

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 2- International relation- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and VVPATs: Restoring Public Trust in Elections

In the aftermath of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections, where allegations of wrongdoing surfaced before the vote count, concerns have been raised about the public trust in electronic voting. To address these issues, steps need to be taken to enhance transparency and verifiability in the election process.

What are VVPATs?

Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) is an independent system connected to an EVM, enabling voters to verify that their votes are accurately cast. When a vote is registered, a slip containing the candidate's serial number, name, and symbol is printed on the VVPAT. This printed slip, visible to the voter for seven seconds, is then automatically cut and deposited into a sealed drop box, allowing for later verification if necessary.

Concerns Raised Over EVMs:

1. Complexity of EVMs:

- **Challenge:** Establishing the correctness of a complex system like the EVM proves difficult, making it challenging to ascertain whether the system is vulnerable to hacking.

2. No Inherent Guarantee of Correct Voting:

- *Concern:* In the absence of VVPAT, there is no inherent guarantee that votes are cast as intended, recorded accurately in the EVM, and counted correctly.

3. Inadequacy of Testing:

- **Challenge:** Testing is insufficient to ensure the correctness of an EVM, as it can only detect a limited fraction of potential software or hardware errors.

4. Issues with VVPAT:

- **Concerns:** Current VVPAT systems lack true voter verification, providing no agency to the voter, and lack a principled method for dispute resolution in case of discrepancies.

5. Lack of Verifiability by the Public:

- **Challenge:** Common individuals lack the means to verify EVM accuracy without specialized knowledge or certification, as recognized by a German Constitutional Court in 2009.

6. Arbitrary Procedures:

- **Concern:** The current practice of auditing five EVMs per assembly constituency lacks statistical basis, raising questions about its reliability.

Recommended Actions:

1. Changes in VVPAT Protocol:

- **Proposal:** Allow voters to approve the VVPAT slip before the final vote is cast, providing an option to cancel the vote if any discrepancies are noticed.

2. Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA):

- **Recommendation:** Implement standard RLA methods to cross-check electronic tallies with VVPAT counts, minimizing the risk of incorrect reported outcomes.

3. Mechanization Instead of Manual Processes:

- **Suggestion:** Consider independent systems for mechanized sorting and counting of VVPATs if needed, enhancing efficiency and accuracy.

4. Ensuring Public Trust:

- **Priority:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) should prioritize public verifiability to ensure trust in the election process.

Addressing these concerns and implementing suggested measures can contribute to restoring public confidence in the integrity of electronic voting systems.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Henry Kissinger's Foreign Policy Legacy: Lessons for a Rising India

The recent passing of Henry Kissinger, a prominent figure in American diplomacy, has prompted a reassessment of his contributions to global affairs. While he is remembered for pivotal moments like the U.S. support to Pakistan in the 1971 war and the opening of relations with China, his strategic approach holds lessons for emerging powers like India.

Key Highlights of Kissinger's Foreign Policy:

1. National Interest Focus:

- **Realpolitik:** Kissinger's realpolitik approach prioritized U.S. interests, evident in supporting Pakistan during the 1971 war and establishing a strategic partnership with China against the Soviet Union.

2. Pursuit of Power:

- **Power Politics:** Known for power politics, Kissinger acknowledged the pragmatic nature of India's actions during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, recognizing the pursuit of power in international relations.

3. Middle Path of Pragmatism:

- **Balanced Approach:** Kissinger advocated a balanced, practical foreign policy, steering away from extremes like isolationism or ideological interventions.

Drawback for a Country like India:

While Kissinger's strategy prioritizes order and stability, it often comes at the expense of morality and justice. For instance, the U.S.'s controversial tactics in the Vietnam War were driven by a win-at-

all-costs mentality. India must avoid losing the balance between power and principle, ensuring a foreign policy that harmonizes national interests with values.

Terminology Clarifications:

- **Pragmatism:** A philosophy emphasizing the merit of ideas based on their practicality and usefulness.
- **Realpolitik:** Conducting policies based on circumstances and factors, often prioritizing power considerations.
- **Realism:** A foreign policy approach placing national interests above ideology, ethics, or morality.
- **Idealism:** A foreign policy approach aiming to align international conduct with a country's internal values.
- **Isolationism:** Political philosophy opposing a country's involvement in the affairs of other nations.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 2- International relation- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. Implications of U.S. Accusations Against India: Navigating Diplomatic Challenges

The recent revelation by the U.S. Department of Justice regarding a conspiracy involving an Indian government officer in the murder of a New York attorney has potential far-reaching implications. This case also connects to the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada, adding complexity to the international legal landscape.

Key Implications:

1. Diplomatic Tensions:

- The accusation against the Indian citizen may strain diplomatic relations between India and the U.S., requiring careful management to prevent escalation.

2. International Repercussions:

- If proven true, the allegations may tarnish India's reputation as a principled international actor, impacting relations not only with the U.S. but also with other countries, especially those in the Five Eyes intelligence alliance.

Recommended Actions:

1. Thorough Investigation:

- India should initiate a comprehensive and transparent investigation into the allegations. Clarity on the involvement of Indian officials and the government's stance on Sikh separatists is crucial.

2. Diplomatic Dialogue:

- Establishing transparent and direct communication channels with the U.S. and other relevant countries is essential. This should include engagement with U.S. law enforcement agencies to address concerns and share information.

3. Managing Extradition Requests:

- Addressing the potential extradition requests from the U.S. requires a delicate balance between legal considerations and diplomatic relations. Open dialogue and cooperation will be key to navigating this aspect.

In summary, India needs to approach this situation with a commitment to a thorough investigation, clear communication, and a diplomatic strategy that safeguards bilateral relations while addressing the serious criminal allegations.

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