



## The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Wednesday, 09 Oct , 2024

### Edition: International | Table of Contents

Page 01 <b>Syllabus : Prelims Fact</b>	PSLV C-37 rocket body re-enters the earth's atmosphere ISRO
Page 10 <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International relations</b>	What does USCIRF report say about India?
Page 10 <b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Indian Economy</b>	The Indian textile and apparel sector aims to achieve a \$350 billion annual business by 2030, generating 3.5 crore jobs
Page 11 <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</b>	Global Digital Compact advancing digital innovation in a sustainable fashion
<b>Report In News</b>	Global Water Resource Report 2023
Page 08 : Editorial Analysis: <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International relations</b>	<b>From solidarity to pseud, India's shift on Palestine</b>

The PSLV-C37 upper stage re-entered Earth's atmosphere, marking a significant milestone in ISRO's commitment to space debris mitigation.

- Launched in 2017, it carried 104 satellites, with its re-entry tracked and compliant with international debris guidelines.

**Analysis of the news:**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that the upper stage of the PSLV-C37 rocket re-entered Earth's atmosphere on Sunday.
- The PSLV-C37 mission was launched on February 15, 2017, carrying the Cartosat-2D satellite as the main payload along with 103 co-passenger satellites.
- This mission set a world record by launching 104 satellites in a single rocket.
- After deploying the satellites, the upper stage (PS4) was left in orbit.
- Due to atmospheric drag, the orbit of the PS4 stage gradually decayed over time.
- Since September, ISRO's System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM) monitored the orbital decay and predicted the re-entry in the first week of October.
- The atmospheric re-entry complies with international debris mitigation guidelines, specifically limiting the orbital life of defunct objects in Low-Earth orbit to 25 years.



The ISRO launched the PSLV-C37 rocket, carrying a record 104 satellites, from Sriharikota in February 2017. PTI

## PSLV C-37 rocket body re-enters the earth's atmosphere: ISRO

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said that the upper stage of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle C-37 (PSLV C-37 mission) re-entered the earth's atmosphere on Sunday.

The PSLV-C37 mission was launched on February 15, 2017, with Cartosat-2D as the main payload along with another 103 satellites as co-passengers, namely INS-1A, INS-1B, Al-Farabi 1, BGUSAT, DIDO-2, Nayif 1, PEASS, 88 Flock-3p satellites, and 8 Lemur-2 satellites. The space agency created history as it was the first mission to launch 104 satellites with a single vehicle. After injecting the satellites and passivation, the upper stage (PS4) was left at an orbit of approximately 470x494 km.

"It was regularly tracked by U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) as an object with NORAD id 42052. Its orbital altitude slowly decayed, primarily due to atmospheric drag effects,"

ISRO said on Tuesday.

Since September, ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM) regularly monitored the orbital decay as part of its regular activities and predicted re-entry into the atmosphere in the first week of October. "The orbit had decayed to a size of 134x148 km, as of October 6, 2024. As per USSPACECOM prediction, the re-entry took place on Sunday at 15:49 UTC while IS4OM prediction showed that re-entry would occur on Sunday at 15:48:25 UTC. The impact point is in the North Atlantic Ocean," ISRO said.

**Debris mitigation**

The atmospheric re-entry of the rocket body is fully compliant with the international debris mitigation guidelines, in particular, the guideline of Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee that recommends limiting the post-mission orbital life of a defunct object in Low-Earth orbit to 25 years.

**Page 10 : GS 2 : International relations**

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a report highlighting deteriorating religious freedom in India, citing violence against minorities and government repression.

- India's Ministry of External Affairs rejected the report, labelling USCIRF as biased.
- This ongoing issue raises concerns about religious freedom and international relations.

# What does USCIRF report say about India

What is the mandate of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom? How does the USCIRF designate a country as a 'Country of Particular concern'? How has the Indian government reacted to the report?

**EXPLAINER**

G. Sampath

**The story so far:**

The Washington DC-based United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on October 2 released a country update on India, flagging "collapsing religious freedom conditions". Among other things, the report highlighted how throughout 2024, individuals from minority communities have been killed and lynched by vigilante groups, religious leaders have been arbitrarily arrested, and places of worship have been demolished. The Indian government has rejected the report as coming from a "biased organisation".

**What is the USCIRF?**

The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government agency created under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). It monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in countries other than the U.S. Its assessments of countries are based on international human rights standards, and in particular, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

The USCIRF is distinct from the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF), which is part of the U.S. State Department. The IRF also releases annual reports on religious freedom. While the USCIRF's reports could have a bearing on a country's image, the IRF's stance is more consequential for bilateral relations.

**What does the USCIRF do?**

As per its mandate under the IRFA, the



In protest: Activists burn a copy of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in Kolkata on March 12. AFP

USCIRF monitors religious freedom conditions across the world through travel, research and meetings with representatives of international human rights groups, NGOs, victims of persecution, and foreign officials with the aim of putting out a report every year, listing the countries that meet the threshold for designation by the U.S. State Department as a "Country of Particular concern" (CPC). It also shares another list of countries that, in its assessment, ought to be included in the State Department's 'Special Watch List' (SWL).

Countries that "commit systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom" would be designated as a CPC. Countries "whose governments engage or tolerate in severe religious freedom violations, but do not rise to the CPC standard of "systematic, ongoing,

and egregious" would be included in the SWL. If the U.S. State Department accepts the USCIRF's recommendation and designates a country as a CPC, then under the IRFA, it has a range of policy options, including sanctions, to address such kind of violations.

**What does USCIRF's country update on India state?**

The report, authored by Sema Hasan, Senior Policy Analyst with the USCIRF, says that religious freedom in India in 2024 has been on a "deteriorating and concerning trajectory". It stated that the Indian government, through legislations such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 for which the rules were published in May this year, and "through the enforcement of discriminatory legislation like anti-conversion laws, cow slaughter

laws, and antiterrorism laws", continued to "repress and restrict" religious minorities. It also details how "Indian officials have repeatedly employed hateful and derogatory rhetoric and misinformation to perpetuate false narratives about religious minorities, inciting widespread violence, lynchings, and demolition of places of worship." In its 2024 annual report, the USCIRF designated India as a CPC.

**How did India respond?**

Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal rejected the report, stating, "Our views on the USCIRF are well known. It is a biased organisation with a political agenda. It continues to misrepresent facts and peddles a motivated narrative about India. We reject this malicious report, which only serves to discredit USCIRF further." He further added, "We would urge USCIRF to desist from such agenda-driven efforts."

**Is the USCIRF 'biased' and 'agenda-driven'?**

Its reports are backed by research and numerous citations sourced from credible domestic and international media, besides direct testimonies. In the case of the country update on India, there is no evident instance of misrepresented facts, with every claim backed by publicly verifiable documentation. However, the timing of this update has raised eye brows, and opened it up to concerns such as those voiced by the MEA, about the report being "agenda-driven".

The USCIRF, as a body that works with the U.S. government, and notwithstanding its 'independent' status, is considered by many countries as a tool of U.S. foreign policy.

**Are the USCIRF's recommendations binding?**

No, they are not. It is up to the U.S. State Department whether or not to accept them, and typically, calculations related to bilateral relations and larger foreign policy goals come into play.

**THE GIST**

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Its reports are backed by research and numerous citations sourced from credible domestic and international media, besides direct testimonies.

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**USCIRF Report on India:**

- The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a country update on India, highlighting deteriorating religious freedom conditions in 2024.
- The report claims individuals from minority communities have faced killings, lynchings, arbitrary arrests, and the destruction of places of worship throughout 2024.



- The Indian government has strongly rejected the report, calling USCIRF a biased organisation with a political agenda.

### What is the USCIRF?

- The USCIRF is a U.S.-based federal government agency that monitors religious freedom worldwide, based on international human rights standards, particularly Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- It differs from the U.S. State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) and its recommendations do not directly affect bilateral relations.
- Although backed by extensive research, some view the USCIRF's timing and reports as influenced by U.S. foreign policy goals, raising concerns about its objectivity.

### USCIRF's Role:

- USCIRF assesses religious freedom violations globally, producing an annual report recommending countries for designation as "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPC) or inclusion in the Special Watch List (SWL).
- CPC countries face the possibility of U.S. sanctions if their violations are deemed systematic, ongoing, and egregious.

### USCIRF's Findings on India:

- The report emphasises increasing suppression of minorities through discriminatory laws like the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, anti-conversion laws, and cow slaughter laws.
- It accuses Indian officials of promoting hateful rhetoric and perpetuating violence against religious minorities, while designating India as a CPC in 2024.

### India's Response:

- India's Ministry of External Affairs dismissed the report as politically motivated, stating that it misrepresents facts and reflects an agenda-driven narrative.

## Page 10 : GS 3 : Indian Economy – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

The Indian textile and apparel sector aims to achieve a \$350 billion annual business by 2030, generating 3.5 crore jobs.

- ➔ However, challenges such as export slumps, high raw material prices, and shifting consumer preferences threaten its growth prospects.

# Why is the textile industry struggling to perform better?

What caused the slump in the Indian textile sector in the last two financial years?

M. Soundariya Preetha

The story so far:

Union Minister for Textiles Giriraj Singh recently said that the Indian textile and apparel sector is aiming for a total business of \$350 billion annually by 2030, which is to generate 3.5 crore jobs. However, the industry went through a tumultuous phase during the last two financial years, casting a shadow on the possibility for 10% CAGR.

What is the status now?

The size of the Indian textile and apparel industry was estimated to be \$153 billion in 2021, with almost \$110 billion contributed by domestic business. In FY22, India was the third largest textile exporter globally, enjoying a 5.4% share. India is also said to have the second largest manufacturing capacity, with a robust capability across the value chain. The sector's contribution to GDP is close to 2.3% (FY21) and 10.6% of total

manufacturing Gross Value Added (GVA) in FY23. About 105 million people are employed by the textile and garment units, directly and indirectly. For an industry that has 80% of its capacity spread across MSMEs and is sensitive to international developments as it is strongly linked to global markets, FY2021-2022 saw tremendous growth with \$43.4 billion exports.

However, slowdown in demand that started in 2022-2023 only worsened in FY24 with a slump in exports and domestic demand. This impacted manufacturing clusters severely. For instance, Tamil Nadu, which has the largest spinning capacity in the country, saw the closure of nearly 500 textile mills in the last two years. In Tiruppur, which is a knitwear production destination, many units saw a 40% drop in business in FY23.

Why did exports slump?

Geopolitical developments and a slump in demand in buying countries hit the exporting units. This was exacerbated by

high raw material prices of both, cotton and Man Made Fibres (MMF), and the growing import of fabrics and garments.

The imposition of a 10% import duty on cotton has made Indian cotton more expensive compared to international prices. In the case of MMF, introduction of quality control orders has disturbed raw material availability and price stability. The industry is repeatedly demanding removal of the import duty on cotton at least during the off-season months of April to October. "This is an industry in which the stakeholders compete in the international market with countries that heavily support their domestic production capabilities. So, India needs schemes that run for at least five years and boost investments. Raw material should be available for the domestic industry at internationally competitive prices," says a spokesperson of a leading industry association.

What are the other challenges?

Apart from policy issues, the industry is

also staring at disruptions in its traditional business systems. Direct retailing to customers through e-commerce is a trend that is catching on among garment and home textile manufacturers, with more startups entering this space. A report by Wazir Advisors notes that "(Foreign) brands are fast-tracking the adoption of ESG sustainability across the supply chain." They are defining their sustainability targets and want to source from vendors who will meet these targets. Further, there is a rise in comfort wear, loungewear, and athleisure as the emphasis on comfortable clothing has increased among consumers. "Even in the domestic market, much has changed in the way business is done. Customers in rural and semi-urban areas prefer to shop in multi-brand outlets or hyper markets. They do not want to step into outlets of less known brands," said Palanisamy, a basic garment producer in Tiruppur.

What next?

The industry is looking at a \$100 billion investment across various segments of the value chain by 2030 to augment production capacities and meet the \$350 billion target. Labour constitutes roughly 10% of the production cost in the textile sector. The average daily wage of a trained textile worker is reported to be ₹550 a day. Unskilled workers earn about ₹450 a day. The industry has no option but to look at technology and skilling of its workforce to improve productivity and reduce wastages, say industry sources.

### THE GIST

▼ The size of the Indian textile and apparel industry was estimated to be \$153 billion in 2021, with almost \$110 billion contributed by domestic business.

▼ However, slowdown in demand that started in 2022-2023 only worsened in FY24 with a slump in exports and domestic demand.

▼ Apart from policy issues, the industry is also staring at disruptions in its traditional business systems. Direct retailing to customers through e-commerce is a trend that is catching on among garment and home textile manufacturers, with more startups entering this space.

## Current Status of the Indian Textile and Apparel Sector

- ➔ Union Minister for Textiles Giriraj Singh announced that the Indian textile and apparel sector aims for a total business of \$350 billion annually by 2030, which could generate 3.5 crore jobs.
- ➔ The industry's size was estimated at \$153 billion in 2021, with approximately \$110 billion derived from domestic business.
- ➔ In FY22, India ranked as the third-largest textile exporter globally, with a market share of 5.4%, and possessed the second-largest manufacturing capacity in the sector.
- ➔ The textile industry contributed 2.3% to the country's GDP and 10.6% to total manufacturing Gross Value Added (GVA).
- ➔ The sector employs around 105 million people directly and indirectly.

## Reasons for Export Slump

- ➔ **Economic Downturn:** The industry faced a decline starting in 2022-2023, marked by significant reductions in exports and domestic demand due to geopolitical issues and decreased demand from purchasing countries.

## Daily News Analysis

- ➔ **High Raw Material Prices:** Rising prices for cotton and Man-Made Fibres (MMF) worsened the situation, with a 10% import duty on cotton making Indian cotton less competitive globally.
- ➔ **Quality Control Orders:** The introduction of quality control orders on MMF disrupted raw material availability and pricing, leading to industry calls for the removal of the import duty during the off-season from April to October.

### Challenges Facing the Industry

- ➔ **E-commerce Disruption:** The sector is experiencing shifts due to e-commerce trends, with more manufacturers opting for direct retail to consumers.
- ➔ **Sustainability Demand:** International brands are prioritising sustainability, leading to increased demand for vendors who can meet specific environmental standards.
- ➔ **Changing Consumer Preferences:** There is a growing consumer preference for comfort wear, coupled with shifts in shopping habits, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.
- ➔ **Labour Costs:** Labour constitutes around 10% of production expenses, with trained textile workers earning ₹550 daily and unskilled workers earning ₹450.

### Future Outlook

- ➔ **Investment Goals:** To achieve the \$350 billion target, the industry anticipates a \$100 billion investment across various segments by 2030.
- ➔ **Focus on Technology:** The industry must emphasise technology adoption and workforce skilling to enhance productivity and reduce waste.
- ➔ **Strengthening Supply Chains:** Efforts will be made to strengthen supply chains to mitigate disruptions and ensure timely availability of raw materials and finished products.



**Page 11: GS 2 : International Relations**

The Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted at the UN's 'Summit of the Future,' aims to harness and regulate digital technologies for global benefit.

- ➔ While it offers a framework for cooperation, significant challenges and limitations in implementation remain.





## Global Digital Compact: advancing digital innovation in a sustainable fashion

The GDC is a diplomatic instrument which focuses on the potential of digital technologies, with the specific intention to harness and regulate them for the common good. The GDC rests on the idea that digital technologies are dramatically changing our world

**Neethu Rajam**  
**Krishna Ravi Srinivas**

In the recently concluded 'Summit of the Future' organised by the United Nations, member countries adopted the 'Global Digital Compact' (GDC). This ambitious instrument is perhaps the first of its kind in the international arena focusing on the potential of digital technologies, with the specific intention to harness and regulate them for the common good.

### What is the GDC?

The GDC is not a binding law but a diplomatic instrument with a set of shared goals for governments, institutions, firms, and other stakeholders to bear in mind. Once there is greater adherence, the terms of the compact may become soft laws in each country.

Earlier, the UN helped pilot and legitimise two other compacts: the 'Global Compact' ("a voluntary initiative based on CEO commitments to implement universal sustainability principles and to take steps to support UN goals") and the 'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration' (covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner).

The GDC rests on the idea that digital technologies are dramatically changing our world. While they offer potential benefits for societies and for our planet – by enabling Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – they also pose serious challenges and concerns.

### Realising the GDC

The GDC is a collaborative project with the objective of ensuring human oversight of technologies in ways that advance sustainable development. Building on the norms of international law, the Universal Declaration of Human rights, and the UN 2030 Agenda, among others, the GDC

proposes global cooperation in the governance of data and digital technologies

To meet the Compact's goals, UN member countries have committed to establish two panels – an 'Independent International Scientific Panel on AI [Artificial Intelligence]' and a panel for 'Global Dialogue on AI Governance'.

These goals include closing the digital divide, including everyone in the digital economy, improving access to data, and advancing responsible and equitable data governance. In the same vein, the Compact's principles are based on inclusive participation, access to data and digital technologies, sustainability, and trustworthy technologies that function within a free and competitive market.

### Digital goods and services

To address the digital divide, the GDC proposes "digital public goods" that will include open-source software, open data, and open AI models, plus adherence to privacy and best practices.

This is an acknowledgment of digital public goods' ability to drive social change as elements of a "digital public infrastructure" that delivers services. Such infrastructure involves the development and use of shared digital systems according to specific priorities and needs of stakeholders. To this end, the GDC envisions partnerships, including with private entities.

### What are the GDC's lacunae?

First, the extensive European experience with public-private partnerships vis-a-vis digital projects suggests openness within such partnerships is restricted between 'as open as is required' and 'as closed as is essential'. In other words, openness in the context of the digital public infrastructure may be limited by contractual requirements such as non-disclosure, confidentiality, and

protection of intellectual property.

Second, the GDC adds little to existing frameworks of internet governance but importantly it calls for digital technology companies to self-regulate to keep their users safe and their users' trust. This is not an optimum solution because self-regulation has already proved to be ineffective in practice.

Third, the GDC recognises interoperable data governance as essential to foster innovation and promote economic growth. But experts have noted that the increasing collection, sharing, and processing of data – particularly for AI – may amplify risks in the absence of effective personal data protection and privacy laws.

Fourth, the Compact stresses on achieving SDGs within a paradigm where governments and private entities track, collect, and analyse data to measure progress, while underscoring the importance of governing data in the public interest. For this the Compact proposes to give corporate entities more power in data and internet governance. However, it fails to emphasise the countervailing measures required to stave off monopolistic control.

### The GDC and the UN

In many sections the GDC makes wishful statements that bypass the complexity of underlying issues, assuming the comity of nations will be enough to achieve its objectives. But this stance may also reflect the UN's wish to remain a major player in governing technologies, including AI.

For example, in the 21st century data is oil: it is as valuable even as its use is embedded in extractive industries with polluting effects. Consider the ongoing explosive growth of generative AI models and the spheres, volumes, and varieties of data collected to train them. The GDC acknowledges issues in AI governance but has little to offer in terms of concrete

solutions or even strategies.

Similarly, the GDC does not call for "data flow with trust" but many countries have refused to accept this idea because it goes against the spirit of digital sovereignty. Some even have specific laws that require data about their citizens to remain within their borders.

Finally, the GDC links various objectives and proposed actions with the relevant SDGs. This is a welcome move because it reflects the view that digitalisation should play a prominent role in realising the SDGs. At the same time, when the SDGs were adopted in 2015, the current AI revolution hadn't started. Given the unimpressive record of nations in realising the SDGs, it is doubtful whether an add-on Compact like the GDC could make a difference.

The UN's member states are striving to find ways to work with and regulate Big Tech while also asserting their digital sovereignty. The global governance of digital technologies thus is too complex to be captured or 'fixed' by a singular entity like the GDC. We need multilateral as well as regional negotiations to go with it to address jurisdictional, regional, and/or local needs. By appealing to existing modes of digital governance as well as by combining SDGs with digitalisation, the GDC is positioning itself as an instrument of brainstorming rather than as a provider of roadmaps. Still, the GDC can help with capacity building and with South-South and North-South collaborations in the development of digital public goods.

In sum, the GDC may not result in a paradigm shift in the world's governance of digital technologies but it can facilitate significant and tangible outcomes if member states take it seriously.

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### Overview of the Global Digital Compact (GDC)

- ➡ The Global Digital Compact (GDC) was recently adopted at the 'Summit of the Future' organised by the United Nations.
- ➡ This groundbreaking instrument aims to harness and regulate digital technologies for the common good, marking a significant step in international digital governance.



### **Nature of the GDC**

- The GDC is a non-binding diplomatic instrument that outlines shared goals for governments, institutions, firms, and stakeholders.
- While it is not legally binding, increased adherence could lead to its terms evolving into soft laws within individual countries.

### **Background and Objectives**

- Building on previous UN initiatives, the GDC recognizes the transformative impact of digital technologies on society.
- While these technologies can facilitate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they also present significant challenges.

### **Goals and Structure**

- The GDC focuses on ensuring human oversight of technologies to promote sustainable development.
- It aims for global cooperation in data governance and digital technologies, with member countries committing to establish two panels: an Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and a Global Dialogue on AI Governance.

### **Proposed Digital Public Goods**

- To bridge the digital divide, the GDC advocates for digital public goods such as open-source software and open AI models.
- These goods are seen as crucial for creating a digital public infrastructure that can deliver essential services effectively.

### **Challenges and Criticisms**

- **The GDC faces several lacunae:**
  - Openness in public-private partnerships may be restricted by contractual requirements, limiting transparency.
  - The Compact lacks new frameworks for internet governance and relies on self-regulation from digital technology companies, which has historically proven ineffective.
  - It acknowledges the importance of interoperable data governance but fails to adequately address the risks associated with increased data collection and sharing.
  - The GDC grants more power to corporate entities in data governance without emphasizing necessary countervailing measures to prevent monopolistic control.

### **Conclusion**

- Ultimately, the GDC may not radically transform global digital governance.
- However, it holds the potential for significant outcomes if member states engage seriously with its goals.
- It could foster capacity building and collaborations between nations in developing digital public goods, thus facilitating a more equitable digital landscape.



### Report In News : Global Water Resource Report 2023

- ➡ According to the State of Global Water Resource Report 2023, the year 2023 marked the driest year for global rivers in over three decades.

#### About State of Global Water Resource Report:

- It is an annual report published by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) since 2021.
- It offers a comprehensive and consistent overview of water resources worldwide.
- It is based on input from dozens of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and other organizations and experts.



### Highlights of the 2023 Report:

- The year 2023 marked the driest year for global rivers in 33 years.
- The last five consecutive years have recorded widespread below-normal conditions for river flows, with reservoir inflows following a similar pattern.
- It notes that 2023 was also the second consecutive year in which all regions in the world with glaciers reported ice loss, the year in which "glaciers suffered the largest mass loss ever registered in 50 years.
- More than 600 gigatons (Gt) of water were lost across all glaciated regions of the world.
- The report says that 6 billion people currently face inadequate access to water at least one month a year, and this is expected to increase to more than 5 billion by 2050.
- The world is far off-track with Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation.



# From solidarity to pseud, India's shift on Palestine

India's position on Palestine, once a symbol of its anti-colonial ethos, has been diluted since the end of the Cold War and has dramatically shifted over the past decade. The alignment with Israel, the marginalisation of Palestine, and a focus on transactional diplomacy are not isolated phenomena but interconnected trends shaped by an interplay of domestic and global factors.

## Hindutva and foreign policy

First, India's evolving policy on Palestine is inseparable from the rise of Hindutva. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Sangh Parivar have sought to influence India's diplomacy based on a Hindu nationalist worldview. This ideological shift has manifested itself in a growing affinity with Israel, seen as a natural partner against, and apparently a victim of, the perceived threat of an 'Islamic terror' – a narrative deeply ingrained in the Hindutva discourse.

Historically, India's support for Palestine was rooted in its anti-colonial struggle, self-determination, and anti-racism. However, in 'New India', this support is seen through a communal lens, where the Palestinian cause is linked exclusively with the Muslim identity. The public discourse, fuelled by right-wing media, frames pro-Palestinian protests and solidarity as a threat to national security and 'anti-nationalism'.

Protests supporting Palestine are often met with crackdowns, arrests, and even charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Leaders such as Asaduddin Owaisi, who publicly voice support for Palestine, are routinely vilified, while students expressing solidarity are targeted. The state's tacit approval in delegitimising the Palestinian cause helps it align with Israel, not just diplomatically but also ideologically.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unscheduled stop at Mount Herzl to pay tribute to Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, during his 2017 visit is emblematic of this ideological convergence. Under him, foreign policy is no longer framed by its historical commitments, but



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In these times of great power politics, the legacy ideals of non-alignment and anti-colonialism are seen as baggage

by a new narrative that views Israel as a strategic ally in a shared battle against perceived threats.

## Values or 'interests'?

The second factor driving India's shift is a transition from values-based to transactional diplomacy. During the Nehruvian era, India's foreign policy was deeply intertwined with anti-colonialism, including strong backing for Palestinian statehood. At the end of the Cold War, that ideological foundation began to give way to a more transactional approach, where narrowly defined interests took precedence over historical commitments. India-Israel relations are a product of this transition.

India's ties with Israel have flourished recently, with bilateral trade reaching over \$10 billion in 2022-23. Cooperation extends across sectors such as defence, agriculture, and technology, areas where Israel has become an invaluable partner. The renewed engagement is defined by the dual pillars of 'dehyphenation', treating India's relations with Israel and Palestine as separate, and 'depoliticisation', enhancing cooperation by circumventing politically sensitive questions. To dehyphenate and depoliticise are political acts. This allows New Delhi to deepen its engagement with Israel while paying lip service to the Palestinian cause.

However, this shift towards transactional diplomacy is not unique to India. Globally, foreign policies are increasingly guided by constructed economic and strategic interests. In India's case, the West Asia policy has evolved significantly since the 1990s, with energy security, diaspora, and investments taking centre stage. The old Non-Aligned paradigm, which once governed India's position, is now seen as inadequate for pursuing these objectives.

India's approach to Palestine reflects this trend. As the government focuses on attracting investments from the Gulf and forging new partnerships, the Palestinian issue, lacking immediate economic or strategic benefits, has been relegated to the margins. The shift is stark when contrasted with Jawaharlal Nehru and

Indira Gandhi's India which saw support for Palestine as a moral duty.

## Ambitions and the great game

Finally, India's aspiration to emerge as a great power has also played a crucial role. While it is flirting to emerge as a broker in the Ukraine conflict, it is simultaneously abdicating its support for Palestine. India's alignment with the U.S., Israel's staunchest ally, amidst the China-U.S. contest across various theatres, including West Asia is also a contributing factor.

In these times of great power politics, the legacy ideals of non-alignment and anti-colonialism are seen as baggage. This is best reflected in the rhetorical shift from non-alignment to strategic autonomy to multialignment. While the operational essence remains the same, every rebranding has witnessed normative dilution. This is evident in India's muted response to Israel's war on Gaza.

Despite the extensive loss of life and destruction, New Delhi's reaction has been limited to (non) statements calling for peace and dialogue. The focus remains on strengthening ties with Israel, securing defence partnerships, and leveraging other sectoral opportunities.

The rise of Hindutva, transactional diplomacy, and India's strategic ambitions in the context of the China-U.S. rivalry have all contributed to the marginalisation of the Palestinian cause.

While official rhetoric may still endorse a two-state solution, the reality on the ground reveals a distinct shift towards strengthening ties with Israel and prioritising economic and strategic interests over normative commitments.

In this new era of international politics, India seems to have moved away from its role as a champion of anti-colonial struggles. Instead, it has embraced a path defined by narrow interests over values. As the global order continues to evolve, will India continue down a path that increasingly aligns it with power politics over principles?

As it stands, the 'new' international order will likely be the same game with just new players.

## GS Paper 02 : International Relations

**UPSC Mains Practice Question :** Discuss the factors behind India's evolving stance on the Palestine-Israel issue, focusing on the influence of domestic politics, strategic interests, and global power dynamics. (250 w/15m)

- India's foreign policy on Palestine has evolved from its anti-colonial roots to a more transactional approach, marked by closer ties with Israel.
- This shift, influenced by national politics, strategic interests, and global power politics, reflects a departure from India's values-based diplomacy.
- India now prioritises economic and security concerns over historical commitments.

### India's Evolving Stance on Palestine

- India's position on Palestine, once a symbol of its anti-colonial ethos, has significantly shifted, especially in the past decade.
- The alignment with Israel and marginalisation of Palestine are influenced by domestic and global factors, including the rise of Hindutva and transactional diplomacy.
- This shift highlights a broader trend where India's foreign policy now prioritises strategic and economic interests over historical commitments.

### Hindutva's Influence on Foreign Policy

- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Sangh Parivar have promoted a Hindu nationalist worldview in shaping India's diplomacy.
- This shift has led to a growing affinity with Israel, perceived as a natural ally in combating 'Islamic terror', a narrative prominent in Hindutva discourse.
- Historically, India's support for Palestine was based on anti-colonialism, but now it is viewed through a communal lens, associating the Palestinian cause with Muslim identity.
- Public discourse, driven by right-wing media, frames pro-Palestinian protests as threats to national security, with crackdowns on such expressions of solidarity.

### From Values to Transactional Diplomacy

- India's shift from values-based foreign policy to transactional diplomacy is evident in its relations with Israel.
- Under the Nehruvian era, India's foreign policy was rooted in anti-colonialism and support for Palestinian statehood.

## Daily News Analysis

- The post-Cold War period marked a shift towards a more transactional approach, prioritising economic and strategic interests over historical values.
- India-Israel relations have flourished, with bilateral trade surpassing \$10 billion in 2022-23 and cooperation extending across sectors like defence, agriculture, and technology.
- The 'dehyphenation' strategy, where India treats its relations with Israel and Palestine separately, and 'depoliticisation', enhancing cooperation without addressing sensitive political issues, define this new engagement.

### India's Ambitions and Strategic Realignment

- India's aspirations to become a global power have influenced its stance on Palestine.
- While positioning itself as a potential broker in the Ukraine conflict, India has notably reduced its support for Palestine.
- India's alignment with the U.S., Israel's key ally, amidst the China-U.S. geopolitical rivalry, also shapes its West Asia policy.
- The shift from non-alignment to strategic autonomy to multialignment reflects a broader normative dilution in India's foreign policy.

### Conclusion: Power Politics over Principles

- Despite its official endorsement of a two-state solution, India's approach prioritises strengthening ties with Israel over its historical support for Palestine.
- This shift represents a move towards power politics, where economic and strategic interests outweigh India's former values-based commitments.