

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 2- polity- Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Decoding the Tenth Schedule: Challenges and Solutions in Anti-Defection Laws

Introduction and Purpose:

Enacted in 1985, the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution serves as an anti-defection law. It emerged as a response to the political instability fueled by frequent defections during the 1960s and 70s. The primary objective was to bring stability to the Indian political landscape by curbing opportunistic defections.

Key Provisions:

The Tenth Schedule mandates the disqualification of Members of Parliament or state legislatures if they voluntarily give up their party membership or defy party directives during voting. The enforcement of party discipline and voting instructions is carried out through a party-appointed 'whip.'

Amendments for Strength:

Originally, the Schedule allowed a one-third faction to split without disqualification, a provision removed in 2003 (91st Constitutional Amendment Act) to fortify the law against defections.

Issues with the Tenth Schedule:

1. Misuse for Political Gains:

The Tenth Schedule faces criticism for being manipulated by lawmakers to defect without facing disqualification. Instances in Rajasthan (2019) and Goa (2022), where entire groups of legislators merged with another party, underscore the need to address this tactic, which undermines the intended purpose of the Schedule.

2. Ambiguity in Definition:

The criteria for what constitutes defection under the law can be interpreted in various ways, leading to confusion and manipulation. Recent incidents in Maharashtra exemplify this challenge, where differing interpretations caused controversy over faction legitimacy.

3. Speaker's Biased Role:

The Speaker's role in disqualification decisions is often questioned for potential partiality. Cases like Maharashtra highlight concerns about the Speaker's impartiality, as decisions may favor the ruling party, compromising the integrity of the anti-defection law.

Recommendations for Reform:

1. Establish an Independent Tribunal:

To ensure unbiased decisions on disqualification, there is a growing consensus for an independent tribunal led by judges to replace the Speaker's authority. This suggestion aligns with the K.M. Singh vs Speaker of Manipur case (2020), emphasizing the need for impartial adjudication.

2. Strengthen Inner Party Democracy:

Addressing the root cause of defections, implementing regular and transparent inner-party elections monitored by the Election Commission can enhance democracy within political parties. This move aims to reduce dissatisfaction that often leads to defections.

3. Clear Guidelines for Faction Recognition:

To determine the legitimacy of political factions, the Supreme Court's proposed three-test formula in Sadiq Ali vs. Election Commission of India (1971) can serve as clear guidelines. Assessing the party's aims, adherence to the constitution, and majority in legislative and organizational wings provides a structured approach to faction recognition.

Conclusion: Navigating the Path Forward

As the Tenth Schedule grapples with challenges, it is essential to consider comprehensive reforms that strengthen the anti-defection framework. Establishing an independent tribunal, fortifying inner-party democracy, and adopting clear guidelines for faction recognition represent critical steps in ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of the anti-defection laws in India.

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

Taiwan's Election Triumph and Global Responses: Unraveling Geopolitical Dynamics

Background:

In the recent Taiwan elections, Lai Ching-te of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) secured victory, marking the third consecutive win for the party. The DPP maintains a firm stance on independence, rejecting China's assertion of sovereignty and the 1992 consensus, which acknowledges one China but distinguishes it as the PRC and the Republic of China.

Major Powers' Reactions:

1. China:

Chinese Foreign Minister reiterated China's steadfast position, emphasizing that there is only one China globally, and Taiwan is an integral part of it.

2. USA:

The United States welcomed the elections as a testament to Taiwan's vibrant democracy. However, it reiterated its non-support for Taiwan's independence, underscoring the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Taiwan Strait.

3. Japan:

Japan extended congratulations to Taiwan, acknowledging the shared values and democratic principles binding the two countries.

Taiwan's Global Geopolitical Significance:

1. Economic Weight:

Taiwan holds a significant place in the global economic landscape as the world's 16th largest economy and a major trading power.

2. Semiconductors Hub:

As the primary source of 92% of the world's most advanced logic chips, Taiwan plays a pivotal role in the semiconductor industry. It fabricates 55% of the semiconductors embedded in various technological devices globally.

3. Maritime Trading Route:

The Taiwan Strait is a critical passage for maritime trade, impacting digital supply chains and nearly 60% of global maritime trade passing through the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Any conflict in this region has far-reaching consequences.

India's Evolving Stance:

India's position on Taiwan has undergone notable shifts, aligning with its interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

1. Expansion of Economic Relations:

Recent years have witnessed a significant expansion of trade and investment relations between India and Taiwan, reflecting a deepening economic engagement.

2. Direct Criticism of China:

In a noteworthy development in 2022, India openly criticized China for its "militarization of the Taiwan Strait," marking a departure from its previous diplomatic approach.

3. Non-Affirmation of the One-China Principle:

India has refrained from reaffirming the one-China principle, aligning its stance more closely with its QUAD partners and signalling a nuanced shift in its geopolitical positioning.

Conclusion: Navigating Complex Geopolitical Realities

As Taiwan's political landscape undergoes significant shifts, major global players respond with nuanced positions. The economic prowess of Taiwan, coupled with its strategic importance in global trade, underscores its centrality in geopolitical discussions. India's evolving stance reflects a dynamic recalibration of diplomatic priorities, emphasizing the intricate interplay of economic interests and strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. The trajectory of Taiwan's geopolitical standing will undoubtedly continue to shape international relations in the coming years.

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India's Triumph Over Multidimensional Poverty: A Holistic Perspective

Understanding Multidimensional Poverty:

Traditionally, poverty assessment relied on one-dimensional measures, primarily focused on income. However, recognizing the limitations of monetary metrics in capturing the full extent of poverty, a paradigm shift towards multidimensional poverty emerged. This approach considers various qualitative aspects of life, such as access to basic services, that go beyond traditional income-based measurements.

Current Status of Multidimensional Poverty in India:

India has made substantial strides in reducing multidimensional poverty, as revealed by the NITI Aayog discussion paper.

- In 2013-14, 29.2% of the population experienced multidimensional poverty, which dramatically decreased to 11.3% in 2022-23.
- Approximately 248.2 million individuals escaped extreme poverty since 2013.
- Data from Niti Aayog and the World Bank indicates a continuous decline, with the Indian government aiming to further reduce the poverty metric to 1%.

Strategies for Reducing Multidimensional Poverty:

1. Digital Integration:

The 'JAM' trio – Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar identities, and mobile phones – played a pivotal role in streamlining welfare distribution, ensuring efficient and targeted delivery.

2. Direct Cash Transfers:

Implementing direct cash transfers for various benefit schemes proved effective in minimizing leakages and ensuring the comprehensive coverage of welfare programs.

3. Expanded Welfare Budgets:

Sustained economic growth facilitated increased funding for welfare programs, contributing significantly to poverty alleviation.

4. Targeted Measures:

Focused efforts on health, education, and living standards addressed key dimensions of deprivation, ensuring a comprehensive approach.

5. Multidimensional Approach:

Adoption of the multidimensional poverty index (MPI), aligned with international standards, enhanced the precision of poverty measurement, aiding in better targeting.

6. Data-Driven Decisions:

Utilizing data from National Family Health Surveys enabled accurate assessment, facilitating evidence-based policy formulation and strategic decision-making.

Challenges in Countering Multidimensional Poverty:

1. Data Quality Concerns:

Challenges in obtaining reliable data, highlighted by the rejection of the 2017-18 consumer expenditure survey, underscore the need for robust data collection mechanisms.

2. Regional Disparities:

Significant variations in poverty levels across states indicate the necessity for region-specific policies to address uneven development.

3. Educational Outcomes:

The multidimensional poverty index includes education but falls short in addressing the quality of education. Learning outcomes in India need improvement.

4. Policy Direction and Spending:

The efficiency of current government expenditure, such as free food distribution and cash transfers, is questioned, suggesting a need for more focused spending on development areas like education

quality.

The Way Forward:

To further reduce multidimensional poverty, India must prioritize sustained economic growth and implement targeted policies for inclusive development. Ensuring accurate data collection, redirecting government spending towards critical areas like education quality, addressing regional disparities, and emphasizing not just the quantity but the quality of services will pave the way for balanced and inclusive progress.

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