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UPSC Mains 2021 GS II

Year-wise PYQ pack • WRAP model answers with canonical links

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains/gs-2/2021/>

Q1 • 10 marks

'Constitutional Morality' is rooted in the Constitution itself and is founded on its essential facets. Explain the doctrine of 'Constitutional Morality' with the help of relevant judicial decisions.

GS II • 2021 • Indian Constitution

Revision summary

Constitutional morality is fidelity to liberty, equality, dignity and the rule of law in the Constitution itself.

Kesavananda (1973) locked those essential facets as basic structure.

Navtej Johar (2018) preferred constitutional morality over social morality on **Section 377**.

Indian Young Lawyers Association (Sabarimala, 2018) tested temple exclusion against **Articles 14, 15, 17 and 25**.

NCT of Delhi (2018) used the doctrine to restrain a parallel Lieutenant Governor against an elected government.

Introduction

Constitutional morality is loyalty to the Constitution's own values - liberty, equality, dignity, fraternity, and the rule of law - rather than to shifting social majorities. Indian benches have treated it as a doctrine rooted in the text and in the basic structure, not as a preacher's extra-constitutional ethic.

Body

Meaning of the doctrine

- Dr **B.R. Ambedkar**, in the Constituent Assembly, warned that democracy in India needed constitutional morality: a habit of respecting institutions and limits, not only a one-time vote.
- The doctrine asks courts and governments to prefer the Constitution's essential facets over popular morality, religious custom, or administrative convenience when those clash with Part III and the basic structure.
- It is not a licence for judges to invent a private code; it is a method of reading **Articles 14, 15, 19, 21 and 25** together with the Preamble.

Kesavananda and the moral compact

- **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)** held that the basic structure cannot be destroyed even by a constitutional amendment, which is the deepest judicial statement that the Constitution has unamendable moral-legal facets.
- Supremacy of the Constitution, democracy, secularism, and judicial review are those facets; constitutional morality is the everyday name for remaining faithful to them.

Navtej Johar, Sabarimala, and NCT Delhi

- **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)** struck down the criminalisation of consensual same-sex relations under **Section 377**, holding that constitutional morality protects dignity and intimacy against majoritarian social morality.
- **Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala** (Sabarimala, 2018) held that exclusion of women of menstruating age from the Ayyappa temple failed **Articles 14, 15, 17 and 25** when tested against constitutional morality, not against a claimed essential religious practice alone.
- **Government of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India (2018)** used constitutional morality and collaborative federalism to read the Lieutenant Governor as a constitutional functionary who must ordinarily go with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, not as a parallel executive.
- Together these cases show the doctrine at work in personal liberty, religious access, and federal governance.

Flow diagram

Constitution Preamble Part III -> Constitutional morality
Kesavananda basic structure -> Constitutional morality
Navtej Johar dignity -> Constitutional morality
Sabarimala equality in worship -> Constitutional morality
NCT Delhi collaborative federalism -> Constitutional morality

Conclusion

Constitutional morality is rooted in the Constitution because it names the essential facets that Kesavananda protected as basic structure and that later benches applied against social morality, temple exclusion, and central overreach in Delhi. The doctrine binds courts and executives to the Preamble and Part III, not to the crowd of the day.

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Q2 · 10 marks

Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity and inclusiveness.

GS II · 2021 · Executive and Judiciary

Revision summary

Women remain under-represented on Supreme Court and High Court benches despite a large pool at the Bar.

Diversity improves judging in gender, family and workplace cases; equity and inclusiveness are **Articles 14-16** values the Court itself enforces.

The filter is informal networks and seniority practice, not a constitutional ban.

Publish data, widen the district-judge and senior-advocate pool, and name gender diversity as a collegium criterion.

Inclusion is about legitimacy of the Bench, not about a single judicial ideology.

Introduction

The higher judiciary speaks the Constitution for the whole Republic, yet women remain a thin minority on the Supreme Court and High Court benches. Greater representation is desirable because diversity, equity and inclusiveness are conditions of legitimacy, not ornaments on an otherwise male collegium.

Body

Why representation is desirable

- Diversity of life experience on the Bench improves the quality of judging in cases on workplace harassment, family property, reproductive autonomy, and the POSH framework; a homogenous court systematically under-sees those facts.
- Equity demands that women, who are half the citizenry and a rising share of law graduates and advocates, are not filtered out at the point of elevation to the High Court and the Supreme Court.
- Inclusiveness is a constitutional value read with **Articles 14, 15 and 16**; a court that enforces those Articles while remaining almost all-male weakens its own moral authority.
- **Visible women judges also change the pipeline:** juniors, litigants, and court staff treat the courtroom as a shared public space rather than a male guild.

The present gap

- India has had distinguished women judges from Justice Fathima Beevi onward, yet the Supreme Court has never approached gender parity, and several High Courts have gone years with few or no women judges.
- Collegium elevation still leans on seniority at the Bar and on informal networks that historically favoured men; there is no constitutional bar on women, but there is a structural filter.
- Justice Indu Malhotra's Sabarimala dissent and later benches on **Article 15** show that women judges do not vote as a bloc; the case for inclusion is about perspective and fairness, not about a guaranteed outcome.

How to get there without lowering the office

- Publish gender-disaggregated data on recommendations, elevations, and residual vacancies, so the Memorandum of Procedure is not a closed male conversation.

- Widen the pool from district judges and from women senior advocates, and make transfer, housing, and parental-leave practice compatible with a judicial career.
- **Recommendation:** treat gender diversity as an express collegium criterion alongside seniority and merit, as several **Law Commission** and parliamentary committee notes have already urged.

Flow diagram

Pool of women lawyers and DJs -> Collegium elevation
Collegium elevation -> Diverse High Court and SC benches
Diverse High Court and SC benches -> Diversity equity inclusiveness
Diverse High Court and SC benches -> Legitimacy of constitutional judging

Conclusion

Greater representation of women in the higher judiciary is desirable because a constitutional court that is diverse, equitable and inclusive judges better and is believed more. The gap is structural, not a shortage of women lawyers; the collegium and the Memorandum of Procedure must treat gender as a criterion of a complete Bench.

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Q3 · 10 marks

How have the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission of India enabled the states to improve their fiscal position?

GS II · 2021 · Governance and Policy

Revision summary

The **14th Finance Commission** raised States' share in the divisible pool from 32 to 42 per cent for 2015-20.

Untied devolution, not only CSS, let States fund their own priorities and borrow on a more predictable base.

Horizontal criteria helped poorer and forested States; revenue-deficit grants closed residual gaps.

Local-body and disaster grants reduced raids on State revenue for third-tier and calamity costs.

Cesses outside the pool and later GST shocks limited the gain; the 15th FC kept devolution near that high watermark at 41 per cent.

Introduction

- The **Fourteenth Finance Commission** (Chair: Y.V. Reddy; award period 2015-20) raised States' share in the divisible pool of Union taxes to 42 per cent from 32 per cent. That single change, plus a cleaner grant design, gave States more untied money with which to repair their own fiscal position.

Body

The 42 per cent devolution

- Vertical devolution of 42 per cent was a structural jump, not a routine tweak; it moved a large block of resources from Union discretion to a formula share under **Article 280**.
- Untied tax devolution lets a State fund salaries, health, irrigation, or debt service according to its Assembly's priorities, which specific-purpose Centrally Sponsored Schemes never fully allowed.
- Horizontal shares used income distance, population, area, forest cover and demographic change, which helped poorer and forested States more than a pure equal-cut would have.

Grants and fiscal space

- The Commission recommended grants to local bodies and a disaster-relief architecture, which reduced the need for States to raid their own revenue for constitutionally mandated third-tier and calamity spending.
- It asked for a sharper distinction between tax devolution and grants, and for fewer overlapping CSS conditions, so State budgets were less a Union annex.
- Revenue-deficit grants for selected States were meant to close residual gaps after the 42 per cent formula, which is how fiscally weaker States were enabled without diluting the formula for all.

How the fiscal position actually improved - and the caveats

- Higher predictable devolution improved the States' bargaining power in GST-era compensation debates and in market borrowing plans under **Article 293**, because a larger own-share is better collateral than an uncertain scheme release.

- Several States could raise capital outlay and still keep FRBM paths in the early award years, which is the practical meaning of an improved fiscal position.
- **Caveat:** oil cesses and other non-divisible levies shrank the divisible pool in practice; GST implementation and later shocks (2016-20) meant the 42 per cent was necessary but not sufficient.
- **Recommendation:** protect the divisible pool from excessive cesses, which is the 15th Finance Commission's continuing worry after it set devolution at 41 per cent to make room for the new Union Territories.

Flow diagram

14th FC Art 280 -> 42 percent tax devolution
14th FC Art 280 -> Local body and disaster grants
42 percent tax devolution -> Untied State fiscal space
Local body and disaster grants -> Untied State fiscal space
Untied State fiscal space -> Improved State fiscal position

Conclusion

The Fourteenth Finance Commission enabled States mainly by the 42 per cent untied devolution, cleaner local-body and disaster grants, and a smaller shadow of CSS conditions. Fiscal positions improved where States used that predictability for own-priority spending and borrowing; cesses and later shocks show that devolution is the floor, not the whole house.

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Q4 · 10 marks

To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?

GS II · 2021 · Parliament and State Legislatures

Revision summary

Collective responsibility, questions, money votes, CAG audit and the PAC are the core accountability tools.

PAC, usually Opposition-chaired, is the sharpest regular fiscal check on the executive.

Disruptions, the Tenth Schedule whip, ordinances and thin committee reference reduce daily control.

Parliament can still unseat a government and expose waste; it is not a rubber stamp, and it is not a full-time scrutineer either.

Protecting Question Hour and default committee scrutiny would widen the extent without rewriting the Constitution.

Introduction

- **Parliamentary accountability of the executive is written into the Constitution:** collective responsibility, questions, money votes, and audit. In practice the tools still work, but disruptions, a tight whip, and ordinance politics have narrowed the extent to which the House actually holds the government to account.

Body

Formal tools that still bite

- **Article 75** makes the Council of Ministers collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha; a confidence vote remains the ultimate sanction.
- Question Hour, Zero Hour, calling attention, and adjournment motions force ministers onto the record; departmental standing committees examine Demands for Grants and bills when the House itself is short of time.
- The Comptroller and Auditor General under **Article 148** audits Union accounts; the **Public Accounts Committee**, traditionally chaired by an Opposition member, examines CAG reports and can summon officials, which is the hardest regular fiscal check.
- The **Estimates Committee** and the Committee on Public Undertakings complete the financial triad; budget cut motions and the need for appropriation still legally bind the executive.

Where the extent falls short

- Frequent adjournments and walkouts shrink Question Hour, which is the daily accountability device the citizen actually sees.
- The anti-defection **Tenth Schedule** whip reduces intra-party dissent, so the House often debates as two blocs rather than as a scrutineer of departments.
- Ordinances under **Article 123**, delayed laying of reports, and a packed legislative calendar mean many statutes pass with thin clause-by-clause debate.
- Money bills and hybrid finance bills have been used in ways that limit Rajya Sabha's role, which weakens bicameral check even when the Lok Sabha majority is firm.

A balanced extent

- Parliament can still unseat a government, stall a bill, and shame a ministry through PAC and CAG; that is more than a rubber stamp.
- **Recommendation:** protect Question Hour in the rule book, time-bind PAC action-taken reports, and refer more bills to committees as the default, not as a favour.

Flow diagram

Executive -> Lok Sabha confidence Art 75
Executive -> Question Hour and debates
CAG Art 148 Art 148 -> Public Accounts Committee
Public Accounts Committee -> Executive
Question Hour and debates -> Executive
Lok Sabha confidence Art 75 -> Executive

Conclusion

- **Parliament is able to ensure executive accountability to a real but incomplete extent:** CAG and PAC, confidence votes, and the budget still constrain the government, while disruptions, the whip, and ordinance practice blunt daily control. The design is strong; the working year of the House decides how much of that design the citizen gets.

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Q5 · 10 marks

"Pressure groups play a vital role in influencing public policy making in India." Explain how the business associations contribute to public policies.

GS II · 2021 · Governance and Policy

Revision summary

Pressure groups influence policy by organising interests and supplying technical drafts; business associations are the densest such groups in India.

FICCI covers a broad industrial-commercial brief; CII pushes competitiveness and State climates; NASSCOM shapes IT and data policy.

They work through pre-budget notes, GST representations, PLI design, and standing-committee evidence.

The contribution is expertise and implementation capacity; the risk is capture of labour and consumer rules.

Plural seats and disclosure keep the vital role compatible with public policy, not only with firm policy.

Introduction

Business associations are among India's most organised pressure groups. FICCI, CII and NASSCOM do not sit in Parliament, yet they shape budgets, labour and technology rules by supplying information, drafting templates, and bargaining inside the committee state.

Body

How associations enter the policy process

- They aggregate firm interests so the government hears a sector, not a thousand separate lobbies; that aggregation is the classic pressure-group function.
- Pre-budget memoranda, GST rate representations, and appearances before parliamentary standing committees put technical numbers into Finance and Commerce drafts that generalist officials cannot generate alone.
- Joint task forces and public-private working groups on **Make in India**, PLI schemes, and ease of doing business let associations co-author implementation circulars, which is influence at the rule stage, not only at the slogan stage.

FICCI, CII, NASSCOM

- FICCI, with a long pre-Independence pedigree, still speaks for a broad industrial and commercial constituency on tax, trade, and infrastructure.
- CII has specialised in competitiveness, standards, skilling, and state-level investment climates, which moves policy from Delhi notifications to factory-floor practice.
- NASSCOM has been central to software-export policy, data-protection debates, IT labour mobility, and the image of India as a services exporter; without that association, electronic-policy chapters would look very different.

Contribution and the capture risk

- Contribution is real where associations bring comparative data, model contracts, and training codes that a ministry then adopts.

- The same channel can become regulatory capture if MSMEs, informal workers, and consumers are unheard; labour-code consultations showed business voice often louder than trade unions.
- **Recommendation:** mandatory disclosure of committee membership and a statutory MSME seat beside FICCI-CII-NASSCOM, so policy influence stays plural.

Flow diagram

FICCI CII NASSCOM -> Memoranda and task forces
Memoranda and task forces -> Tax labour IT and industrial policy
Tax labour IT and industrial policy -> Government rules and budgets
Unions MSMEs consumers -> Tax labour IT and industrial policy

Conclusion

Business associations contribute to public policy by aggregating sectoral knowledge, drafting options, and sitting on the committees that write rules. FICCI, CII and NASSCOM illustrate a vital pressure-group role; the democratic task is to keep that role transparent so it does not harden into capture.

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Q6 · 10 marks

"Besides being a moral imperative of Welfare State, primary health structure is a necessary pre-condition for sustainable development." Analyze.

GS II · 2021 · Health, Education and Human Resources

Revision summary

Primary health is a Welfare-State moral duty under **Article 47** and **Article 21**'s dignity reading.

- **It is also a pre-condition for sustainable development:** schooling, labour, epidemic control and household poverty all turn on the first mile.

NHM and ASHAs are the community spine; Ayushman Bharat adds HWCs and PM-JAY insurance.

Insurance without PHC staff and drugs still fails the poor.

Fund Health and Wellness Centres as infrastructure, not as a leftover after tertiary schemes.

Introduction

A Welfare State that leaves the first mile of health to chance fails **Article 47** and the Preamble's justice. Primary health structure is also economic infrastructure: without it, learning, labour productivity and sustainable development goals remain paper.

Body

Moral imperative of the Welfare State

- **Article 47** directs the State to raise nutrition and living standards and to improve public health; primary care is how that directive becomes a clinic, not a slogan.
- Alma-Ata's primary health care idea - access, prevention, community workers - is the ethical minimum of a Republic that promises dignity under **Article 21** as read in health-related cases.
- Out-of-pocket spending that pushes households into poverty is a Welfare-State failure even when tertiary hospitals glitter in capital cities.

Pre-condition for sustainable development

- Healthy children attend school; healthy adults stay in the workforce; reduced stunting and infection are growth policies, not only clinic policies, which is why SDG 3 sits inside any serious sustainable-development strategy.
- Epidemic surveillance, immunisation, and maternal care at the sub-centre and PHC stop crises that later consume fiscal space and destroy livelihoods, as COVID-19 showed when the first mile was thin.
- Environmental and occupational health - water, air, farm chemicals - are managed, if at all, at the primary level closest to the village.

Indian architecture: NHM, ASHA, Ayushman

- The National Health Mission funds rural and urban primary systems, including the ASHA community worker who is the last-mile link for immunisation, maternal care and health education.
- **Ayushman Bharat tries to complete the stack:** Health and Wellness Centres for comprehensive primary care, and PM-JAY for secondary-tertiary insurance, so primary structure is not abandoned for hospital packages alone.

- **Gaps remain:** doctor and drug shortages, weak diagnostics, and an urban bias; insurance without a functioning PHC still dumps the poor at a distant ward.
- **Recommendation:** freeze a larger share of health spending on HWCs, ASHAs' pay and drugs, because sustainable development is lost if primary care is the residual after tertiary schemes.

Flow diagram

Welfare State Art 47 -> Primary health structure
Primary health structure -> ASHA NHM HWC
Primary health structure -> Human capital and SDG 3
ASHA NHM HWC -> Sustainable development
Human capital and SDG 3 -> Sustainable development

Conclusion

Primary health structure is a Welfare-State duty under **Article 47** and a pre-condition for sustainable development because human capital, epidemic control and household solvency all begin at the first mile. NHM, ASHA and Ayushman Bharat are the right stack only if Health and Wellness Centres, not only hospital insurance, get the money and the staff.

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Q7 · 10 marks

"'Earn while you learn' scheme needs to be strengthened to make vocational education and skill training meaningful." Comment.

GS II · 2021 · Health, Education and Human Resources

Revision summary

Earn-while-you-learn is the missing wage-and-workplace limb of vocational education.

NEP 2020 wants internships and vocational integration; the Apprenticeship Act and PMKVY are the older tools.

Without stipends, poor students exit training and industry keeps unused certificates.

Strengthen by credit-linked paid apprenticeships, completion-tied incentives, and one national portal.

Meaningful skill is supervised hours on pay, not a second-class classroom stream.

Introduction

Vocational education fails when it is a classroom without a wage and a workplace. 'Earn while you learn' - internships, apprenticeships and campus jobs - is how skill training becomes a livelihood path rather than a second-class stream, and NEP 2020 has already named that need.

Body

Why the scheme is necessary

- Stigma still treats ITI and vocational courses as a residual after the academic board exam; a stipend and a real employer break that stigma better than a poster.
- Without earning, rural and poor students exit training to casual labour, so the National Skills Qualifications Framework never gets hours on the machine.
- Industry complains of unemployable graduates while refusing to pay learners; earn-while-you-learn is the bargain that aligns both sides.

NEP and the apprenticeship spine

- NEP 2020 asks for internships, bagless days, and integration of vocational education from the school years, plus multiple entry-exit in higher education, which only works if workplaces take learners on pay.
- The **Apprenticeship Act**, National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, PMKVY, and internship credits in universities are the existing instruments; they are patchy in coverage and in stipend discipline.
- Dual-system models (workplace plus institute) used in pockets of manufacturing and in some polytechnics show that meaningful skill is hours under a supervisor, not only a certificate.

How to strengthen it

- Make a paid apprenticeship or internship a credit requirement for vocational qualifications, with a statutory minimum stipend indexed to the State floor wage.
- Give firms a simple tax or PMKVY-linked incentive that is paid only after completion and trainee placement, to cut ghost seats.
- **Recommendation:** one national 'earn while you learn' window that unifies apprenticeship portals, NEP internship credits, and campus part-time work, so the student does not navigate

five schemes to get one wage.

Flow diagram

NEP 2020 vocational integration -> Earn while you learn
Apprenticeship Act and NAPS -> Earn while you learn
Earn while you learn -> Stipend workplace hours
Stipend workplace hours -> Meaningful skill and livelihood

Conclusion

- **The statement is sound:** vocational education and skill training become meaningful when the learner is paid to practise in a real firm. NEP 2020 and the apprenticeship laws already point that way; they need a unified stipend, credit and placement spine, not another orphan scheme name.

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Q8 · 10 marks

Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples.

GS II · 2021 · Poverty and Hunger

Revision summary

SHG microfinance can interrupt gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition by giving women cash, savings and bargaining power.

SEWA links credit to organising; Kudumbashree links neighbourhood groups to livelihoods and the panchayat.

NABARD linkage and DAY-NRLM took the model to national scale.

Over-lending, as in the Andhra stress, can deepen poverty; nutrition still needs PDS and health.

Use SHG finance as a lever beside titles, food and care services, not as a substitute Welfare State.

Introduction

- **Gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition feed one another:** a woman without income or voice feeds her child last and stays poor. Microfinance through women's self-help groups can interrupt that cycle, as SEWA and Kudumbashree show, but it cannot replace food, health and property rights on its own.

Body

How SHG microfinance attacks the cycle

- A group loan and a savings habit give women a cash buffer, which cuts distress sale of assets and the need for a moneylender at hunger months.
- Intra-household bargaining often improves when the woman is the account holder, which can raise spending on food and schooling - the malnutrition and inequality links.
- NABARD's SHG-bank linkage and DAY-NRLM scaled this from NGO islands to a national architecture, so the mechanism is no longer only a pilot.

Examples that work

- SEWA organised self-employed women for credit, markets and social security, showing that finance plus union-like voice attacks inequality, not only liquidity.
- Kudumbashree in Kerala combined neighbourhood groups with livelihoods, nutrition and local-government linkage, which is why it is cited for poverty and women's public presence together.
- Many NRLM groups run kitchen gardens, PDS vigilance and take-home ration follow-up, which is microfinance sitting next to nutrition, not in place of it.

Limits - the cycle does not break by credit alone

- The Andhra microfinance stress of 2010 showed that multiple lending and coercive recovery can worsen poverty.
- Malnutrition is also WASH, PDS, ANMs and women's unpaid care time; a loan for a goat does not fix a failed anganwadi.

- **Recommendation:** pair SHG credit with land and house titles in women's names, maternity entitlements, and food-health services, so microfinance is a lever inside a Welfare-State stack.

Flow diagram

Women SHGs -> Microfinance and savings
Microfinance and savings -> Income and bargaining
Income and bargaining -> Better food and schooling
Kudumbashree SEWA NRLM -> Women SHGs
PDS health titles -> Better food and schooling

Conclusion

Microfinancing of women SHGs can loosen the cycle of gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition where groups also bring voice and a link to food and health, as SEWA and Kudumbashree illustrate. Credit alone is not a break; over-indebtedness can retighten the cycle. The honest answer is yes, as a necessary lever, not as a sufficient cure.

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Q9 · 10 marks

"If the last few decades were of Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be of Africa's." In the light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years.

GS II · 2021 · India and its Neighbourhood

Revision summary

Africa's demography and resources make it a plausible next continental growth story after Asia.

India's recent influence runs through IAFS diplomacy, EXIM Lines of Credit, ITEC, pharma and peacekeeping.

LoCs build visible assets but often disburse slowly.

China still leads on infrastructure scale; Indian firms add a private layer in pharma, auto and telecom.

Faster credit, local jobs and a digital-maritime offer would deepen influence without copying BRI.

Introduction

Africa's demographic and resource weight is the next long growth story after East and South Asia. India's influence there has grown through the India-Africa Forum Summit, concessional Lines of Credit, peacekeeping, and medicines - a partnership pitch against a much larger Chinese balance sheet.

Body

The light of the statement

- Asia's decades were manufacturing, infrastructure and poverty reduction at continental scale; Africa is now the young labour and urbanising market that investors expect to repeat parts of that arc.
- Influence in that story will belong to partners who bring credit, skills, digital public goods and political respect, not only extraction.

India's recent instruments

- India-Africa Forum Summits created a regular political frame, with invitations that signalled continent-wide, not only Anglophone, diplomacy.
- EXIM Bank Lines of Credit have financed railways, power, irrigation and parliament buildings in partner States, which is influence you can photograph, though disbursement has often lagged announcements.
- ITEC training, scholarships, tele-medicine, and vaccine and pharma supply (including COVID-era outreach) build human-capital ties cheaper than mega ports.
- Indian peacekeepers and a long anti-colonial political memory still distinguish New Delhi from purely commercial players in several African debates.

Extent and the China comparison

- China's Belt and Road volumes, commodities-for-infrastructure deals, and diplomatic density still outweigh India in many capitals; influence is real but second-tier on hard infrastructure.

- Private Indian firms in telecom, pharma, automobiles and mining add a non-state layer that summits do not fully own.
- **Recommendation:** faster LoC disbursement, more local-job conditions, and a maritime-digital offer from the western Indian Ocean would match Africa's next decades better than a speech surplus.

Flow diagram

Africa growth story -> India influence

India Africa Forum Summit -> India influence

EXIM Lines of Credit -> India influence

ITEC pharma peacekeeping -> India influence

China BRI scale -> Africa growth story

Conclusion

If Africa is the next growth story, India's influence has risen through IAFS, Lines of Credit, training and health, which is a distinct partnership brand. It remains smaller than China's infrastructure footprint. Influence will hold only if credit actually arrives and African agency stays at the centre of the pitch.

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Q10 · 10 marks

"The USA is facing an existential threat in the form of a China, that is much more challenging than the erstwhile Soviet Union." Explain.

GS II · 2021 · India and its Neighbourhood

Revision summary

The USSR was a nuclear-ideological rival outside Western production; decoupling was default.

China is inside U.S. trade, tech and finance, and is a military peer in the Western Pacific.

Semiconductors, dual-use fusion and Taiwan make the contest intimate and maritime, not only a missile count.

Allies still trade with China, so coalition discipline is harder than NATO-versus-Warsaw Pact.

'Existential' here is a threat to American primacy and order, not a prediction that the U.S. State will vanish.

Introduction

The Cold War Soviet Union was a nuclear-military and ideological rival with a weak consumer economy. China is a peer competitor inside the same trading and technology system that made American prosperity, which is why many U.S. strategists call it a harder, even 'existential', challenge - a claim that needs unpacking, not chanting.

Body**How the Soviet challenge was bounded**

- The USSR competed in missiles, space, and proxy wars, but it was largely outside Western production networks; decoupling was the starting point, not a painful policy choice.
- Ideological bipolarity organised allies into NATO and the Warsaw Pact; the economic race was a planned economy that ultimately stagnated.
- Mutual assured destruction made a direct great-power war irrational; the threat was military-political, not a daily dependence on Soviet factories.

Why China is described as more challenging

- China is a top trading partner, a central node in electronics, rare earths, pharmaceuticals and green-tech supply chains, and a holder of U.S. financial assets; rivalry and interdependence run together.
- Technology competition - 5G, semiconductors, AI, dual-use civil-military fusion - hits the U.S. innovation model at home, not only at a distant iron curtain.
- China combines a large nuclear-modernising PLA, a first-rate navy in the Western Pacific, and a claim over Taiwan that could force a U.S. war in a crowded maritime theatre.
- **There is no single 'free world' tariff wall:** allies trade with China even as they treaty-bind with Washington, which is a coalition problem Moscow never posed in the same way.

Reading 'existential' carefully

- Existential in this statement means a possible end of uncontested U.S. primacy and of the open order America designed, not a certain end of the American State.
- The USSR could be contained until it collapsed; China is a civilisational state with a dynamic economy, so waiting it out is not a strategy.

- **For India, the same facts argue for multi-alignment:** the China challenge is real, yet a U.S.-China binary is not New Delhi's full map.

Flow diagram

Soviet Union -> Military ideological bloc
China -> Trade tech supply chains
China -> PLA Taiwan Western Pacific
Trade tech supply chains -> Harder US challenge
PLA Taiwan Western Pacific -> Harder US challenge
Military ideological bloc -> Containable Cold War

Conclusion

China is more challenging than the Soviet Union because it is a military, technological and economic peer inside America's own supply chains, not a sealed-off bloc. 'Existential' names a threat to primacy and to the post-1945 order, not a scripted collapse of the United States. That is why the competition is longer, more intimate, and harder to fence.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/gs-2/2021/the-usa-is-facing-an-existential-threat-in-the-form-of-a-china-that-is-much-more-challenging-than-the-erstwhile-soviet-union-explain/>

Q11 · 15 marks

The jurisdiction of the Central Bureau of Investigation(CBI) regarding lodging an FIR and conducting probe within a particular state is being questioned by various States. However, the power of States to withhold consent to the CBI is not absolute. Explain with special reference to the federal character of India.

GS II · 2021 · Federal Structure and Devolution

Revision summary

Police is a State List subject; the CBI enters a State under the DSPE Act, 1946, mainly through **Section 6** consent.

General consent was the administrative convenience; Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal showed it can be withdrawn, forcing case-specific permission for new FIRs.

- **The power is not absolute:** court-ordered probes, Union Territories, and already-attached investigations are not killed by a political letter.

Vineet Narain insulated the agency's working; it did not abolish federal consent.

A clear CBI statute would reduce standoffs without pretending India has a U.S.-style dual police sovereignty.

Introduction

Police is a State subject; the Central Bureau of Investigation is a Union investigating police that enters a State only through a constitutional and statutory gate. That gate is consent under the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**. Federalism explains both why States question CBI FIRs and why their power to withhold consent is not a complete veto.

Body

Federal design and the CBI's legal basis

- Entry 2 of the State List puts police with the States; Entry 80 of the Union List allows the Union's police to extend to a State only with that State's consent, which is the federal hinge.
- **The CBI traces to the DSPE Act, 1946:** it is not a fully independent constitutional police of the kind **Article 246** would invent from scratch, which is why States can call it a Union agency on their soil.
- **Vineet Narain v. Union of India** sought insulation of the CBI from executive pull, but it did not repeal the consent requirement or convert the Bureau into a federal police with a free run of the Map.

General consent, specific consent, and FIR lodging

- **Section 6** of the DSPE Act requires the State Government's consent for the CBI to exercise powers in that State; practice grew a 'general consent' so every case would not need a fresh letter.
- Withdrawal of general consent, as Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal did in 2018-20 (with other States at times joining the pattern), means the CBI must seek case-specific consent to register a fresh FIR and investigate inside that State.
- States argue that without this gate, a Union ministry could plant a police force on a rival State government - a classic federal grievance in a competitive party system.

- The CBI and the Union argue that corruption in central employees, multi-State crime, and court-ordered probes cannot be held hostage to a State's political weather.

Why the State's power is not absolute

- Consent is not needed in Union Territories, where the Union is the local police authority in the relevant sense.
- High Courts and the Supreme Court can order a CBI investigation under **Articles 32 and 226**; judicial federalism then overrides a withheld political consent because fundamental rights and a fair probe are not a State's patronage.
- Once a valid investigation has begun, or where the offence is committed in a place already within DSPE jurisdiction, a later political withdrawal of general consent does not automatically kill every pending case; courts have treated abrupt withdrawal as unable to erase jurisdiction already attached.
- Central employees and specified central offences can still draw the CBI where the statutory notifications and the consent matrix so provide; the State cannot rewrite the Union's power over its own servants by a press release.
- The Supreme Court's federalism cases, including the NCT Delhi line on collaborative federalism, cut both ways: the Union must not treat States as field offices, and States must not treat national investigating agencies as foreign police when the Constitution has already shared the field.

Federal character: a two-sided limit

- India's federal character is not dual sovereignty of the U.S. type; it is a Union of States with a strong Centre, a single citizenship, and All-India Services - yet police remains the most sensitive State List entry.
- **A healthy federal bargain is therefore:** CBI for complex, inter-State, and court-mandated cases; State police for ordinary crime; consent as a default courtesy, not as a shield for State-level impunity.
- **Recommendation:** a comprehensive CBI statute that clarifies consent, mandatory court-monitored probes in specified classes, and a federal crime list, so Andhra/West Bengal-style standoffs are not the only way to argue jurisdiction.

Flow diagram

State List police -> s.6 DSPE consent
 s.6 DSPE consent -> General consent
 General consent -> Andhra WB withdrawal
 Andhra WB withdrawal -> Case-specific consent
 SC HC ordered probe HC ordered probe -> CBI FIR and investigation FIR and investigation
 Union Territory -> CBI FIR and investigation
 Case-specific consent -> CBI FIR and investigation

Conclusion

States question CBI FIRs because police is a State subject and the DSPE Act makes consent the federal key. That key is real, as Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal showed by withdrawing general consent, but it is not absolute: court orders, Union Territories, pending jurisdiction, and central subjects still open the door. Indian federalism here is a negotiated police power, not a State veto and not a Union walk-in.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/gs-2/2021/the-jurisdiction-of-the-central-bureau-of-investigation-cbi-regarding-lodging-an-fir-and-conducting-probe-within-a-particular-state-is-being-questioned-by-various-states-however-the-power-of-states-to-withhold-consent-to/>

Q12 · 15 marks

Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analyzing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures.

GS II · 2021 · Governance and Policy

Revision summary

NHRC and **State Commissions** have documented custodial harm, bonded labour and prison conditions, and recommended relief.

The **Protection of Human Rights Act** keeps them largely recommendatory and often dependent on borrowed police.

Armed-forces procedure, one-year limitation, vacancies and political appointments blunt action against the powerful.

The 2019 amendment widened membership but did not create enforcement teeth.

- **Remedies:** time-bound implementation of core findings, a civilian investigation wing, charged finances, diversity, and Paris Principles independence.

Introduction

The **National Human Rights Commission** and the **State Commissions** have given India a standing address for custodial violence, bonded labour, and delay in rights cases. The **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**, however, built them as recommendatory bodies. Against the mighty - police leadership, armed forces, and sitting executives - that design often fails to assert.

Body

Contribution that is real

- NHRC fact-finding, spot inquiries, and compensation recommendations have made custodial deaths and encounter killings harder to bury in a district file.
- Interventions on bonded labour, mental hospitals, and prison overcrowding created a public record that courts and the press could use.
- **State Human Rights Commissions**, where they function, shorten the distance for a poor complainant who will never reach New Delhi.
- Paris Principles-style publicity and annual reports have kept human rights inside the official vocabulary even when governments are impatient.

Structural limitations in the Act

- The **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993** (amended 2006 and 2019) makes NHRC recommendations non-binding; a powerful ministry can note, delay, or dilute them.
- Investigation often depends on police on deputation, so the Commission is structurally shy of indicting the force that staffs it.
- **Section 19**-type limits on the armed forces - a report-seeking procedure rather than a full independent probe - weaken the Commission precisely where State violence is most insulated.

- The 2019 amendment widened the pool for chairperson and members (no longer only a former Chief Justice of India as chair) and allowed persons from other fields; critics said this could dilute judicial weight even as vacancies were the older disease.
- Jurisdiction over cases older than one year, and a crowded cause list, shut out slow-burning violations that the powerful prefer to wait out.

Practical limitations against the mighty

- Delayed appointments, acting chairs, and understaffed **State Commissions** make the institution look optional to a Chief Minister or a Union Home ministry.
- Political appointees and post-retirement incentives can blunt inquiry into the government of the day.
- Complainants against large corporations, security laws, or ruling-party cadres face the same recommendatory ceiling: shame without sanction.
- Poor coordination with the **National Commission** for Women, SC/ST commissions, and the courts produces forum-shopping and dropped files.

Remedial measures

- Give selected NHRC findings - custodial death, proven torture, wilful non-cooperation - a statutory duty to implement within a fixed time, subject to judicial review, so the mighty face more than a letter.
- Build an independent investigation wing of forensic and civilian investigators, not only borrowed police.
- Align the armed-forces procedure with a time-bound, reasoned public order, and let the Commission approach the Supreme Court as of right when the Union stonewalls.
- Fix a six-month rule for filling vacancies, gender and minority diversity on the bench, and financial charge on the Consolidated Fund to protect the budget.
- **Recommendation:** Paris Principles compliance in law, not only in the annual report - independence of appointment, own investigative capacity, and enforceable follow-up.

Flow diagram

Protection of HR Act 1993 -> NHRC and SHRCs
 NHRC and SHRCs -> Inquiry reports compensation
 Recommendatory police-dependent s.19 limits -> Failure against the mighty
 NHRC and SHRCs -> Failure against the mighty
 Binding follow-up independent wing -> Assertive commission

Conclusion

Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely as recorders, visitors, and recommenders. They fail against the mighty because the **Protection of Human Rights Act** left them recommendatory, police-dependent, and weak on the armed forces, while practice added vacancies and political timing. Remedies are statutory bite, an independent probe wing, time-bound appointments, and court-backed enforcement - assertion by design, not by the courage of a particular chair.

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Q13 · 15 marks

Analyze the distinguishing features of the notion of Equality in the Constitutions of the USA and India.

GS II · 2021 · Indian Constitution

Revision summary

The U.S. Fourteenth Amendment is a compact equal-protection clause; India's **Articles 14-18** are a social-equality code.

Article 14 uses reasonable classification; the U.S. uses levels of scrutiny, with race as a suspect class.

India expressly authorises special provisions in **Articles 15 and 16**; U.S. affirmative action is judicial and contested.

Article 17 abolishes untouchability and **Article 18** titles - clauses without a U.S. twin.

Indian equality is more horizontal and more group-conscious; U.S. equality is more State-action and colour-blind in its dominant reading.

Introduction

Both Constitutions outlaw caste-like caste in their own histories - slavery and segregation in the United States, untouchability and princely privilege in India - yet they write equality differently. The U.S. Fourteenth Amendment is a terse equal-protection clause built by courts; **Articles 14** to 18 of the Indian Constitution are a code of formal equality plus express social repair.

Body

Text and architecture

- The U.S. Fourteenth Amendment (1868) forbids any State to deny any person equal protection of the laws, and adds due process and privileges-or-immunities; there is no equivalent of India's **Articles 15-18** as a numbered social charter.
- Indian **Article 14** guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws to every person; **Articles 15 and 16** then name prohibited grounds and immediately authorise protective discrimination.
- **Article 17** abolishes untouchability and makes its practice an offence; **Article 18** abolishes titles except military and academic distinctions. The U.S. text has no untouchability clause and treats titles mainly through the older republican Article I limits.
- India therefore constitutionalises both the rule against arbitrary classification and a programme against historic group subordination; the U.S. left much of the programme to statutes (**Civil Rights Act**) and to judicial levels of scrutiny.

Formal equality, classification, and affirmative action

- **Indian doctrine under Article 14 is reasonable classification:** intelligible differentia plus rational nexus, later thickened by arbitrariness review after E.P. Royappa and Maneka **Gandhi**.
- U.S. equal protection uses suspect classifications and strict, intermediate, or rational-basis scrutiny; race is the classic suspect class after **Brown v. Board of Education and the Fourteenth Amendment's Reconstruction** origin.
- Affirmative action in the U.S. has been judicially unstable (Bakke, Grutter, and later retreats) because the Amendment is often read in a colour-blind key; it is not a constitutional duty to

reserve seats.

• **India writes the opposite instinct into the text:** Articles 15(3), 15(4), 15(5), 15(6) and 16(4), 16(4A), 16(6) authorise special provisions for women, socially and educationally backward classes, SCs, STs, and EWS. Indra Sawhney and later amendments treat substantive equality as constitutional, not as a grudging exception.

State action, horizontality, and social rights

- U.S. equal protection is primarily a limit on State action; private discrimination is reached mainly through statutes and commerce power, not through a general Article 17-style duty on private persons.
- Indian Article 15(2) and Article 17 reach certain private spheres (shops, wells, temples, untouchability), which is a distinguishing horizontal bite.
- India pairs equality with Directive Principles (Articles 38, 39, 46) that tell the State to minimise inequality of status and opportunity; the U.S. Constitution has no comparable socio-economic directive text.
- Titles, abolition of privy-style honour, and a written war on untouchability make Indian equality a social-revolutionary clause-set; U.S. equality is a Reconstruction and civil-rights clause-set aimed first at racial caste.

Distinguishing features, compressed

- **U.S.:** short clause, court-made tests, colour-blind tension, weak textual affirmative action, strong State-action limit.
- **India:** Articles 14-18 as a bundle, reasonable classification plus express reservations, abolition of untouchability and titles, partial horizontality, and a Welfare-State directive backdrop.
- Both fight inherited hierarchy; India names caste and titles in the Constitution itself, which is the deepest textual distinction.

Flow diagram

US 14th Amendment 14th Amendment -> Equal protection court tests
 India Arts 14 to 18 -> Art 14 reasonable classification
 India Arts 14 to 18 -> Arts 15 16 protective discrimination
 India Arts 14 to 18 -> Art 17 untouchability Art 18 titles
 Equal protection court tests -> Formal / colour-blind tension
 Arts 15 16 protective discrimination -> Substantive equality

Conclusion

Equality in the United States is the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection, elaborated by courts against racial caste and still uneasy with race-conscious repair. Equality in India is Articles 14-18: a general equality rule plus authorised special provisions, abolition of untouchability and titles, and a reach into some private spaces. The distinguishing feature is that India constitutionalises substantive, group-conscious equality instead of leaving it to statute and judicial mood.

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Q14 · 15 marks

Explain the constitutional provisions under which Legislative Councils are established. Review the working and current status of Legislative Councils with suitable illustrations.

GS II · 2021 · Indian Constitution

Revision summary

Article 169 lets Parliament create or abolish a Legislative Council only after a special-majority Assembly resolution.

Article 171 sets size and a mixed electoral-nominated composition; **Articles 197-198** keep it a delaying House.

- **Working is mixed:** some revision, much patronage and cost.

Current map is a few bicameral States (UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana) against a unicameral majority.

Andhra's abolition-revival politics and Tamil Nadu's history show Councils are optional instruments, not essential federal organs.

Introduction

A Legislative Council is the optional second House of a State. **Articles 168, 169 and 171** tell Parliament how to create or abolish it and how to compose it. Working has been mixed: a revising chamber in some States, a parking lot for politicians in others, which is why the current map keeps changing.

Body

Constitutional provisions

- **Article 168** says a State legislature may be unicameral or bicameral; a Council exists only where the Constitution or Parliament so provides.
- **Article 169 is the establishment and abolition clause:** if the Legislative Assembly passes a resolution by a majority of the total membership and by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting, Parliament may by law create or abolish the Council. No Assembly resolution, no Council.
- That parliamentary law is not a constitutional amendment under **Article 368**; it is an ordinary law with a special State trigger, which keeps the Union from imposing a Council on an unwilling Assembly.
- **Article 171** caps the Council at one-third of the Assembly (and not less than forty), and mixes elected MLAs' votes, local-body seats, graduates, teachers, and Governor's nominees for literature, science, art, cooperative movement and social service.
- Money bills and the ordinary-bill delay rules (**Articles 197-198**) make the Council a revising, not a blocking, House: it can delay, suggest, and debate; it cannot permanently kill an Assembly majority's will.

Working in practice

- In theory the Council is a place for experienced persons and for second thought on hasty bills, like a State-level Rajya Sabha without the Union's federal function.
- In practice graduate and teacher constituencies have low turnouts and a narrow class base; nominated seats can become patronage; defeated MLAs sometimes reappear as MLCs, which

hurts the revising-house claim.

- Useful working is visible when a Council committee or a nominated expert catches a drafting error, or when a government without a Council majority must negotiate a delay - a modest check, not a veto.
- Cost of a second House, duplicate staff, and delayed legislation are the standing criticisms in every abolition debate.

Current status and illustrations

- Councils exist in a handful of States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; most Indian States remain unicameral, which is the Republic's default.
- Andhra Pradesh has swung between abolition politics and revival politics around **Article 169**, illustrating that the Council is a live partisan object, not a frozen heritage.
- Tamil Nadu's long history of abolition and later steps toward revival, and proposals from States such as Rajasthan, Assam or Odisha at various times, show demand is political and fiscal, not a uniform federal need.
- Jammu and Kashmir had a Council under its earlier special frame; reorganisation ended that State legislature, which is a status illustration of how Union law can erase a second House with the State itself.
- **Recommendation:** if a Council is kept, reform **Article 171**'s graduate/teacher seats toward local-government and skilled-profession representation, and publish a delay-and-amendment scorecard so working can be judged, not only sloganised.

Flow diagram

Art 168 bicameral option -> Art 169 Assembly special resolution
 Art 169 Assembly special resolution -> Parliament law create or abolish
 Parliament law create or abolish -> Legislative Council
 Legislative Council -> Art 171 composition
 Legislative Council -> Arts 197 198 delay not veto

Conclusion

Legislative Councils are established under **Article 169** on a special Assembly resolution, composed under **Article 171**, and limited to a delaying role by **Articles 197-198**. Their working as revising chambers is uneven; patronage and cost dominate the public argument. Current status is a short list of bicameral States amid a unicameral majority, with Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu as the clearest illustrations that Councils come and go with politics, not with a fixed constitutional destiny.

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Q15 · 15 marks

Do Department -related Parliamentary Standing Committees keep the administration on its toes and inspire reverence for parliamentary control? Evaluate the working of such committees with suitable examples.

GS II · 2021 · Parliament and State Legislatures

Revision summary

DRSCs since 1993 scrutinise clustered ministries through Demands, bills and policy reports, off-camera and often by consensus.

They summon secretaries and use secretariat plus CAG-type numbers, which does keep officials on their toes.

Finance, Defence and Health committees are working examples of written justification extracted from ministries.

- **Reverence is weaker:** bills skip referral, Action Taken can be ritual, and the public sees the floor not the room.

Default referral and a floor debate on major reports would convert useful control into visible parliamentary authority.

Introduction

Department-related **Parliamentary Standing Committees**, in their present form from 1993, were meant to take ministries out of the glare of the whip and into clause-by-clause and rupee-by-rupee scrutiny. They do keep the administration on its toes on a good week. Reverence for parliamentary control is rarer: reports are often unread, and the House still passes bills without them.

Body

Design that can keep officials on their toes

- Twenty-four DRSCs cover clusters of ministries; members from both Houses sit off-camera, which allows cross-party questioning that the floor, under a whip, will not.
- They examine Demands for Grants, selected bills, and long-term policy, and they summon secretaries - a civil servant's most regular taste of Parliament outside a PAC hearing.
- Consensus reports, rather than division, are the culture; a ministry that is embarrassed in a unanimous report feels a professional sting even if the party numbers on the floor are safe.
- The committee secretariat and CAG-fed numbers give amateurs in the House a briefing they would not get in a shouting Question Hour.

Examples of working

- The **Standing Committee** on Finance has repeatedly gone into tax administration, GST architecture, and financial-sector bills, forcing the Department of Revenue to justify circulars in writing.
- The Committee on Defence has questioned capital acquisition delays and research outcomes, which is parliamentary control in a sector that prefers secrecy.
- Health and family-welfare committees have reported on drug regulation, COVID preparedness, and Ayushman-type coverage gaps, putting the Health ministry on a published clock.

- IT, communications, and home committees have examined data, telecom, and internal-security Demands, sometimes producing the only accessible public record of a technical bill.
- When the government refers a major bill - Insolvency, labour codes, or a data-protection draft in various years - the committee stage has extracted concessions; when it skips referral, the toes stay comfortable.

Limits on 'reverence'

- Referral of bills is not automatic; an executive in a hurry bypasses the committee, which teaches the administration that Parliament is optional.
- Attendance, party research capacity, and the chair's proximity to the ruling party vary; a captured chair does not inspire reverence.
- Reports are recommendatory; ministries file Action Taken notes that can be formulaic. Unlike a confidence vote, a DRSC cannot sack a minister.
- Secrecy of proceedings helps candour but hides the spectacle that creates public reverence; citizens see disruption on television, not a clerk sweating over a grant.

Evaluation

- **On the toes:** yes, for budget grants, for officials who must file replies, and for bills that actually go to committee - a real, under-advertised form of control.
- **Reverence:** only partly. The administration still treats the floor majority as the true master and the committee as a delay to be managed.
- **Recommendation:** default referral of all non-money bills, a published deadline for Action Taken, and a short floor debate on each major DRSC report, so control is seen as well as filed.

Flow diagram

Department-related Standing Committees -> Demands for Grants
 Department-related Standing Committees -> Bills and policy reports
 Demands for Grants -> Administration on its toes
 Bills and policy reports -> Administration on its toes
 Skip referral weak ATR -> Limited reverence
 Administration on its toes -> Parliamentary control

Conclusion

Department-related **Standing Committees** keep the administration on its toes when Demands and bills actually meet them, as Finance, Defence and Health illustrations show. They do not yet inspire consistent reverence for parliamentary control, because referral is optional, reports are soft, and the public never sees the work. Strengthen the default and the follow-up, and the 1993 design will match its promise.

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Q16 · 15 marks

Has digital illiteracy, particularly in rural areas, couple with lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility hindered socio-economic development? Examine with justification.

GS II · 2021 · Governance and Policy

Revision summary

Rural digital illiteracy and poor ICT access travel together and block DBT, schooling, markets and e-health.

COVID online classes and CoWIN-type portals showed the exclusion in hard outcomes, not only in survey comfort.

Women, the elderly and low-literacy groups are the worst hit, which deepens existing inequality.

PMGDISHA, CSCs and BharatNet are official admissions that the couple is a development constraint.

Offline fallbacks and women-centred access must sit beside fibre, or digital public goods will stratify the village.

Introduction

Socio-economic development in this decade runs through a phone, a bank app, a school video, and a public-service portal. Where rural citizens cannot read the screen and cannot reach a network or a cheap device, JAM, DBT, e-health and online markets arrive as exclusion. Digital illiteracy plus weak ICT access has hindered development; it is not the only hindrance, but it is a binding one.

Body

The coupled problem

- Digital illiteracy is not only inability to read; it is inability to use interfaces, OTPs, KYC, and grievance tabs in a language and script the user owns.
- ICT inaccessibility is missing fibre, patchy mobile data, unaffordable smartphones, and no public access point - BharatNet and village Wi-Fi still leave last-mile holes.
- **The two couple:** a kiosk without a literate intermediary still fails the old woman; a literate youth without spectrum still fails the market.

How development is hindered - justification

- **Financial inclusion:** Jan Dhan and DBT leak or freeze when biometrics fail and the user cannot navigate an AePS dispute; the rural poor then return to cash and the tout.
- **Education:** COVID-era online classes widened the rural-urban and girl-boy gap because devices were shared, if owned at all; learning loss is a development loss.
- **Livelihoods:** e-NAM, ONDC-type markets, and gig platforms reward the digitally fluent; the small farmer and weaver stay price-takers offline.
- **Health and welfare:** CoWIN-type registration, telemedicine, and ration e-KYC punished those without a smartphone or a helper, which is socio-economic harm in the name of efficiency.

- **Voice:** RTI, grievance portals, and panchayat disclosure are paper rights if the village cannot open the PDF.

What the data pattern shows, even without a census of clicks

- Urban, male, and high-school groups dominate internet use; rural women and the elderly lag, which maps onto wage and nutrition outcomes already stratified by gender and age.
- States with denser optical fibre, Common Service Centres, and local-language content show faster uptake of DBT and open-schooling tools - a natural experiment that justifies the causal claim.
- **PMGDISHA and CSC networks prove the diagnosis:** the Union itself treats literacy-plus-access as a development programme, not as a hobby class.

Caveats and the rest of the stack

- Roads, power, teachers, and land rights still bind rural development; a 5G tower on a hungry village is not a growth model.
- Digital public infrastructure (Aadhaar, UPI, ONDC) can cut costs when access exists; it magnifies exclusion when it does not - justification for treating illiteracy and access as first-order, not cosmetic.
- **Recommendation:** public access points in every panchayat, women-targeted device and tariff support, local-language interfaces, and an offline fallback for every essential welfare transfer.

Flow diagram

Rural digital illiteracy -> Cannot use DBT school health apps
 Weak Weak ICT access access -> Cannot use DBT school health apps
 Cannot use DBT school health apps -> Hindered socio-economic development
 CSC PMGDISHA BharatNet PMGDISHA BharatNet -> Literacy plus access
 Literacy plus access -> Inclusion and development

Conclusion

- **Yes:** rural digital illiteracy coupled with weak ICT access has hindered socio-economic development by blocking finance, school, markets, health and grievance. The justification is the COVID learning gap, DBT failures at the last mile, and the Union's own literacy-and-CSC architecture. Fix the couple - skills and connectivity together - and digital public goods become development; leave it, and they become a new caste line.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/gs-2/2021/has-digital-illiteracy-particularly-in-rural-areas-couple-with-lack-of-information-and-communication-technology-ict-accessibility-hindered-socio-economic-development-examine-with-justification/>

Q17 · 15 marks

"Though women in post-Independent India have excelled in various fields, the social attitude towards women and feminist movement has been patriarchal." Apart from women education and women empowerment schemes, what interventions can help change this milieu?

GS II · 2021 · Health, Education and Human Resources

Revision summary

Individual excellence by women has not dissolved patriarchal attitudes toward women or toward the feminist movement.

Beyond education and empowerment schemes, change needs political seats, enforced property rights, and a public care economy.

POSH that works, non-compromise on sexual violence, and an end to sarpanch-pati are attitude interventions.

Male engagement, media norms, and rural-union feminisms stop the smear that equality is only urban.

Milieu is power plus culture; schemes without seats and titles leave patriarchy standing.

Introduction

Post-Independence India has produced women Presidents, scientists, judges, pilots and Olympic medallists, yet everyday attitude - in the household, the shrine, the newsroom and the party office - often remains patriarchal. Education and empowerment schemes are necessary; they do not by themselves rewrite the milieu in which a feminist claim is mocked as Western or as a threat to the family.

Body

What the statement gets right

- Excellence at the tail - a woman CEO or a woman Air Marshal - coexists with son preference, unpaid care, and violence, because patriarchy is a social structure, not a shortage of role models.
- Parts of the public conversation still treat the feminist movement as man-hatred rather than as a demand for [Articles 14, 15 and 21](#), which is itself a patriarchal attitude toward politics.

Interventions beyond classrooms and scheme portals

- **Political power:** legislate a fair share of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies (the long-pending reservation idea), and enforce the 73rd and 74th Amendment's women's seats against sarpanch-pati practice with penalties, so authority is seen in a woman's name.
- **Property and unpaid work:** full, cheap enforcement of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, coparcenary rights, and a care-economy policy - creches, maternity plus paternity leave, and time-use recognition in statistics - so the household bargain shifts.
- **Violence and workplace law:** fast POSH committees that are not employer-captured, time-bound trial of sexual violence, and police-station women-help desks that do not mediate rape as a 'compromise'.
- **Male engagement:** school and panchayat programmes that treat boys as participants in equality, not as the audience of a women-only scheme; religious and caste sabhas that are asked

to drop honour-based controls.

- **Media and culture:** public broadcasting and film certification that do not reward humiliation humour; sports and STEM fellowships that keep girls in the pipeline after Class 10, which is attitude work in a stadium, not only in a textbook.

- **Feminist movement itself:** fund rural and union feminisms (SEWA-type, forest rights, ASHA and anganwadi unions) so the movement is not typed as only urban-English, which patriarchy uses as a smear.

Changing the milieu, not only the metric

- Gender budgeting that publishes incidence of spending, and corporate board diversity with real, not dummy, directors, change what institutions honour.
- Community watch against sex-selective practices and against social boycott of mixed marriages attacks patriarchy where schemes never reach.
- **Recommendation:** a bundle of political reservation, care infrastructure, property enforcement, and male-targeted social norms campaigns - because milieu is power plus culture, and education schemes address only one input.

Flow diagram

Education and schemes -> Partial change
Political reservation property care -> Milieu shift
POSH criminal justice -> Milieu shift
Male engagement media rural feminism -> Milieu shift
Milieu shift -> Attitude less patriarchal

Conclusion

Women's excellence has not automatically civilised social attitude; patriarchy still frames both the woman achiever and the feminist movement. Apart from education and empowerment schemes, the milieu changes when women hold seats and titles to land, when care is public, when violence is not compromised, and when men and local institutions are made parties to equality. That is constitutional morality in the household, not only in a ministry guideline.

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Q18 · 15 marks

Can Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations present an alternative model of public service delivery to benefit the common citizen. Discuss the challenges of this alternative model.

GS II · 2021 · Development Processes and NGOs

Revision summary

NGOs already deliver specialised, last-mile and surge services the common citizen uses.

They cannot replace PDS-scale entitlements that need tax, law and uniformity.

- **Challenges:** donor accountability, FCRA chill, short projects, elite capture, poor coordination, and a split between voice and service.

The State must not dump its **Article 38** duty onto charities.

A regulated partnership with beneficiary boards and honest FCRA administration is the workable alternative, not a shadow government.

Introduction

Civil society and NGOs already deliver schools, watersheds, hospice care, and legal aid that a thin State does not reach. They can be an alternative model for the common citizen in niches. They cannot be a shadow government: legitimacy, scale, money, and accountability all pull the model back toward partnership with the public system, not replacement of it.

Body

Where an alternative model works

- **Last-mile innovation:** SEWA's member services, MKSS-type social audits, and watershed NGOs have delivered income, information and water with a human face the block office often lacks.
- **Specialised care:** palliative, disability, and rare-disease NGOs supply what line departments treat as residual.
- **Disaster and epidemic surge:** civil volunteers and NGO logistics have filled gaps in kitchens, oxygen, and data when the State was slow.
- **Rights literacy:** NGO help-lines make RTI, labour and forest rights usable for a citizen who cannot hire a lawyer.
- In these bands, the common citizen does benefit from a non-departmental delivery model - flexible, local, and mission-driven.

Why it is not a full alternative to the State

- Public services at continental scale - PDS, immunisation, policing, roads - need tax finance, uniform entitlement, and coercive legal authority that a society cannot vote to an NGO.
- **Cream-skimming is a risk:** NGOs may serve the reachable village and leave the hostile hinterland to the State, which is not an alternative for the common citizen as a class.
- The constitutional Welfare State under **Articles 38 and 47** cannot outsource its duty; NGOs are agents or critics, not sovereigns.

Challenges of the alternative model

- **Accountability:** an NGO board is not the Assembly; donors can set the menu more than beneficiaries can. Scandal or faith-based conditions then hit the user who has no vote against the

secretary.

- **FCRA and regulatory chill:** foreign-contribution rules, tax exemptions, and alleged anti-national tagging can starve legitimate delivery or, conversely, hide opaque money - both are challenges to a clean alternative.
- **Capacity and continuity:** project cycles, volunteer turnover, and founder-centric trusts collapse when the grant ends; a PHC is supposed to outlive a project.
- **Capture and parallel power:** local elites can run an 'NGO' as a contractor; the State may use NGOs to shed blame while keeping the budget.
- **Coordination:** multiple NGOs in one district duplicate nutrition kits and ignore sanitation, which wastes the citizen's time.
- **Rights versus service:** a delivery NGO may stay silent on police abuse to keep its permission; a protest NGO may not run a clinic. The alternative model splits voice and service.

A workable position

- **Treat civil society as a complementary model:** contracted, audited, and rights-compatible, with social audits both of the NGO and of the department.
- **Recommendation:** a light, independent charity regulator, mandatory beneficiary seats on boards for publicly funded projects, and no FCRA use as a partisan switch - so the common citizen gets the NGO's flexibility without losing the State's entitlement.

Flow diagram

Civil society NGOs -> Niche last-mile delivery
 State entitlement tax authority -> Universal public services
 Niche last-mile delivery -> Citizen benefit in gaps
 Accountability FCRA scale capture -> Civil society NGOs
 Niche last-mile delivery -> Partnership not replacement
 Universal public services -> Partnership not replacement

Conclusion

Civil society and NGOs can present an alternative model in niches of last-mile care, audit and surge, and the common citizen has already benefited. The challenges - accountability, FCRA politics, scale, capture, and short project life - mean they cannot replace the public system. The democratic model is a regulated partnership, not a romantic handover of the Welfare State.

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Q19 · 15 marks

Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. what importance does it hold for India.

GS II · 2021 · Bilateral and Regional Groupings

Revision summary

SCO's aims are regional security, the 'three evils', and economic-connectivity cooperation under a China-Russia-centred Eurasian tent.

RATS is the concrete security limb; trade and a development-bank story have lagged BRI.

Terror definitions split, especially India-Pakistan; consensus yields thin communiqués.

For India, importance is Central Asia, strategic autonomy beside the Quad, and a limited China channel.

Do not treat SCO as a court against Pakistan or as a settlement mechanism for the LAC.

Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation grew from the **Shanghai Five (1996)** into a Eurasian grouping with China and Russia at the core and India and Pakistan as members from 2017. Its stated aims are security, connectivity and a multipolar order. For India the table is valuable; the meal is often thin, and China-Pakistan politics is the salt that spoils it.

Body

Stated aims and objectives

- The SCO Charter lists regional peace, security and stability, the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism - the 'three evils' - plus trade, energy, transport and cultural cooperation.
- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent is the operational security limb; annual summits and a thickening set of ministers are the political limb.
- A deeper, less written aim is to organise Eurasia with China and Russia as convenors, offering members an alternative to Western-led security and finance clubs.
- Expansion to India, Pakistan, and later Iran, advertises SCO as a big-tent of the 'non-West', not a small Central Asian border club.

Critical examination

- Counter-terror language is real in exercises and RATS lists, yet members do not share a definition of terrorism when it touches each other's partners; India-Pakistan divergence is the obvious crack.
- Economic aims - a development bank conversation, energy club, and connectivity - have under-delivered beside Belt and Road, which is a China project that SCO communiqués often bless in spirit.
- Sovereignty and non-interference are official norms; they also shelter members from discussing each other's human-rights records, so the organisation is a states' club, not a citizens' one.
- **China-Russia leadership is structural:** agenda, finance, and diplomatic weight are not equal among eight or more flags. Multipolarity here can mean bipolar Eurasia with guests.
- Consensus culture avoids walkouts but produces lowest-common-denominator statements that rarely bind a PLA or a Taliban-era Afghan spillover.

Importance for India

- **Central Asia:** SCO is one of the few regular rooms where India sits with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia on terror, drugs, and connectivity (Chabahar, INSTC) without a Western chair.
- **Strategic autonomy:** membership balances Quad and Western minilaterals with a Eurasian file; it is not a substitute for the Quad, and it should not be.
- **China:** a channel for engagement even after Galwan, useful for signalling, limited for settlement of the LAC.
- **Pakistan:** a constrained multilateral space; RATS can name groups, but SCO will not become India's preferred counter-terror court against Islamabad.
- **Energy and connectivity:** talk of corridors and hydrocarbons matters if Indian firms actually move; otherwise importance stays diplomatic.
- **Recommendation:** use SCO for RATS, Central Asian diplomacy, and connectivity that does not run only through BRI; keep hard security with other partners when SCO consensus is China-shaped.

Flow diagram

SCO table peace three evils connectivity -> RATS Tashkent Tashkent

SCO table peace three evils connectivity -> Multipolar Eurasia

China Russia core -> SCO table table

India 2017 -> Central Asia energy autonomy

Pakistan divergence -> Limited terror consensus

Central Asia energy autonomy -> Importance for India

Limited terror consensus -> Importance for India

Conclusion

SCO aims at Eurasian security, anti-terror cooperation and a multipolar economic space, but it is critically a China-Russia-led consensus club with a soft economic spine and a cracked terror definition. For India it is important as a Central Asian and autonomy-preserving table, not as a substitute for bilateral China policy or for the Quad. Sit in the room; do not outsource the hard files to the communiqué.

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Q20 · 15 marks

The newly tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario.

GS II · 2021 · India and its Neighbourhood

Revision summary

AUKUS (2021) is a tri-nation pact for Australian nuclear-powered submarines and advanced military technology, aimed at China's Indo-Pacific rise.

Its strength is hard undersea power and Anglosphere interoperability, not regional political inclusion.

- **It will not supersede the Quad or Malabar:** those include India and do diplomacy and exercises AUKUS does not.

Impact includes PLA planning, a France-Australia rift over the Barracuda contract, and ASEAN nuclear-sensitivity.

India should treat AUKUS as a parallel layer, keep Quad-Malabar as its own China-balancing tools, and stay out of the nuclear-propulsion club.

Introduction

AUKUS, announced in 2021 by Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, is a hard-security pact whose first pillar is nuclear-powered attack submarines for Australia, with a second pillar in advanced technology. It is aimed at China's military-maritime rise. It will not supersede the Quad, Malabar, ASEAN-centred diplomacy, or Five Eyes; it adds a sharper Anglosphere blade beside those partnerships.

Body

What AUKUS is, and what it is not

- AUKUS is a tri-nation defence-industrial partnership, not a pan-Indo-Pacific political forum. India, Japan, ASEAN and France are outside the nuclear-submarine core.
- Pillar I (submarines) transfers naval nuclear propulsion to Australia, a first among non-nuclear-weapon NPT states in this form, which is a proliferation-sensitive strength and a diplomatic cost.
- Pillar II (undersea, AI, quantum, hypersonics, cyber) is the longer technology glue, potentially more transferable than hulls.

Strength in the present scenario

- It gives Australia a quieter, longer-range undersea capability that complicates PLA Navy planning in the South China Sea and approaches to Taiwan - a military fact the Quad's statements do not create by themselves.
- It binds UK industry and nuclear know-how to a Pacific theatre, thickening the American alliance system after years of European distraction.
- Interoperability among three English-speaking militaries with Five Eyes intelligence habits is a real combat strength, not a communiqué.
- The shock to France (cancellation of the conventional Barracuda-class deal) showed AUKUS can reorder alliance politics overnight - impact as well as strength.

Impact, including on China and on partners

- Beijing reads AUKUS as containment with nuclear overtones, which may accelerate PLA naval and nuclear modernisation rather than freeze it.
- **ASEAN centrality is rattled:** nuclear propulsion in regional waters raises residual NPT and environmental politics even if Australia stays a non-nuclear-weapon state.
- France-Australia and EU Indo-Pacific trust took a hit, then a slow repair; minilateralism now has a reputation for surprise.
- **For India, AUKUS is not an invitation and not a threat to strategic autonomy:** New Delhi wants a balance on China without a nuclear-submarine club that would collide with its non-proliferation story.

Will it supersede existing partnerships?

- The Quad (India, Japan, Australia, U.S.) is a diplomatic and public-goods minilateral - vaccines, maritime domain awareness, infrastructure talk - not a NATO. AUKUS does not replace that political table; Australia simply sits in both.
- Malabar is a naval exercise grouping (U.S., India, Japan, later Australia) that builds operational habit among four navies, including India's. AUKUS does not absorb Malabar or give India nuclear propulsion.
- **ANZUS, Five Eyes, U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea alliances, and ASEAN Regional Forum remain:** AUKUS layers on the U.S.-Australia-UK node; it does not merge the lattice.
- Supercession talk confuses a specialised defence pact with the region's whole security architecture. Different tools, overlapping members, no single heir.
- **Recommendation for India:** deepen Quad and Malabar, keep AUKUS at arm's length on nuclear propulsion, and cooperate case-by-case on undersea domain awareness that does not require club membership.

Flow diagram

AUKUS AUKUS AU UK US UK US -> Nuclear submarines Pillar I
 AUKUS AU UK US -> Pillar II advanced tech
 Nuclear submarines Pillar I -> Harder PLA maritime calculus
 Quad -> Diplomatic public goods
 Malabar -> Four-navy exercises
 AUKUS AU UK US -> Layer not successor
 Quad -> Layer not successor
 Malabar -> Layer not successor

Conclusion

AUKUS is a strong, China-focused Anglosphere defence-industrial pact whose submarine and technology pillars will matter in the Western Pacific. It will not supersede the Quad, Malabar, or ASEAN-centred partnerships, because those do different political and operational jobs and include India and others whom AUKUS excludes. Impact is real - on the PLA's planning, on France, on ASEAN nerves - as an added layer, not as a successor regime.

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Compiled answer key

Last pages of this pack. Each question links to the WRAP model answer on wrapexams.com.

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Q1 10 marks	Q2 10 marks	Q3 10 marks	Q4 10 marks
Q5 10 marks	Q6 10 marks	Q7 10 marks	Q8 10 marks
Q9 10 marks	Q10 10 marks	Q11 15 marks	Q12 15 marks
Q13 15 marks	Q14 15 marks	Q15 15 marks	Q16 15 marks
Q17 15 marks	Q18 15 marks	Q19 15 marks	Q20 15 marks

Question-wise key

Q1 · 10 marks Solution

Q2 · 10 marks Solution

Q3 · 10 marks Solution

Q4 · 10 marks Solution

Q5 · 10 marks Solution

Q6 · 10 marks Solution

Q7 · 10 marks Solution

Q8 · 10 marks Solution

Q9 · 10 marks Solution

Q10 · 10 marks Solution

Q11 · 15 marks Solution

Q12 · 15 marks Solution

Q13 · 15 marks Solution

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Q17 · 15 marks Solution

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