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MCQs

THE HINDU

A unilateral America in a post-unipolar world

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Why in Focus?

- The **25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks provides an opportunity to assess how the U.S.-led "War on Terror" reshaped West Asia and influenced the transition from a unipolar to a more multipolar world order.**

Key Highlights

- After 9/11 (2001), the **U.S. launched the "Global War on Terror", beginning with the military intervention in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.**
- The **U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 diverted attention from al-Qaeda** and allowed the Taliban to regroup in Afghanistan.
- The **instability in Iraq contributed to the rise of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which later evolved into ISIS.**
- The **fall of Saddam Hussein reduced Iraq's role as a buffer against Iran**, allowing Iranian influence in Iraq and the wider region to grow.

- The **2011 NATO intervention in Libya overthrew Muammar Gaddafi but contributed to state collapse**, weapons proliferation and the spread of jihadist groups across the Sahel.
- The **U.S. eventually negotiated with the Taliban and signed the Doha Agreement 2020, leading to the withdrawal of U.S. troops**; the Taliban returned to Kabul on August 15, 2021.
- The **post-9/11 period has seen the rise of China as a major global power, renewed Russian challenges in Europe and increasing instability in West Asia**, contributing to a shift towards a multipolar world order.

Implications for the Global Order

- Terrorist organisations have become more decentralised** and geographically dispersed.
- Continued conflicts in West Asia and Europe** limit global stability.
- Growing U.S.-China strategic rivalry** is increasing geopolitical competition.
- The **weakening of traditional alliances and growing transactionalism** have created uncertainty.

Transactionalism means conducting relationships mainly on the basis of immediate benefits and exchanges rather than long-term shared values or commitments.

- Existing international institutions face difficulties in addressing new security challenges** and geopolitical conflicts.



Way Forward

- **Prioritise diplomacy, conflict prevention and political solutions** over prolonged military interventions.
- **Strengthen international cooperation against terrorism** while addressing its political, economic and social drivers.
- **Support state-building and institutional capacity** in conflict-affected countries.
- **Strengthen multilateral institutions and promote reformed multilateralism** to reflect emerging global power realities.
- **Encourage dialogue among major powers to manage U.S.-China** and Russia-West tensions and prevent further fragmentation.

Mains Question

The post-9/11 “War on Terror” altered global geopolitics but failed to eliminate terrorism. Examine its major geopolitical consequences and discuss how the emerging multipolar world order can promote greater international stability. (250 words)

The global war on terror, an empowered Iran

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

Why in Focus?

- The focus is on **how the U.S.-led War on Terror unintentionally strengthened Iran by removing its hostile neighbours, creating power vacuums** and expanding its regional network of allies.

Key Highlights

- **Before 2001, Iran was strategically contained by two hostile regimes:** the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.
- **U.S. interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) removed both regimes, improving Iran’s strategic position.**

- In Iraq, **the fall of the Sunni-led Saddam regime enabled a Shia-led government with close ties to Iran to emerge.**
- **Regional instability fuelled Shia-Sunni sectarian conflicts, creating space for proxy warfare** and strengthening Iran’s influence.
- The **rise of ISIS pushed Iran to become a major actor in the fight against terrorism**, increasing its military and political influence in Iraq and Syria.
- **Iran developed the “Axis of Resistance”,** a network of political and armed groups across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine.
- **Through groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis and Shia militias in Iraq,** Iran built an asymmetric regional strategy to counter the U.S. and Israel.
- The **IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), particularly its Quds Force, became central to managing Iran’s regional networks and proxy warfare.**

Proxy warfare is a conflict in which a country supports another group or country to fight its opponent indirectly, instead of fighting the opponent directly.

Implications

- **Proxy conflicts have increased regional instability** and sectarian tensions.
- **Iran’s growing network has intensified U.S.-Iran and Iran-Israel rivalry.**
- **Armed groups operating across borders complicate regional security** and state sovereignty.
- Continued conflicts **create risks of a wider West Asian war.**
- **Iran’s reliance on asymmetric warfare limits** the possibility of conventional security arrangements.

Asymmetric warfare is a conflict between opponents with unequal military strength, where the weaker side uses unconventional tactics to overcome the stronger side’s advantages.

Way Forward

- **Promote regional dialogue and confidence-**

building measures among Iran, Arab states and Israel.

- **Address conflicts through political and diplomatic solutions** rather than prolonged military interventions.
- **Strengthen sovereign state institutions in countries** affected by proxy conflicts.
- **Develop regional mechanisms for counter-terrorism** and conflict prevention.
- **Encourage an inclusive West Asian security framework** that addresses the interests of Iran, Arab states, Israel and other regional actors.

Mains Question

The U.S.-led War on Terror unintentionally contributed to the rise of Iran as a dominant regional power in West Asia. Examine the factors behind Iran's growing influence and its implications for regional stability. (250 words)

How should RUPPs be regulated?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 2

Salient features of the Representation of People's Act

Why in Focus?

- A **BBC News Hindi investigation** found that six Gujarat-based **Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** received around **₹1,700 crore in donations in 2023-24**, raising concerns about financial transparency.
- India had over **2,800 RUPPs** as of July 2025, but only around **750 contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections**, raising concerns about the misuse of tax exemptions and other benefits.

Key Highlights

- **Political parties are an association or body** of individuals that can be **formed by citizens**.
- **Section 29A of the Representation of the**

People Act, 1951 lays down the requirements for registration of a political party with the Election Commission (EC).

- A RUPP is a party that is **formally registered with the ECI** but **does not qualify for the status** of a recognised state party or national party.
- RUPPs receive benefits such as **tax exemption on donations**, a **common election symbol** and up to **20 star campaigners**.
- RUPPs must report details of individual donors contributing more than **₹20,000 in a financial year** to the EC.
- Donations above **₹2,000** must be received through **cheque or bank transfer**.
- India had over **2,800 RUPPs** as of July, but only around **750 contested the 2024 elections**, leading to the term "**letter pad parties**" for the rest.
- The **RP Act does not explicitly empower the EC to de-register** parties for failing to contest elections, hold **inner-party elections** or submit required returns.
- In **Indian National Congress vs Institute of Social Welfare (2002)**, the Supreme Court held that the EC generally does not have the power to de-register political parties.
 - ◆ Except in circumstances such as **fraudulent registration**, loss of allegiance to the **Constitution**, or being declared **unlawful** by the government.
- According to an **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** report, annual reports of only around **26% of RUPPs** were available in the public domain in July 2025.

Implications

- Weak monitoring of RUPPs can undermine **transparency and accountability in political funding**.
- Poor compliance and lack of transparency can allow some RUPPs to become channels for **tax evasion, money laundering and other illegal financial activities**.
- Lack of public access to annual reports reduces **public scrutiny of political donations and finances**.
- The absence of clear de-registration powers



creates a regulatory gap for dealing with **non-serious political parties**.

- At the same time, **overly strict eligibility conditions could disadvantage smaller parties that contest elections** genuinely but do not win seats.

Way Forward

- The **Law Commission**, in its 255th report, had recommended **amendments for de-registration of a political party** if it fails to contest elections for ten consecutive years.
- Strengthen monitoring of **donations, financial returns and tax exemptions** through greater coordination between the EC, Income Tax Department and enforcement agencies.
- Improve **public disclosure and transparency** of RUPP annual reports and political donations.
- Instead of restricting tax exemptions only to parties that win seats, consider a **reasonable vote-share threshold** for RUPPs to qualify for such exemptions.
- Use **digital financial monitoring** to detect suspicious transactions and prevent misuse of political parties for money laundering.

Mains Question

The regulation of Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) highlights the challenges of ensuring transparency and accountability in political funding in India. Discuss the existing gaps and suggest reforms to strengthen the electoral regulatory framework. **(250 words)**

Why India must rethink the way it values skills, jobs and productive work

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 3

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Why in Focus?

- India's rapid economic growth is facing the risk of a **middle-income trap**, where growth slows before achieving high-income status due to weak productivity, inadequate job creation and limited innovation.
- The issue highlights the need to move from **factor-driven growth to productivity- and innovation-driven growth**.

Key Highlights

- The **middle-income trap** occurs when a country grows rapidly using cheap labour and basic technologies but later struggles to move towards a **high-income, innovation-driven economy**.
- India's growth is increasingly becoming **job-poor**. Manufacturing has not created enough jobs, while growth has been concentrated in large companies and the digital economy.
- **Private investment remains weak**, wage growth is stagnant and household consumption is under pressure. This creates a cycle of low demand, low investment and limited job creation.
- India spends only around **0.65% of GDP on Research and Development (R&D)**. Technology adoption is also concentrated in a few advanced sectors rather than spreading across the wider economy.
- India faces a serious **skill gap**. Less than **3% of the workforce** has formal vocational education. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) also face low enrolment and limited employment outcomes.
- Social attitudes often give greater respect to university degrees than technical skills such as **welding, plumbing, carpentry and machining**. This reduces the supply of skilled workers needed for manufacturing.
- Countries such as **South Korea and China** escaped the middle-income trap by investing heavily in education, technical skills, health, industrial capacity and the diffusion of technology.

Implications

- **Jobless growth** can increase inequality when productivity gains benefit mainly capital-intensive industries and highly skilled workers.
- **Skill mismatch** creates a situation where



educated youth struggle to find suitable jobs while industries face shortages of skilled workers.

- **Low productivity** limits wage growth and makes Indian firms less competitive in global markets.
- Limited **technology diffusion** means that productivity improvements remain concentrated among a small number of large and advanced firms.
- Weak public services such as **education and healthcare** can reduce human capital and limit the ability of workers to participate in productive sectors.
- The combination of **low productivity, weak employment and inequality** can reduce consumption and investment, making sustained high growth more difficult.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **vocational and technical education** by modernising ITIs, improving apprenticeships and linking training directly with industry requirements.
- Promote **labour-intensive manufacturing and productive employment** so that economic growth creates jobs on a larger scale.
- Increase **R&D investment** and ensure that new technologies reach Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) rather than remaining concentrated in a few advanced sectors.
- Improve **mass education, healthcare and basic public services** to build a healthier and more skilled workforce.
- Change the social perception of technical work by giving **greater dignity and economic recognition to skilled occupations** and encouraging occupational mobility.

Mains Question

India's rapid economic growth has not been accompanied by adequate employment and productivity growth. Discuss the factors that may push India towards a middle-income trap and suggest measures to overcome it. (15 marks, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

North American Free Trade Agreement.

- NAFTA was **signed in 1992 by the United States, Canada and Mexico and came into effect on 1 January 1994.**
- It **aimed to eliminate tariffs and trade barriers and promote trade, investment and economic integration** among the three countries.
- **NAFTA was one of the world's major regional trade blocs**, covering a market of over 400 million people at its inception.
- NAFTA was **criticised for manufacturing job losses, wage stagnation, weak labour and environmental protections**, and unequal distribution of benefits.
- It **was replaced by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) in 2020**, which introduced stronger labour and environmental standards and updated rules on digital trade and automobiles.

Yudh Abhyas 2026

- **Yudh Abhyas 2026** is the **22nd edition** of the annual **India-US bilateral military exercise.**
- The exercise is being held from **9–28 September 2026** at **Bikaner, Rajasthan, and Auli, Uttarakhand.**
- It focuses on **high-altitude warfare, long-range precision fires, counter-drone capabilities and operational interoperability.**
- **Arctic-trained US Army soldiers from Alaska** are participating in high-altitude training in India, along with the US Army's **3rd Multi-Domain Task Force.**
- The 2026 edition marks the **first deployment of advanced counter-drone systems to India** as part of the exercise.

Places in News

Zuqar Island



- **Yemeni Houthi rebels recently seized control of Zuqar Island** in the Red Sea as part of a wider offensive that also included the capture of the strategic port city of Mokha and advances towards the critical **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**.
- Zuqar is a **rugged, volcanic island** of about **130 sq km** in the Hanish Archipelago of the southern Red Sea. It lies on the **Asian continental shelf**, between mainland Yemen and Eritrea.
- Its location close to the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait** places it alongside major international shipping routes. Its highest peak, at **624 metres**, provides an important vantage point for **visual and electronic surveillance** of maritime traffic.
- Ownership of Zuqar and the wider Hanish Archipelago was disputed between **Yemen and Eritrea**, leading to the **1995 Hanish Islands conflict**. In 1998, the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)** at The Hague awarded Zuqar and the larger islands to Yemen.
- Before the recent Houthi takeover, **satellite imagery from late 2025** showed the near-completion of a secretive **2-km-long airstrip** on the island.
- The airstrip could significantly improve the island's capacity for **military logistics, troop movement and drone operations**, increasing its strategic importance in the Red Sea region.

Mokha

- **Mokha** is a historic port town in **southwestern Yemen**, located on the **Red Sea** and the **Tihamah coastal plain**.
- It was historically famous as a major **coffee-exporting centre** of Arabia and gave its name to **"mocha" coffee**.
- Mokha is an important port near the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, a strategic maritime passage connecting the **Red Sea and Gulf of Aden**.
- Its modern port was established in **1955** and served as a **minor logistics and military hub** between the major commercial ports of **Aden and Hodeidah**.
- In **September 2026**, the town was reported to have been **captured by Houthi rebels**.



Species In News

Indian Peafowl

- **Indian Peafowl**, scientifically known as *Pavo cristatus*, is currently in the news as the upcoming **Kerala Bird Atlas 2.0** highlights its rapid expansion into Kerala. This may indicate that the State's historically **dense and humid ecosystem is undergoing aridification**, with a shift towards dry, open landscapes.
- It has the **highest level of domestic legal protection** under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**. Globally, it is classified as **Least Concern (LC)** on the **IUCN Red List** due to its widespread and stable population.
- While commonly referred to as "peacocks" in general conversation, the correct species term is **Peafowl**. The term **Peacock** refers to the male bird, while the female is the **Peahen**, and the offspring are called **Peachicks**.
- The Indian Peafowl was officially declared the **National Bird of India in 1963**, mainly because of its wide distribution across India and its deep association with the country's **cultural and mythological traditions**.
- While **native to the Indian subcontinent** and naturally preferring **dry, semi-arid plains, thorn scrub and forest edges**, the recent expansion of Indian Peafowl into traditionally **wet regions** is being viewed by ecologists as a **bio-indicator of regional climate change and increasing aridity**.
- The species shows clear **sexual dimorphism**. Males have a long, iridescent **train of upper-tail covert feathers** with characteristic eyespots, which they display during courtship. Females have **mottled brown and cryptic colouring**, which provides camouflage while **nesting on the ground**.

