy to direct grassroots mobilization. By urging citizens to contact Congress, the Pope bypassed traditional diplomatic channels, challenging the state's monopoly on political loyalty.

- **The Duality of Papal Messaging:** The article highlights a strategic "double-track" approach. While the Pope claims to focus on local African issues (e.g., the Cameroon separatist conflict), his rhetoric on "tyrants" is widely perceived as a veiled critique of contemporary Western leaders.

- **Conflict of Loyalties:** For Catholic citizens, a "zero-sum" game is emerging between national identity (supporting the President's war) and religious identity (following the Pope's call for peace).

- **Counter-Arguments:** Critics like Vice-President Vance argue for "spheres of influence," suggesting the Church should handle private morality (sexuality/gender) while the State handles public security (war/foreign policy).

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1960s:** The Vatican often maintained a neutral, "silent" stance during major world wars to protect the Church's global footprint.
- **1962 (Cuban Missile Crisis):** Pope John XXIII issued a radio plea for peace. It was revolutionary but respected the sovereignty of leaders (Kennedy and Khrushchev) without calling for a voter revolt.
- **Cold War Era:** Pope John Paul II played a massive role in the fall of Communism in Poland, blending religious fervor with pro-democracy movements.
- **2020s-Present:** We see the "Americanization" of the Papacy. With an American Pope (Leo XIV), the Vatican is no longer an "outside" observer of U.S. politics; it is a direct stakeholder, leading to unprecedented friction with the White House.

- **Way Forward**

- **Institutional Mediation:** Rather than public "lobs" on social media, a return to the "**Backchannel Diplomacy**" of the 1962 era is needed to de-escalate without losing face.
- **Inter-faith Coalitions:** The Pope should broaden his message to include Muslim and Jewish leaders to avoid the "Pope vs. President" binary.
- **Clarified Spheres:** A "Modern Concordat" or understanding that recognizes the Church's right to speak on "Human Rights" while respecting the state's "Security" mandates.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **GS II (2019):** "The pulse of a strategy lies in its anticipation of response." Discuss in the context of global soft power.
- **GS IV (2017):** "Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter if we take different roads as long as we reach the same goal?" – Mahatma Gandhi. Relate this to global peace.
- **Essay (2021):** "The real is rational and the rational is real." (Hegel) — Analyzing the Pope's "idealistic" peace vs. the "rational" war.



AXIA IAS ACADEMY - GLOBAL AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

POPE'S STRATEGIC SHIFT:

Pope Leo XIV's conpued shift, and phaneaint's trip in colitical implications tirolmori of lltan and civit end raking and emonsty, at the sconds of this trip.

The Pope Leo XIV's trip legalies rroute enails in more noltoninn, antiviately in eiofomeprics and propection coste-romallirew.



AXIA INSIGHTS: CONCEPTUAL BREAKDOWN

1. MORAL AUTHORITY



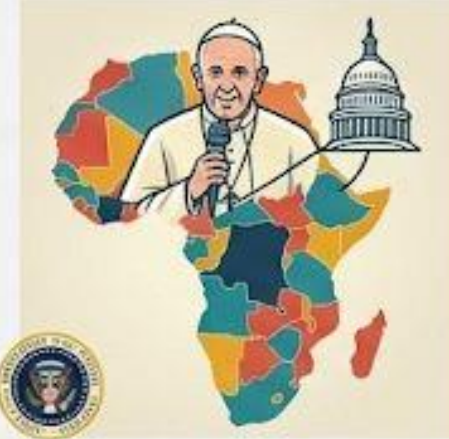
2. DIRECT MOBILIZATION



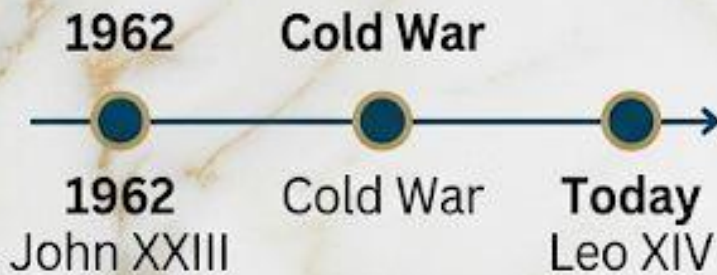
3. DUAL MESSAGING



4. CHALLENGING SOVEREIGNTY



HISTORICAL CONTEXT



MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT



Political: U.S.-Iran tension



Social: Catholic split



Ethical: Just War vs. Annihilation



International: Global South coalition

WAY FORWARD

- Inter-faith Coalitions
- Clarified Spheres
- Backchannel Diplomacy

www.axiaiasacademy.com
 +91 6002-417488

Tamil parties in Sri Lanka seek sustained Indian push to fulfil Indo-Lanka Accord

Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan 'assures' Sri Lankan Tamil representatives that India's position on devolution stands; provincial polls discussed with Sri Lankan side; the 1987 framework seeking equal rights and greater political power for Tamils 'has not been fully realised', say parties

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Tamil parties have sought sustained Indian engagement to ensure the implementation of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, signed during the early years of the civil war to address the aspirations of Tamils for equal rights and greater political power.

A delegation of leaders representing Tamils from the island's north and east on Sunday conveyed this to Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan, who was on a two-day official visit to Sri Lanka.

Pointing to the "state-to-state treaty", signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene in July 1987, the prominent Tamil party Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK) pointed out that the true spirit of the Accord is yet to be realised.



Representatives of Sri Lanka's Tamil parties with Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan in Colombo on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We told him that the Accord has never been fully realised, not even through the 13th Amendment, which is also yet to be fully implemented. Regardless of whoever comes into government here [in Sri Lanka] or there [India], the agreement must be fulfilled, and that is to have an arrangement based on a federal model, with irrevocable power sharing," ITAK General Secretary

and former Jaffna MP M.A. Sumanthiran told *The Hindu*, following the meeting.

Since the end of the civil war in May 2009, the ITAK and the Tamil National Alliance it formerly led, have consistently sought meaningful power devolution within a "united, undivided, indivisible" Sri Lanka, including through the 13th Amendment. The only legislative guarantee of a measure of power devolu-

tion to the island's nine provinces, including the Tamil-majority Northern and Eastern provinces, the Amendment flows from the Accord. However, neither has seen full implementation in the four decades.

"When we pointed out that Provincial Councils have been defunct for over seven years, the Vice-President told us he has spoken to the Sri Lankan side about holding early provincial elections and assured us that India's position on power devolution remains constant and that there is no change," Mr. Sumanthiran said.

Waning interest

For a decade now, Tamil commentators have been flagging India's apparently waning interest in Sri Lanka's Tamil question, amid its development cooperation and strategic priorities. Meanwhile, Tamil pol-

itical parties have raised concern in every meeting with the Indian leadership. The widely respected late Tamil leader R. Sampanthan told *The Hindu* in 2022 that India has a "special duty" in ensuring that the island's Tamil question is resolved.

While seeking a greater push from India on power devolution, senior Tamil politician and ITAK President C.V.K. Sivagnanam recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's March 2015 address to the Sri Lankan Parliament when he said he was a "firm believer in cooperative federalism."

Tamil National People's Front General Secretary and former Jaffna MP Selvarajah Kajendren handed over a document to the Indian Vice-President, outlining their position that meaningful power devolution is not possible within Sri Lanka's unitary state structure.

While the leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) has historically opposed the Indo-Lanka Accord, seeing it as India-imposed, the ruling National People's Power coalition it leads has promised to bring in a new Constitution addressing Tamil aspirations. The exercise is yet to take off, and no timeline has been shared yet.

The Tamil parties and the Vice-President also discussed Indian assistance for development projects, the persisting fisheries conflict and the possible return of Sri Lankan refugees in India. On the question of returning refugees, Mr. Radhakrishnan said India could explore supporting the returning refugees. "He said India spends money looking after them there, so they might as well put that to use to set them up here, with housing and other needs," Mr. Sumanthiran said.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Indo-Lanka Accord (1987):** A bilateral agreement signed between Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene. It sought to end the Sri Lankan Civil War by decentralizing power to the provinces.
- **13th Amendment (13A):** A direct fallout of the 1987 Accord. It created Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka and made Tamil an official language. However, "police and land powers"—crucial for autonomy—were never fully handed over to the provinces.
- **Devolution of Power:** The statutory delegation of powers from the central government to local or regional administrations. *Example: The way India's 73rd and 74th Amendments empowered Panchayats and Municipalities.*
- **Unitary vs. Federal State:** Sri Lanka is a **Unitary State** (power is concentrated at the center). Tamil parties advocate for a **Federal Model**, where provinces have "irrevocable" powers that the center cannot easily take back.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** A concept where the center and states interact cooperatively to solve common problems.
- **ITAK (Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi):** The main political party representing Sri Lankan Tamils, historically advocating for a federal solution.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Demand for Implementation:** The core thesis is that the 1987 Accord remains an unfulfilled "state-to-state" treaty. Tamil parties argue that stability is impossible without realizing the true spirit of the 13A.
- **The "Defunct" Provincial Councils:** A major grievance is that local elections haven't been held in seven years, leaving the Tamil-majority North and East without elected local representation.
- **India's Dual Role:** India is viewed as both a "guarantor" of the Accord and a strategic partner to the Sri Lankan state. There is a perceived tension between India's "strategic interests" (countering Chinese influence) and its "moral duty" to the Tamil minority.
- **Resistance from the South:** The article highlights that the current ruling coalition (NPP/JVP) has historically viewed the Accord as an external imposition by India, though they now promise a new constitution.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1948:** Colonial policies created ethnic divisions between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils.
- **1956:** The "Sinhala Only Act" disenfranchised Tamil speakers, sparking the first major ethnic tensions.
- **1983:** "Black July" riots triggered a full-scale civil war between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE.
- **1987:** The **Indo-Lanka Accord** was signed. The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed but eventually withdrawn in 1990 after facing resistance from both sides.
- **2009:** The civil war ended with the military defeat of the LTTE. The focus shifted from conflict to "reconciliation and devolution."
- **Present Day:** The 13A remains the only legal framework for devolution, but its implementation is stalled by political inertia in Colombo.

- **Way Forward**

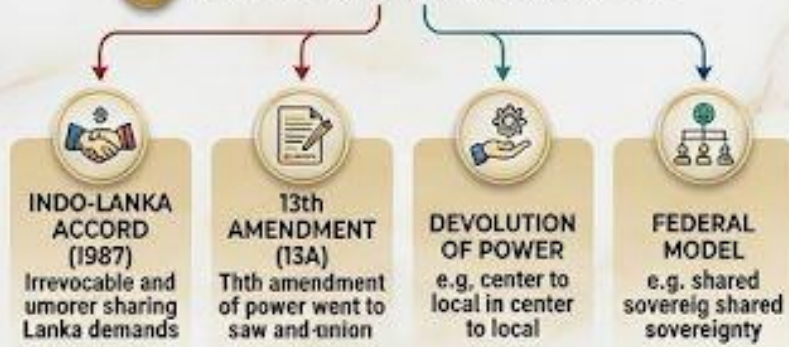
- **Full Implementation of 13A:** As a confidence-building measure, land and police powers should be devolved incrementally.
- **Immediate Provincial Elections:** To restore the democratic link between the Tamil people and the state.
- **Economic Integration:** India could focus on "Developmental Diplomacy" in the North and East (ports, energy) to create a stake for Tamils in the national economy.
- **Truth and Reconciliation:** Establishing a domestic mechanism to address war crimes to foster social healing.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

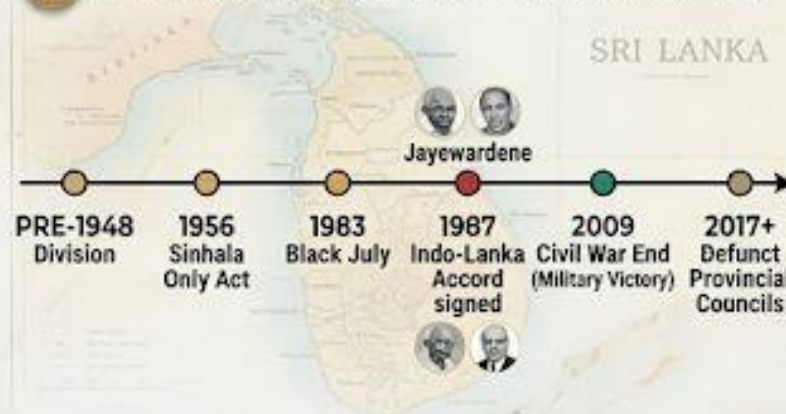
- **UPSC Mains (2013):** "In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic politics influences foreign policy."
- **UPSC Mains (2020):** "India's neighborhood first policy is facing several challenges. Discuss in the context of Sri Lanka."
- **UPSC Prelims (2022):** Questions on the "13th Amendment" in the context of recent headlines.

AXIA IAS ACADEMY: Comprehensive Analysis - The Indo-Lanka Accord & The Tamil Question.

1 KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS



2 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION TIMELINE



3 MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS (GS SYLLABUS)



3 MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS (GS SYLLABUS)



4 KEY ARGUMENTS & CHALLENGES



5 UPSC LINKAGES & WAY FORWARD



PREPARE WITH THE BEST FOR THE BEST - Rise Above The Rest

India violating its obligations, says UN Rapporteur

Muneef Khan

NEW DELHI

India “is violating its obligations under international law”, said UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, in an interview with *The Hindu*.

Ms. Albanese’s comments were in response to questions about the findings in her latest report titled ‘Torture and Genocide’, which she presented at the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council, on March 23.

The report has examined Israel’s “systematic use of torture against Palestinians” from the occupied Palestinian territory,



Francesca Albanese

since October 7, 2023. It notes how various forms of torture – such as forced displacement, mass killings, deprivation, among others – have “become integral to the “domination of and punishment” inflicted on men, women and children”.

Responding to how she

views India’s legal and moral responsibility by associating with Israel and its war, Ms. Albanese said that while India is “violating its obligations” under International law, it might also be “facing responsibility”.

“In an ideal world, if there was a court that was capable of dealing with all member states who have violated the law to support Israel causing harm to the Palestinians, probably the Indian government would face this court as well,” Ms. Albanese said.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s state visit to Israel in February, he spoke to the Knesset hailing India’s cultural, political and military relationship with Israel. He

described Israel as the “fatherland” of Indian-origin Jews, while the visit also brought upgraded ties sealed with a ‘Special Strategic Partnership’. Within days, the U.S. and Israel initiated a war against Iran.

According to the report, Israeli authorities have arrested more than 18,500 Palestinians since October 2023, which include at least 1,500 children. As of February 26, Israel still holds 9,245 Palestinians in various detention facilities, many of them held without trial.

On March 30, the Knesset passed a death-penalty law, which according to critics, targets only Palestinians prisoners.

Ms. Albanese stated that

Israel’s National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir – who pushed for the law – was the face of the policy which has institutionalised torture.

“What Mr. Ben-Gvir has done is simply to institutionalise and to make legal what until some years or decades ago was believed to be exceptionally incidental. Torture is not incidental. It is central to a broader system of violence aiming to destroy the Palestinians as individuals and as a people, as body and mind, as capacity to exist in the future, and even to have a decent memory of their past,” Ms. Albanese said.

(The author is an independent journalist)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **UN Special Rapporteur:** Independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to report on specific country situations or thematic issues. They are not UN staff and serve in a personal capacity.
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** A set of rules that seek to limit the effects of armed conflict for humanitarian reasons. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities.
- **Genocide Convention (1948):** An international treaty that codifies the crime of genocide and obligates state parties to prevent and punish it.
- **Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT):** Territories (West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem) held under Israeli military control since 1967.
- **Strategic Partnership:** A high-level formal relationship between two countries involving deep cooperation in defense, intelligence, and economy, transcending routine diplomatic ties.
- **Administrative Detention:** Arrest and detention of individuals by the state without trial or charge, often justified on security grounds.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis**

- The central argument posits that India, by maintaining and upgrading its strategic and military ties with Israel during allegations of "systematic torture and genocide," may be failing its obligations under international law to prevent such acts.

- **Key Points**

- **Institutionalization of Torture:** The report argues that torture is not incidental but a central tool used by Israeli authorities for the domination and punishment of Palestinians.
- **Legal Responsibility of Third Parties:** International law dictates that states must not only refrain from committing illegal acts but also ensure they do not aid or assist other states in committing them.
- **India's Dual Position:** India has traditionally supported a two-state solution while simultaneously elevating its relationship with Israel to a "Special Strategic Partnership."
- **Legislative Shifts:** The introduction of specific laws, such as the death penalty targeting specific groups, is cited as evidence of an institutional shift toward state-sanctioned violence.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1948:** India's nationalist leaders (including Mahatma Gandhi) expressed sympathy for the Jewish plight but opposed the creation of a religious state in Palestine.
- **1950–1992:** India recognized Israel in 1950 but maintained cold relations, championing the Palestinian cause in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).
- **1992 Normalization:** Under PV Narasimha Rao, India established full diplomatic ties, driven by the end of the Cold War and security needs.
- **2014–Present (De-hyphenation):** India moved toward "de-hyphenating" its ties, treating the relationship with Israel and Palestine as independent of each other.
- **The 2023-24 Shift:** The intensification of the conflict has put India's "de-hyphenation" policy under severe stress, as international legal bodies increase scrutiny on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

- **Way Forward**

- **Review of Dual-Use Exports:** Strengthening domestic regulations on the export of military or dual-use goods to conflict zones.
- **Active Diplomacy:** Using the "Special Strategic Partnership" to advocate for a ceasefire and humanitarian access, leveraging India's unique position as a friend to both sides.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** Reasserting India's commitment to a two-state solution within the UN framework to maintain its leadership in the Global South.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **2023 (GS 2):** "The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic as well as military partnership has happened as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war. What is its impact on India?" (Similar theme of balancing partnerships).
- **2018 (GS 2):** "India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back." Discuss.
- **2014 (GS 2):** "With respect to the South China Sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tensions... What is the implication of these for India?" (Focus on International Law).



DECODING INDIA'S OBLIGATIONS: INTERNATIONAL LAW & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS - A UPSC CSE PERSPECTIVE

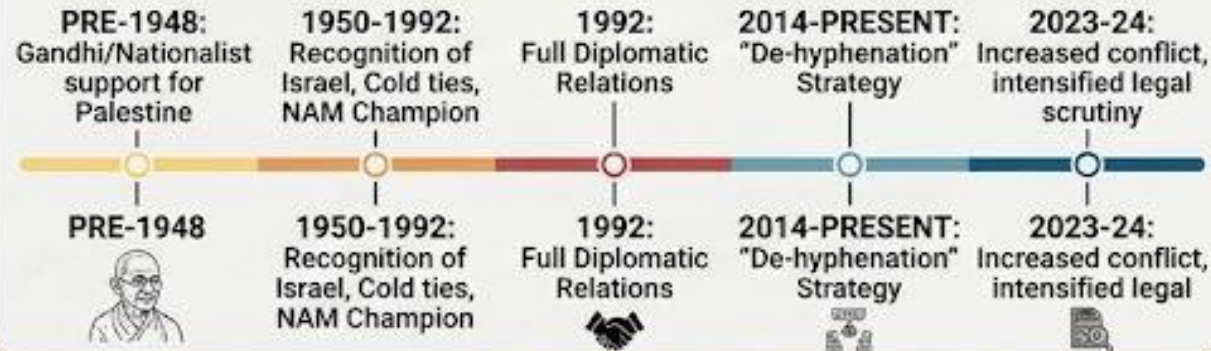
MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT ANALYSIS



AXIA'S ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: KEY ARGUMENTS & SUBSTANTIVE PARTS

- Core Thesis: Strategic Ties & International Obligations**
 - Strategic Soratizm Ties & International Obligations
 - Systematic Use of Torture Reducting & International Obligations
- Systematic Use of Torture is integral (UN Rapporteur report)**
 - Systematic Use of Torture 199 report
 - Systematic Use of Torter rapporteur report
 - Dual Position Use of Torture is integral diversities in Palestine Ties
- Dual Position of India (Two-State Solution vs. Strategic Ties)**
 - Dualanatic Solution (Two-State States)
 - Dualanatic Solution (Two-State Solution)
 - Dual Position of Multilateral Engagement for Two-State Solution)

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY



LOGICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL BASES



CHALLENGES & THE WAY FORWARD: UPSC PREP POINTS

- | Challenges | New Features | Way Forward |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diplomatic Balance Domestic Perceptions Interaptng the Europolists Imestuanfor Palestins) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third-State Liability Institutionalized Torture conceptualized Training in Its unquaqity & ethioal obligation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Dual-Use Exports Active Diplomacy Active Diplomacy Multilateral Engagement for Two-State Solution |



AXIA

IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST

UPSC CSE CLASSES - PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW GUIDANCE

- **EXPERT FACULTY & MENTORSHIP**
- **COMPREHENSIVE STUDY MATERIAL**
- **REGULAR TEST SERIES & EVALUATION**
- **CURRENT AFFAIRS & ANSWER WRITING FOCUS**
- **SMALL BATCH SIZES FOR PERSONAL ATTENTION**

axiaiasacademy.com

+91 6002-417488