

International law, 'optional' for powerful states

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.

1. Erosion of the International Rules-Based Order

- **International law** was created through treaties and institutions such as the **Hague Conventions, Geneva Conventions, UNCLOS**, and **human rights agreements** to maintain global peace and stability.
- In recent years, many countries have **broken international rules without facing punishment**, which has **reduced trust in the international institutions**.
- International law is becoming less effective because **power politics** is increasingly overriding **legal principles**.

2. Major Violations of International Law

Use of Force and Sovereignty

- **Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2022)** and the **U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran (2026)** are cited as major violations of the **UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force**.
- Other examples include the **2003 Iraq invasion by US, Türkiye's actions in Syria, Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh**, and **Ethiopia's actions in Tigray**.

Violations of Maritime Law (UNCLOS)

- **China's "Nine-Dash Line" claim** in the **South China Sea** has been rejected internationally but continues to be **enforced through coercive actions**.
- Disputes and tanker seizures in the **Strait of Hormuz** have undermined the principle of **freedom of navigation**.

3. Humanitarian, Human Rights and Environmental Concerns

Humanitarian Law Violations

- Conflicts in **Syria, Yemen**, and **Tigray** have witnessed **chemical weapon use**, attacks on civilians, mass killings, sexual violence, and starvation tactics.
- Non-state actors such as **ISIS** have also committed large-scale atrocities.

Human Rights Violations

- Allegations include:
 - ➔ **Israel's actions in Gaza**
 - ➔ **China's treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang**
 - ➔ **Myanmar's actions against the Rohingya**
 - ➔ **Iran's suppression of protests after Mahsa Amini's death**
 - ➔ **U.S. torture practices during the "War on Terror"**

Environmental Law Failures

- Countries have failed to meet commitments under the **Paris Agreement**.
- **Deforestation in the Amazon** and poorly regulated **deep-sea mining** threaten biodiversity and marine ecosystems.

4. Causes, Consequences and the Way Forward

Why Enforcement is Weak

- The **UN Security Council** is often paralysed by geopolitical rivalries.
- The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** faces jurisdictional limitations and accusations of bias.
- Many international agreements rely on **voluntary compliance** rather than strong enforcement mechanisms.

Consequences

- More frequent and prolonged **conflicts**.
- Greater suffering for **civilians**.
- Degradation of **global commons** such as oceans and the environment.
- Declining **trust among nations**.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **multilateral institutions** and **accountability mechanisms**.
- Promote a global political culture that values **restraint, cooperation, and respect for international norms**.
- Reaffirm the importance of **international law** as the best available framework for maintaining global order and preventing chaos.

'Off with their heads' – the purge of Republican dissenters

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.

1. Context

- **Foreign observers, including Indians**, question why Republicans do not oppose **Donald Trump's (US President) controversial policies**, drawing parallels with **India's "high command" politics**.
- The U.S. system traditionally emphasized **grassroots candidate selection**, but is now shifting toward **centralized, leader-driven control**.
- This shift was evident in **Kentucky's 4th Congressional District**, where **Thomas Massie (Politician)** faced a **\$32-million proxy political battle** backed by Trump.
- The election became a **test of loyalty within the Republican Party**.

2. Culture of Fear

- **Opposing Trump carries career-ending risks**, creating a **climate of fear** within the party.
- **Bill Cassidy's (US Senator) defeat** after supporting Trump's impeachment highlights this trend.

- Leaders like **Lindsey Graham** acknowledge that dissent leads to **political destruction**.
- Trump's influence over the **party base, funding, and public opinion** ensures conformity.
- Even minor criticism can result in **loss of support and funding**, discouraging dissent.

3. Massie Episode & Trumpian Backlash

- **Thomas Massie**, a **libertarian Republican**, is known for **independent voting** and constitutional rigidity.
- Key disagreements with Trump:
 - ➔ Opposed **"One Big Beautiful Bill"** citing **debt and inflation concerns**.
 - ➔ Pushed for release of **Jeffrey Epstein files**.
 - ➔ Criticized **U.S. involvement with Iran** (anti-interventionist stance).
- Trump publicly attacked him and backed **Ed Gallrein** to defeat him.
- The campaign became **toxic and highly funded**, with support from **AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee)** and donors like **Miriam Adelson and Paul Singer**.
- **AIPAC spent \$9 million** portraying Massie as anti-Israel.
- Massie countered by proposing to **classify AIPAC as foreign agents**.
- Despite **strong local popularity**, **Massie lost**, showing limits of independence.

4. Implications (U.S. & India)

- **Loyalty is replacing ideological independence** within the Republican Party.
- The party is becoming **centralized and leader-dominated**, reducing **internal dissent**.
- Growing coordination between **executive, donors, and lobbies** weakens **checks and balances**.
- For politicians, **alignment with Trump is key to survival**.
- Broader concern: **shrinking intra-party democracy**, not just partisan conflict.
- **For India:**
 - ➔ A less predictable U.S. may affect **global stability and foreign policy consistency**.

⊖ Concentration of power could impact **India's strategic and economic interests**.

- Strengthening **institutional checks and intra-party democracy**, along with ensuring **transparency in political funding and lobbying**, is essential to preserve democratic balance and policy stability.

Concrete fever: On India and heat management

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
- Disaster and disaster management

1. Intensifying Heatwaves in India

- **Sri Ganganagar (Rajasthan) recorded 48°C, the highest temperature** in India this year so far.
- **Heatwave frequency has increased by 0.1 days per decade** since 1961.

A **heatwave is a period of abnormally high temperatures** over a region for at least **two consecutive days**, as defined by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

- **Heatwave duration has increased by 0.55 days** per decade.
- The **Core Heatwave Zone covers about 30% of India's land** area.
- The **period 2015–2025 was the warmest 11-year stretch on record**.

2. Climate Change and Rising Temperatures

- Climate change is a major driver of extreme heat events.
- Rising greenhouse gas emissions have increased global temperatures.
- Heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense.
- Delayed monsoons can aggravate summer heat conditions.
- **The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) links recent warming trends to human-induced climate change.**

3. Urban Heat Island Effect

- **Indian cities are 2°C–10°C hotter** than nearby rural areas.
- **Concrete and asphalt trap and radiate** heat.
- **Loss of trees and green spaces** reduces natural cooling.
- **Urbanisation has increased** heat retention in cities.
- **Sealed surfaces have contributed to rising humidity** levels.

4. Air Conditioning: A Double-Edged Sword

- **Air conditioners provide relief** mainly to indoor workers.
- Outdoor workers and street vendors **remain vulnerable**.
- **ACs release waste heat** into the surroundings.
- **Increased AC use can worsen** urban temperatures.
- Technological fixes alone cannot solve the heat crisis.

5. Need for Long-Term Heat Management

- **Increase urban green cover** and tree plantations.
- **Promote reflective and climate-resilient building** materials.
- **Update building codes** to suit changing climatic conditions.
- **Enforce labour laws restricting outdoor work** during extreme heat.
- **Create dedicated budget allocations** for heat management and adaptation.

KEYWORDS

MAUSAM Journal

- **MAUSAM**, formerly known as the **Indian Journal of Meteorology, Hydrology & Geophysics**, was established in **January 1950** by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- It is a **quarterly international research journal** that publishes **original scientific research** in the fields of **Meteorology, Hydrology, Geophysics, and allied sciences**.
- Recognized as a **premier Indian scientific journal**, it holds a **prestigious position among contemporary scientific research publications**

Directorate of Enforcement (ED)

- The **Directorate of Enforcement (ED)** was established in **1956** with its headquarters in **New Delhi**.
- It is responsible for enforcing the **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)** and investigating and prosecuting offences under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**.
- The Directorate is under the **administrative control of the Department of Revenue** for operational purposes.
- Policy matters relating to the **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)** are handled by the **Department of Economic Affairs**, while policy issues concerning the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)** fall under the **Department of Revenue**.
- Before **FEMA** came into force on **1 June 2000**, the Directorate enforced the provisions of the **Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 (FERA)**.

Babesia Infection

- Babesia is a **genus of microscopic protozoan parasites that infect red blood cells and cause the disease babesiosis**.
- The infection is **mainly transmitted through the bite of infected Ixodes (deer) ticks, which also spread Lyme disease**.

- It **commonly affects animals such as cattle, dogs, and wild mammals, but humans can also be infected** in tick-prone regions.
- Symptoms range from mild fever and fatigue to severe anemia due to the destruction of red blood cells.
- In severe cases, babesiosis **can lead to complications such as respiratory failure, kidney failure, liver damage, and heart problems**.
- Two lion cubs **recently died in the region of Gir National Park** due to a suspected Babesia infection.

Mission Aspides

- Mission Aspides is a **defensive naval operation launched by the European Union in February 2024 to protect commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and northwestern Indian Ocean**.
- It was **established in response to attacks on merchant vessels by Iran-backed Houthi rebels** during the Red Sea crisis.
- The mission has a **strict defensive mandate, allowing its vessels to use force only in self-defence and not for pre-emptive strikes**.
- Its **operational headquarters is located in Larissa, with contributions from countries including France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium**.
- The operation **was extended until 28 February 2027 to ensure the security of international maritime trade routes**.

Places in News

Guatemala



- Guatemala is a country in **Central America**, bordered by Mexico, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, the Pacific Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea.
- It is located in a **tectonically active region** and is known for volcanoes such as Volcán de Fuego, Pacaya, and Santa María.
- Guatemala was an **important center of the ancient Maya civilization**, and the archaeological site of Tikal is world-famous.
- **India and Guatemala established diplomatic relations in 1972**, with cooperation in trade, culture, and development.
- Guatemala is **highly vulnerable to natural disasters** such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and climate-induced droughts.

Hami ICBM Silo Site

- The **Hami ICBM Silo Site** is a large missile field located near Hami in the China autonomous region of Xinjiang.
- The site is **designed to accommodate approximately 110 Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) silos**.

- It forms **part of China's broader nuclear modernization programme**, alongside the **Yumen and Ordos** (Inner Mongolia) missile fields.
- The site is expected to host advanced ICBMs such as the DF-41, which is capable of carrying Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs).



Ningbo (Zhejiang Province, China)



- **Ningbo is a major port city** located in the southern manufacturing heartland of Zhejiang province, about **200 km south of Shanghai**, making it strategically important for trade.
- It has a **deep historical legacy**, emerging as a **key maritime centre during the 7th-century Tang Dynasty**, and evolving into a **cultural hub** with landmarks like the **Temple of King Ashoka**.
- In the contemporary economy, Ningbo functions as a **critical anchor of China's green industrial transition**, serving as a **major manufacturing and export hub for high-end Electric Vehicles (EVs)**.

- The city demonstrates **advanced industrial automation** through “**future factories**”, where **60-70% of operations (e.g., welding)** are performed by **autonomous robotics**, enhancing efficiency and supply-chain agility.
- Ningbo represents a **model of ecological retrofitting**, where **polluting industries (e.g., Ningbo Iron and Steel Company)** have been transformed through **state-led investments**, achieving **zero-solid-waste targets** and **real-time, data-driven environmental monitoring**.

