

NOVEMBER 2024

PERSEPECTIVES

TRUMP 2.0
AND IMPLICATIONS

A portrait of Donald Trump, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is sitting with his hands clasped, looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a solid blue color.

**WHAT IT MEANS FOR INDIA
THE CRISIS IN MULTILATERALISM
A WEST ASIA UNDER DONALD TRUMP**

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The October edition of our PSIR magazine explores pivotal developments in international relations, strategic diplomacy, and regional geopolitics, with a focus on their implications for India and the world.

The November edition explores the implications of a potential Trump 2.0 presidency for India, U.S.-India relations, and multilateral institutions. Articles examine West Asia under Trump, India-Pakistan tensions over the Indus Waters Treaty, and China's geopolitical challenges. The role of BRICS in global governance and its impact on India-Iran ties is also discussed. Domestically, the magazine reflects on 75 years of India's Constitution, analyzing feminist ideology in constitutional discourse and the Election Commission's role in Indian democracy. This edition offers insightful perspectives from top political analysts, making it a valuable resource for students of international relations and political science.

We also delve into German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's visit to India, marking a turning point in Indo-German relations. As Germany redefines its strategic priorities, this partnership holds promise for India's manufacturing and defense sectors, as well as broader economic ties with Europe.

Moving westward, the Middle East emerges as a central focus, from Netanyahu's controversial push for regime change in Iran to the ongoing Iran-Israel tensions. These discussions underline the intricate balance India must strike in engaging with both Arab states and Israel, while safeguarding its own strategic interests in the region.

The magazine further examines critical issues such as the civil war in Sudan, the three-tier conflict in West Asia, and the U.K.'s decolonization efforts in the Indian Ocean. Each article connects these global developments with their strategic and policy implications for India, fostering a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay of international forces.

Through these themes, this edition aims to equip readers with the analytical tools necessary to navigate the complexities of global politics. We hope that this compilation not only informs but also inspires thought and discussion among UPSC aspirants and PSIR enthusiasts.

Happy reading!



Rahul
Puri

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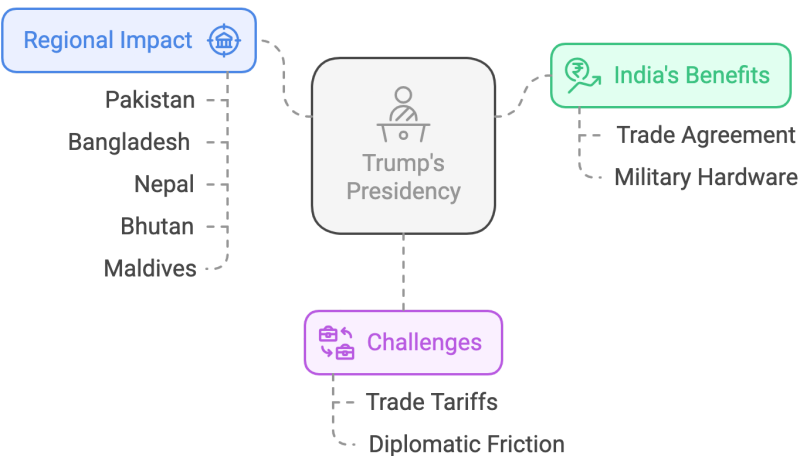


TRUMP 2.0

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INDIA

Suhasini Haidar

New Delhi's warm welcome for Trump 2.0 will be tempered by concerns over his social media posts and tough rhetoric on trade and tariffs



Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency presents a mixed scenario for India. While **Prime Minister Modi and Trump share personal rapport**, bilateral ties during Trump's first term were marked by both cooperation and friction. Trump's second term is expected to benefit India in areas like trade, technology, and defense, with renewed talks on a Free Trade Agreement and increased access to U.S. military hardware.

Unlike Biden, **Trump is unlikely to press India on human rights and democratic issues**, reducing pressure on New Delhi regarding matters like religious freedom and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. **Additionally, Trump's strained relations with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau may work in India's favor** amid its diplomatic tensions with Ottawa over the Nijjar killing.

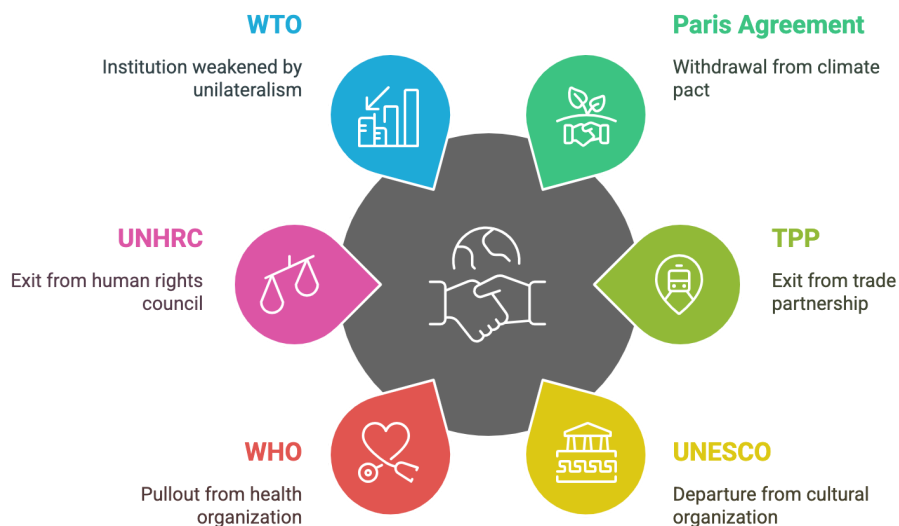
However, challenges persist. **Trump's focus on reducing trade tariffs previously led to countermeasures against India**, withdrawal of GSP benefits, and WTO complaints. His **tendency to disclose and exaggerate private conversations** could create diplomatic friction, as seen in past remarks about Modi and Kashmir.

His confrontational approach toward Iran forced India to halt oil imports, though he may now take a softer stance on Russia. **Trump's unpredictability in foreign policy also affects India's regional strategy**, especially regarding the Israel-Gaza conflict and economic corridors in the Middle East.

India's neighbors may face uncertainties. **Trump previously cut aid to Pakistan**, raising concerns in Islamabad over U.S. support for IMF and World Bank loans. Bangladesh could see diplomatic tensions due to Trump's criticism of its treatment of Hindu minorities. Smaller South Asian nations like Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives may experience reduced U.S. engagement, reversing the Biden administration's efforts to strengthen ties in the region.

INDIA, TRUMP, AND THE CRISIS IN MULTILATERALISM

C Raja Mohan



“Multilateralism – economic, political, and institutional – that reached its peak at the turn of the 21st century is now in trouble.”

As high-profile summits such as the climate conference in Azerbaijan, the APEC forum in Peru, and the G20 summit in Brazil unfold, they do so under the shadow of Donald Trump’s re-election. **Multilateral institutions, already weakened over the past decade,** now face even greater challenges. Trump’s second term necessitates a **strategic reassessment for India and other nations in their engagement with global institutions.**

As multilateralism weakens, **India may need to focus more on minilateral groups** and coalitions of like-minded nations to address global issues effectively.

Trump’s first term (2017-2021) marked a significant departure from traditional US foreign policy, **prioritizing unilateralism over multilateralism.**

His administration withdrew from major international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, TPP, UNESCO, WHO, and the UNHRC, weakening institutions like the WTO. His “America First” doctrine, emphasizing national sovereignty over globalism, rejected the US role as a global leader.

Critics argue that **prolonged multilateral engagements have cost American taxpayers, led to prolonged military interventions, and caused job losses due to open global trade.** Biden’s administration attempted to restore US commitment to multilateralism but retained Trump’s skepticism towards global trade. With Trump’s return, this backlash against globalism is set to intensify, likely leading to transformative policies that further undermine multilateral institutions.

Trump is expected to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement again and dismantle environmental regulations imposed by Biden. His push for increased energy production and economic growth is viewed as a major setback for global climate efforts, potentially encouraging other nations to scale back their commitments.

The APEC forum, once a symbol of Sino-US cooperation, now faces heightened tensions, with Trump's economic policies, including a proposed 60% tariff on Chinese imports, likely to escalate the US-China trade war. Meanwhile, China is strengthening its economic influence in Latin America, with President Xi Jinping attending the APEC and G20 summits.

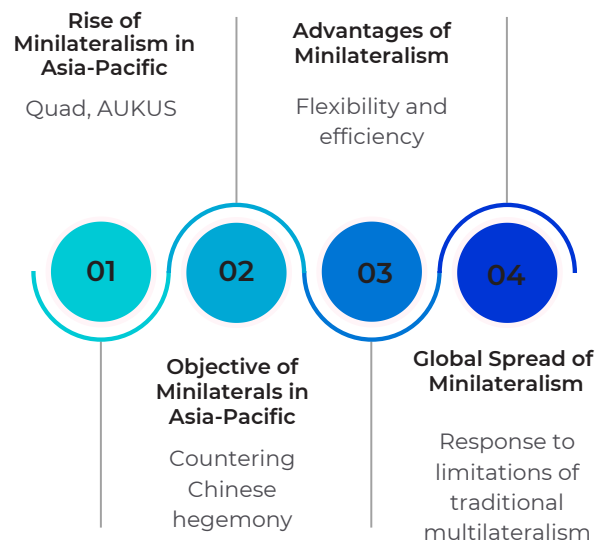
The G20, established in 2008 to address financial crises, has struggled to maintain relevance amid geopolitical and economic divisions. Trump's first term saw US clashes with other members on trade, climate, and migration, and despite Biden's efforts, cooperation remained limited. India, which has heavily invested in multilateralism, must now reassess its engagement in global governance under Trump 2.0.

As multilateralism declines, India has already begun focusing on national development and bilateral trade deals. It has also actively engaged in minilateral groups like the Quad, the Mineral Security Partnership, and the Global Partnership on AI. Until multilateralism regains momentum, India must strengthen these alternative frameworks to navigate the shifting global order effectively.

Decline of “Multi-lateralism”



Rise of “minilateralism”



A WEST ASIA UNDER DONALD TRUMP

Stanly Johny

With Joe Biden leaving behind a broken region, it remains to be seen whether Donald Trump can look at the larger strategic picture.

Joe Biden's presidency saw a major crisis in West Asia following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel. His administration initially aimed to expand the Abraham Accords and normalize Israel-Saudi ties, sidelining the Palestine issue. However, after the attack, Biden fully backed Israel's war in Gaza, attempting to prevent regional escalation.

This strategy failed, as the war dragged on, over 43,000 Palestinians were killed, and the conflict spread to Lebanon and Iran. **Biden's inaction against Israel's excesses led to accusations of complicity in "genocide,"** while U.S. credibility in the region suffered. Donald Trump will now inherit a volatile West Asia where American influence is weakened.

Trump's first presidency strongly favored Israel, moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing the Golan Heights annexation, and withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal. The Abraham Accords reinforced Israel's alliance with Arab nations against Iran. His 2020 Israel-Palestine "peace plan" was dismissed by Palestinians as biased. Given his past stance, Trump is unlikely to oppose Israel's actions in Gaza. However, he will face critical challenges, including preventing an all-out war while maintaining U.S. strategic interests.

Trump's priorities will likely differ from Biden's. His political base opposes prolonged military entanglements in West Asia, and his Vice-President-elect J.D. Vance has criticized past U.S. wars in the region. Trump also seeks to curb inflation, making an Iran conflict—disrupting oil supplies and raising global prices—undesirable.

His focus will likely shift to countering China rather than engaging in prolonged regional wars. To restore U.S. credibility, Trump may need to act decisively to end the Gaza and Lebanon wars, but if he follows Biden's approach combined with his pro-Israel stance, further instability in West Asia is inevitable.

INDIA, PAKISTAN AND MODIFYING THE INDUS WATERS TREATY

Anwar Sadat

India's formal notice on August 30, 2024, under Article XII (3) of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) **seeks a review and modification of the treaty** to address its growing domestic water needs, changing demographics, and clean energy goals. India also cites security concerns due to cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, which hinders full utilisation of its water rights. However, **modifying the treaty requires a ratified agreement between both governments**, making a consensus between India and Pakistan unlikely given their historical disagreements.

A key divergence in interpretation of the IWT exists between India, which prioritises optimal utilisation, and Pakistan, which insists on uninterrupted water flow. This difference has led to frequent disputes. **The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in India's favour regarding the Kishanganga hydropower project but mandated a minimum water flow** of nine cubic metres per second. India is developing 33 hydropower projects on the western rivers, but it must ensure compliance with the treaty's minimum flow requirements.

The IWT divides the Indus Basin into eastern rivers (Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas) under India's control and western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) under Pakistan's control.

This separation, driven by historical contingencies of Partition, has hindered integrated water resource management and long-term cooperation.

Despite the IWT lacking an **explicit "no harm" rule, both countries are bound by customary international law to prevent significant harm through due diligence**. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Pulp Mills case (2010) stressed the importance of conducting Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for transboundary projects, a principle that applies to India and Pakistan. Additionally, the principles of Equitable and Reasonable Utilisation (ERU), outlined in the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention, can guide both nations in addressing emerging challenges such as climate change and glacial depletion, which could reduce Indus river flows by 30-40%.

Given the lack of trust, renegotiating the treaty may be difficult. However, a practical approach could involve using the IWT's existing negotiation framework to establish a memorandum of understanding for joint engineering projects under Article VII.1c. This cooperative approach could help mitigate water variability caused by climate change while maintaining treaty obligations.

THE BRICS JOURNEY

GAINING HEFT WHILE IN TRANSITION

Rajiv Bhatia

There is a realisation now that increased membership has the potential to enhance the influence of this plurilateral grouping.



The BRICS 2024 summit in Kazan marked a significant shift in the grouping's trajectory. A year ago, Russian President Vladimir Putin made only a digital appearance at the BRICS summit due to an ICC-issued arrest warrant. This year, as the host, he dominated the proceedings, with discussions on Ukraine and West Asia taking a backseat.

The summit, the 16th since BRICS' inception in 2009, demonstrated resilience despite past challenges. **Internal strains, such as India-China border tensions and Russia's Ukraine invasion, had cast doubts on its future.** However, the expansion decision at the 2023 summit brought five new members—Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia—into the fold. Putin's revelation that 34 more nations are interested in joining reinforces BRICS' growing influence as a voice for the 'Global Majority.'

BRICS does not seek to replace the existing world order but aims to reform it for broader inclusivity. It operates on eight core principles, including sovereignty, democracy, and collaboration.

The grouping continues to push for comprehensive UN reform, advocating greater representation for Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the Security Council, though China remains hesitant about fully supporting India, Brazil, and South Africa's aspirations.

A key focus of the summit was economic cooperation. While the idea of a common currency remains under study, efforts to expand the use of local currencies in trade were reaffirmed. Saudi Arabia's reluctance to fully join BRICS has delayed large capital injections into the New Development Bank, but leaders stressed the bank's long-term vision.

On security, the summit strongly criticized Israel's actions in West Asia while calling for an independent Palestinian state, yet it avoided mentioning Hamas' October 7 attack. Regarding Ukraine, BRICS reiterated national positions, emphasizing dialogue and diplomacy without significant new initiatives.

An important outcome was the expansion strategy. The summit created a 'partner state' category and invited 13 countries across Latin America, Eurasia, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. This move will likely enhance BRICS' global economic and political weight.

For India, BRICS remains vital among its top plurilateral engagements, including the G-20, Quad, BIMSTEC, G-7, and SCO. The summit facilitated India-China negotiations on border patrolling, hinting at a possible thaw in relations. Strategically, BRICS strengthens India's global standing, allowing it to balance ties between the West and the Global South, reinforcing its role as a bridge between geopolitical blocs.

BRICS CHALLENGES



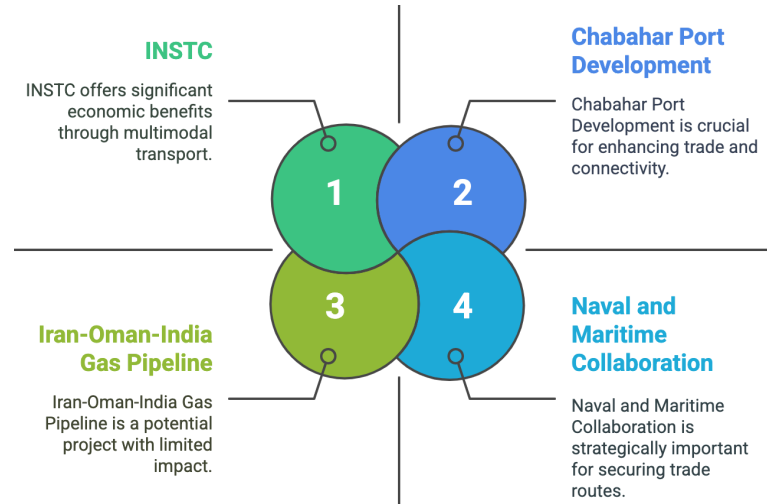
THE BRICS SUMMIT BOOST TO INDIA-IRAN TIES

Rajeev Agarwal

The 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan (October 22-24, 2024) facilitated key sideline meetings, including one between India and Iran. Iran, currently engaged in the Gaza conflict, sought India's support for de-escalation. **India, recognized globally for its balanced ties with both Israel and Iran, has been seen as a potential mediator.**

The meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian marked their first direct engagement. Both leaders acknowledged the strong but underutilized potential in bilateral ties. **Iran appreciated India's role in its entry into the SCO and BRICS and emphasized strengthening cooperation in key areas like the Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).** Iran's strategic importance to India extends beyond connectivity, as it holds vast reserves of crude oil and natural gas. Despite sanctions and conflicts, Iran's oil production and exports have remained significant.

The Chabahar port remains central to India-Iran ties, with a recently signed 10-year operational contract. The port, strategically located outside the Strait of Hormuz, ensures uninterrupted trade. The Chabahar-Zahedan railway and road links to Afghanistan further enhance regional connectivity. Reviving energy imports from Iran could help diversify India's supply.



Defense cooperation, though stalled due to sanctions, presents new opportunities. **Iran's advancements in drones and missile technology could benefit India.** Counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing could also be explored. **Naval collaboration** in the Persian Gulf could further enhance India's regional presence.

India's ability to maintain independent ties with adversarial nations, as seen in its Russia policy, strengthens its position with Iran.

However, diplomatic sensitivities remain, as seen in reactions to statements by Iran's Supreme Leader. Despite challenges, both nations recognize the need to revitalize their partnership. With Modi 3.0 focusing on West Asia, and Iran seeking stronger diplomatic ties, the BRICS meeting may have set the stage for deeper cooperation.

THE LAC AGREEMENT

THE DÉTENTES AND THE QUESTIONS

Suhasini Haidar

Two weeks after the surprise announcement of an India-China détente, a summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan on October 23, 2024, sealed the deal. The exchange of sweets between soldiers at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) signaled a thaw in relations. If sustained, this détente could pave the way for restoring border peace, reversing economic restrictions, easing visa processes, reinstating direct flights, and boosting trade.

While troop disengagement at Depsang and Demchok is reportedly complete, de-escalation and de-induction remain unresolved. The government has not clarified the new "patrolling arrangements," and reports of PLA access to Yangtse raise concerns. This lack of transparency echoes past instances, notably after the Galwan clashes in June 2020. **Despite reassurances, Chinese forces appear to have strengthened their positions along the LAC,** making a return to the pre-2020 status quo unlikely without dismantling buffer zones.

Three key questions emerge: Are the new patrolling arrangements different from past protocols? Will border agreements, including the 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement, be updated? How can India prevent a repeat of the post-Doklam scenario, where disengagement enabled Chinese infrastructure buildup? Moreover, why did China amass troops and transgress the LAC in 2020?

Scholars suggest four possible explanations.

First, Xi Jinping's 2014 policy of asserting control over all claimed territories, reflected in aggressive posturing across Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the Himalayas.

Second, a strategic message that India's maritime focus should not overshadow its continental vulnerabilities along the 3,500-km border with China.

Third, a reaction to India's border infrastructure expansion, including the Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) airstrip and road networks, which China sees as threats to its connectivity projects in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Ironically, if infrastructure concerns drove China's actions, they backfired, as India accelerated its own projects in response.

The fourth and perhaps most critical factor is **India's 2019 reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir,** which Beijing protested, particularly regarding Ladakh. Union Home Minister Amit Shah's assertion of reclaiming Aksai Chin heightened tensions, prompting diplomatic interventions. Despite attempts to clarify that India's move was internal, China's subsequent protests and military buildup in early 2020 suggest a direct link.

The détente follows other significant shifts: elections in Jammu and Kashmir and the likely restoration of statehood, negotiations with Ladakhi protestors over governance and employment, and diplomatic overtures toward Pakistan, as seen in External Affairs Minister Jaishankar's visit to Islamabad for the SCO summit. Whether these steps lead to broader regional openings remains uncertain.

For lasting stability, **India must ensure transparency in its border strategy.** A thorough assessment of the LAC crisis and its lessons is essential. Additionally, India's democratic framework necessitates accountability and informed public discourse on national security issues, distinguishing it from China's opaque governance model.

DEALING WITH THE CHINA QUESTION

C Raja Mohan

India will need to move much faster on the reform front than it has so far to cope with the massive gap in the defence capabilities with China as well as seize the international opportunity for the transformation of its defence industrial base.

India is actively reshaping its defence strategy, **emphasizing greater private sector participation in defence production and bolstering arms exports.** A high-level committee has also recommended restructuring the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to enhance efficiency and innovation.

Two recent defence agreements underscore India's growing security collaboration with Asian partners. **The air-to-air refueling agreement with Australia strengthens operational reach and interoperability,** while India's MoU with Japan on joint stealth technology production signals deeper defence industrial cooperation. These initiatives reflect the strategic imperative of countering China's expanding military dominance and enhancing India's defence modernization efforts.

China's assertive military posture and substantial defence investments—evidenced by its production of 70 submarines between 1995 and 2020—have fueled security concerns across Asia. **The widening military gap between China and its neighbours has led to increased regional security cooperation with the United States.** While China continues to push its "Asia for Asians" rhetoric, many Asian nations recognize the need for external balancing to prevent Chinese regional hegemony.

Despite retaining qualitative superiority, the US military faces challenges in countering China's growing numerical strength. With commitments across multiple theatres—Europe, the Middle East, and Asia—Washington's ability to sustain military dominance in the Indo-Pacific is under strain.

Additionally, **America's ageing military-industrial complex struggles to meet rising global weapons demands**, prompting the US to collaborate with allies like Japan and South Korea to modernize defence production.

The evolving global defence landscape presents India with an **opportunity to modernize its defence production system**. India has already signed industrial roadmaps with the US and France, with similar negotiations underway with Italy. Expanding private sector involvement and reorganizing the DRDO will be crucial for bridging India's defence capability gap with China.

To capitalize on these strategic shifts, India must accelerate its defence reforms, expand military diplomacy, and position itself as a key player in the evolving global defence supply chain.



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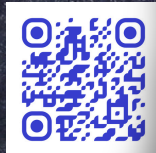
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75 YEARS OF INDIA'S CONSTITUTION

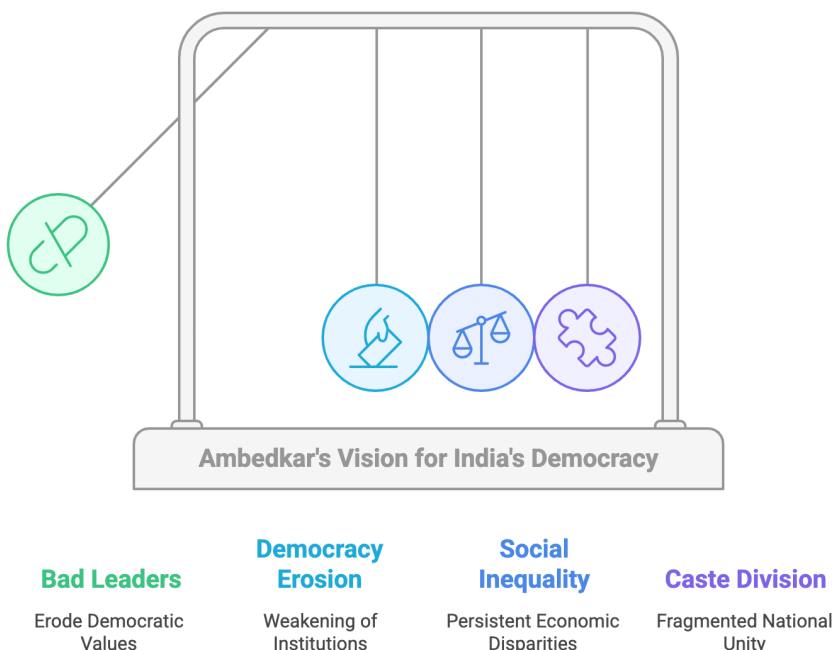
The Constitution as a Guiding Light Ambedkar had warned that independence came with responsibilities—Indians could no longer blame the British for governance failures. Today, as we celebrate 75 years of the Constitution, the challenge remains to ensure that democracy thrives not just in form but in substance. Upholding the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as envisioned by Ambedkar, is the real tribute to the Constitution's legacy.

This month marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of India's Constitution on November 26, 1949. The government plans to commemorate this historic moment with a special joint sitting of Parliament, filled with self-congratulatory speeches. However, the most important speech to recall is that of B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution, delivered on November 25, 1949. In his final address to the Constituent Assembly, **Ambedkar issued a stark warning: a good Constitution could fail in the hands of bad leaders**, whereas even a flawed Constitution could succeed if implemented by good leaders. The functioning of the Constitution, he emphasized, depended on its custodians and their commitment to democracy.

Ambedkar's Key Concerns: The 'Contradictions' in Indian Society

Ambedkar identified two major deficiencies in Indian society: absence of equality and fraternity. He warned that India would enter a life of contradictions—while political equality (universal suffrage) was ensured, social and economic inequalities would persist. He posed the fundamental question: How long can India sustain this contradiction?

- **Equality:** The Constitution granted the principle of “one man, one vote,” but caste and economic inequalities ensured that society denied the principle of one man, one value.
- **Fraternity:** Ambedkar argued that fraternity was essential for national unity but was undermined by caste divisions, religious differences, and lack of a shared national identity. Without fraternity, neither liberty nor equality could survive independently.



Progress and Persistent Challenges

Seventy-five years later, significant progress has been made in some areas, but Ambedkar's concerns remain partially unaddressed:

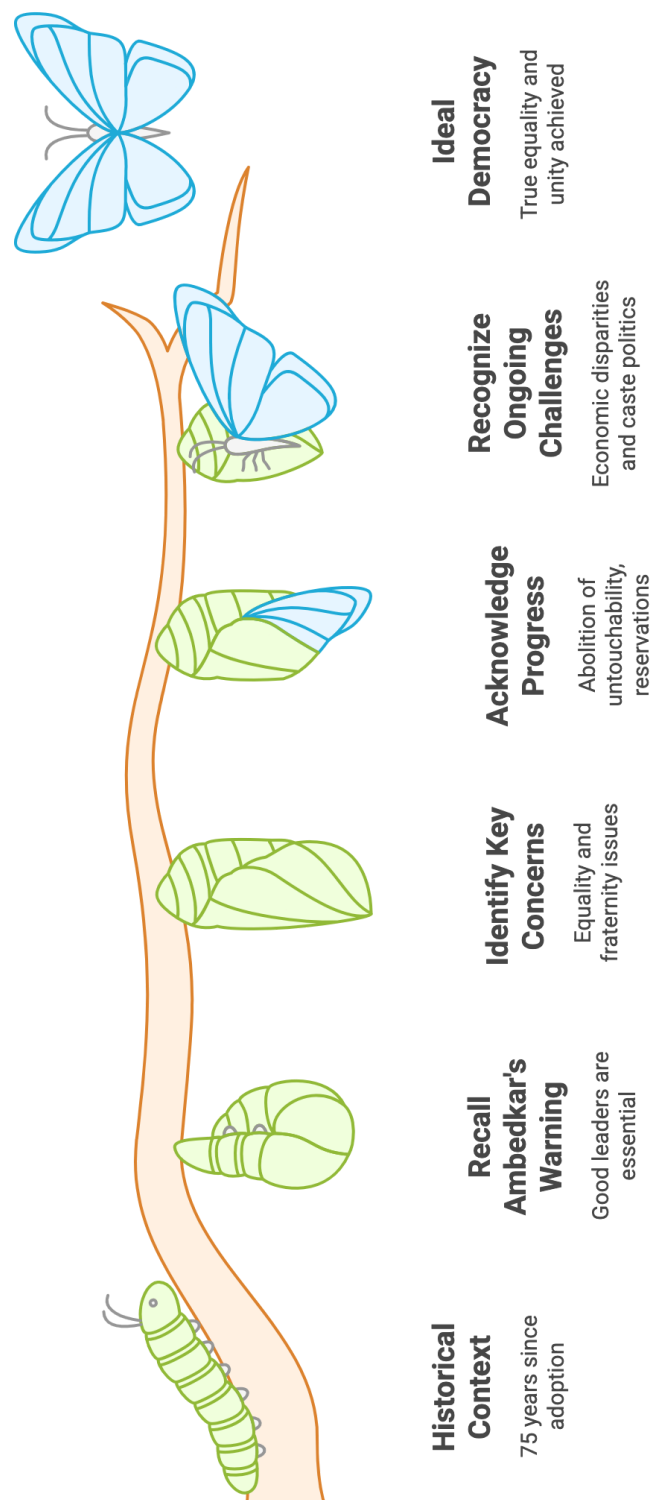
- **Equality:** The abolition of untouchability and the introduction of reservations (affirmative action) for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have been major steps toward social justice. However, economic disparities and demands for a caste census indicate that the struggle for social and economic equality is far from over.
- **Fraternity:** Despite India's political unity, caste-based politics, regionalism, and communal tensions continue to hinder national fraternity. The politicization of caste identity, especially post-Mandal era reservations for OBCs, has entrenched caste rather than eradicating it.

The Irony of the Present Political Order

Despite initial opposition to the Constitution from right-wing political groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Jana Sangh, today's ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), now celebrates it. **While the Constitution remains the foundation of India's democracy, concerns have emerged over:**

- The erosion of democratic institutions,
- Diminishing role of Parliament,
- Judicial pressures, and
- The rise of electoral autocracy as flagged by global democracy indices.

As India marks 75 years of its Constitution, B.R. Ambedkar's warning remains relevant—a good Constitution fails under bad leaders. He highlighted India's contradictions, where political equality exists, but social and economic inequalities persist, undermining fraternity. Despite progress like abolishing untouchability and reservations, caste-based politics and economic disparities remain. Ironically, groups that once opposed the Constitution now celebrate it, even as concerns grow over democratic erosion and rising electoral autocracy.



FEMINIST IDEOLOGY IN INDIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE

Faisal C.K.

The term 'founding fathers' used for the makers of the Indian Constitution reflects a patriarchal bias, overlooking the contributions of eminent women in the Constituent Assembly. Achyut Chetan, in *Founding Mothers of the Indian Republic* (2022), highlights that women members actively shaped constitutional debates, carrying forward the feminist movement through their will, consent, and dissent. Christine Keating, in *Framing the Postcolonial Sexual Contract* (2007), argues that while the framers granted women equality in the public sphere, they simultaneously upheld discriminatory personal laws, subjugating women within the family to maintain political consensus.

Breaking the Patriarchal Framework

The 'founding mothers' collaborated with B.R. Ambedkar, challenging the deeply entrenched Brahmanical patriarchy. Leaders like Amrit Kaur rejected male-defined moral and ethical standards, striving for gender justice both within and beyond the Assembly. Their vision of Fundamental Rights extended beyond state restrictions to counter oppressive structures like religion and family. Hansa Mehta and Amrit Kaur advocated for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to curtail patriarchal dominance, ensuring that the Directive Principles remained central to governance.

Secularism and Women's Rights

Women leaders, particularly Hansa Mehta and Begum Aizaz Rasul, emphasized secularism as a constitutional pillar. Mehta sought to limit unregulated religious rights to safeguard gender equality, proposing 'freedom of religious worship' instead of the 'free practice of religion.' Amrit Kaur's dissent on 'Freedom of Religion' underscored the dangers of unrestricted religious autonomy, arguing that it could invalidate progressive reforms like the Widow Remarriage Act and Sarda Act. However, religious rights ultimately overshadowed women's right to equality, reflecting the limitations of the postcolonial state in addressing gender justice.

Unfulfilled Promises and the Struggle Ahead

Despite constitutional guarantees, gender equality remains elusive. The *Towards Equality* (1974) report concluded that India had failed to fulfill its commitment to women's rights. While women have gained political representation, feminist constitutionalism has weakened due to the absence of strong feminist stateswomen and jurists. The UCC, envisioned as a tool for gender justice, remains a deferred promise. The legacy of the 'founding mothers' demands recognition and action to fulfill the constitutional commitment to gender equality.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA IS ONE OF THE GREATEST GIFTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The institution has stood the test of time and lived up to the trust of the nation as a powerful watchdog of democracy, some temporary hiccups notwithstanding.

November 26, 1949, marked a crucial milestone in India's history as the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution. **Recognizing that free and fair elections were essential to democracy**, the Assembly enacted 16 election-related articles two months before the Constitution came into force. **Article 324 established the Election Commission of India (ECI)**, which was set up on January 25, 1950—just a day before India became a sovereign democratic republic. To ensure electoral independence, Article 329 barred judicial interference in the election process.

A major debate in the Constituent Assembly revolved around whether state elections should be managed by state commissions or the central ECI. In a significant departure from federal principles, **B.R. Ambedkar advocated for central control to prevent discrimination by provincial governments against linguistic, racial, or cultural minorities.**

Indian elections have earned global admiration, with The New York Times calling them “the greatest show on Earth.” However, despite well-conducted elections, democracy in India faces challenges such as illiteracy, gender disparities, corruption, attacks on civil liberties, and political culture. Judicial interventions have reinforced free and fair elections as part of the Constitution's basic structure.

In 2024, the Supreme Court struck down electoral bonds as unconstitutional, dismantling a system that had legalized crony capitalism

Women's electoral participation has improved due to ECI efforts, with the gender ratio of registered voters rising from 928 per 1,000 men in 2019 to 948 in 2024, and the gender gap in voter turnout nearly disappearing. The NDA government's move to reserve 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures (effective from 2029) is a step forward, but legislative representation remains inadequate.

Despite progress, **challenges like the rise of black money and criminalization in politics persist.** In 2024, 46% of MPs had criminal cases, and 93% were crorepatists. Political defections remain a concern, as the Anti-Defection Law (1985) has proven ineffective. The ECI has repeatedly called for reforms such as a cap on party expenditures, state funding of political parties with independent audits, and the creation of a National Election Fund to regulate donations.

Structural weaknesses in the Election Commission's appointment process also remain, with the 2023 Act failing to secure Election Commissioners' independence from government influence. Nevertheless, the ECI remains one of the Constitution's greatest achievements, having safeguarded democracy despite periodic challenges. Strengthening cooperation between the executive, legislature, and judiciary is essential for India to evolve from being the largest democracy to the greatest.



"WORDS CAN NOT EXPRESS THE GRATITUDE WE HAVE FOR SIR"



"I COULD NEVER EXPECT TO LEARN SO MUCH IN MY OWN GRADUATION SUBJECT"



"SIR SHOULD START WRITING RAHUL MANDALA COLUMN IN NEWSPAPERS"



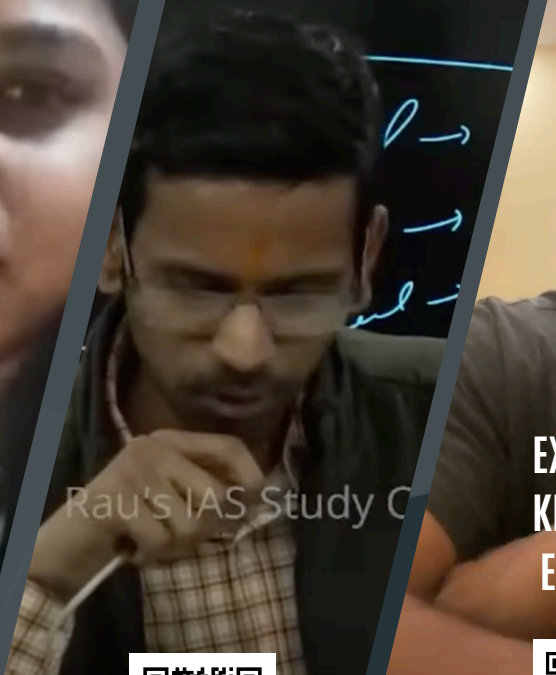
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