

PSIR OPTIONAL

UPSC MAINS

PAPER I & II

PSIR Optional Syllabus, Mapped

The complete UPSC syllabus for Political Science and International Relations, Paper I and Paper II, unit by unit and topic by topic, laid out so you can see the whole subject at a glance.

Mains 2027 Edition · 2 papers · 4 sections · 40 units · 187 syllabus topics · 500 marks

2

Papers, 3 hours each

500

Marks (250 + 250)

40

Syllabus units in four sections

187

Syllabus topics to cover

HOW THE SYLLABUS IS ORGANISED

PAPER I

Political Theory and Indian Politics

SECTION A · POLITICAL THEORY AND INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

- 01 Political Theory
- 02 Theories of the State
- 03 Justice
- 04 Equality and Liberty
- 05 Rights
- 06 Democracy
- 07 Concept of Power
- 08 Political Ideologies
- 09 Indian Political Thought
- 10 Western Political Thought

SECTION B · INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

- 01 Indian Nationalism
- 02 Making of the Constitution
- 03 Salient Features of the Constitution
- 04 Principal Organs of Government
- 05 Grassroots Democracy
- 06 Statutory Institutions / Commissions
- 07 Federalism
- 08 Planning and Economic Development
- 09 Caste, Religion and Ethnicity
- 10 Party System
- 11 Social Movements

PAPER II

Comparative Politics and International Relations

SECTION A · COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

- 01 Comparative Politics
- 02 State in Comparative Perspective
- 03 Representation and Participation
- 04 Globalisation
- 05 Approaches to IR
- 06 Key Concepts in IR
- 07 Changing International Order
- 08 International Economic System
- 09 United Nations
- 10 Regionalisation of World Politics
- 11 Contemporary Global Concerns

SECTION B · INDIA AND THE WORLD

- 01 Indian Foreign Policy
- 02 India and NAM
- 03 India and South Asia
- 04 India and the Global South
- 05 Global Centres of Power
- 06 India and the UN System
- 07 India and the Nuclear Question
- 08 Recent Developments in IFP

The syllabus at a glance

All 40 units on one page. Each bar shows how many separate topics UPSC lists in that unit: the breadth you have to cover, not how often it is asked.

PAPER I Political Theory and Indian Politics			108 topics
SECTION A · POLITICAL THEORY AND INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT			
01	Political Theory		2
02	Theories of the State		6
03	Justice		3
04	Equality and Liberty		3
05	Rights		3
06	Democracy		4
07	Concept of Power		4
08	Political Ideologies		6
09	Indian Political Thought		8
10	Western Political Thought		9
SECTION B · INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS			
01	Indian Nationalism		10
02	Making of the Constitution		2
03	Salient Features of the Constitution		7
04	Principal Organs of Government		6
05	Grassroots Democracy		4
06	Statutory Institutions / Commissions		10
07	Federalism		4
08	Planning and Economic Development		5
09	Caste, Religion and Ethnicity		3
10	Party System		6
11	Social Movements		3
PAPER II Comparative Politics and International Relations			79 topics
SECTION A · COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS			
01	Comparative Politics		4
02	State in Comparative Perspective		4
03	Representation and Participation		3
04	Globalisation		2
05	Approaches to IR		5
06	Key Concepts in IR		5
07	Changing International Order		8
08	International Economic System		4
09	United Nations		3
10	Regionalisation of World Politics		5
11	Contemporary Global Concerns		6
SECTION B · INDIA AND THE WORLD			
01	Indian Foreign Policy		3
02	India and NAM		2
03	India and South Asia		7
04	India and the Global South		4
05	Global Centres of Power		5
06	India and the UN System		2
07	India and the Nuclear Question		1
08	Recent Developments in IFP		6

How each paper is set

Both papers follow the same shape: eight questions of 50 marks in two sections, of which you answer five.

1

Q1 and Q5 are compulsory

One from each section, each split into five short answers of 10 marks.

2

Pick three more

From Q2–Q4 and Q6–Q8, with at least one from each section.

3

5 × 50 = 250 marks

Paper I and Paper II together count for 500 marks in the Mains merit.

PAPER I

Political Theory and Indian Politics

250 marks · 3 hours

SECTION A · POLITICAL THEORY AND INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Q1

50 marks
COMPULSORY
5 × 10 marks

Q2

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q3

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q4

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

SECTION B · INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Q5

50 marks
COMPULSORY
5 × 10 marks

Q6

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q7

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q8

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

PAPER II

Comparative Politics and International Relations

250 marks · 3 hours

SECTION A · COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Q1

50 marks
COMPULSORY
5 × 10 marks

Q2

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q3

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q4

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

SECTION B · INDIA AND THE WORLD

Q5

50 marks
COMPULSORY
5 × 10 marks

Q6

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q7

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Q8

50 marks
OPTIONAL
20 + 15 + 15

Short and long answers. The five parts of Q1 and Q5 are answered in about 150 words each. The other questions have usually come in three parts carrying 20, 15 and 15 marks in the papers from 2013 to 2026, so practise both lengths from the start.

PAPER I

250 MARKS

3 HOURS

Political Theory and Indian Politics

The ideas, thinkers and ideologies of political theory, and how Indian government and politics actually work.

SECTION A Political Theory and Indian Political Thought · 10 units **SECTION B** Indian Government and Politics · 11 units **108** topics

SECTION A

Political Theory and Indian Political Thought



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 01

Political Theory: Meaning and Approaches

2 topics

35 PYQs since 1991

Meaning of political theory

Approaches to political theory



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 02

Theories of the State

6 topics

31 PYQs since 1993

Liberal theory of the state

Neo-liberal theory

Marxist theory

Pluralist theory

Post-colonial theory

Feminist theory



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 03

Justice

3 topics

18 PYQs since 1994

Conceptions of justice

Rawls' theory of justice

Communitarian critiques of Rawls



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 04

Equality and Liberty

3 topics

20 PYQs since 1991

Equality: social, political and economic

Relationship between equality and freedom

Affirmative action



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 05

Rights

3 topics

19 PYQs since 2002

Meaning and theories of rights

Different kinds of rights

Concept of human rights



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 06

Democracy

4 topics

30 PYQs since 1993

Classical and contemporary theories of democracy

Representative democracy

Participatory democracy

Deliberative democracy



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 07

Concept of Power

4 topics

30 PYQs since 1996

Concept of power

Hegemony

Ideology

Legitimacy



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 08

Political Ideologies

6 topics

39 PYQs since 1991

Liberalism

Socialism

Marxism

Fascism

Gandhism

Feminism



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 09

Indian Political Thought

8 topics

54 PYQs since 1991

TRADITIONS

Dharmashastra

Arthashastra

Buddhist traditions

THINKERS

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

Sri Aurobindo

M. K. Gandhi

B. R. Ambedkar

M. N. Roy



PAPER I · SECTION A · UNIT 10

Western Political Thought

9 topics

100 PYQs since 1991

Plato

Aristotle

Machiavelli

Hobbes

Locke

John S. Mill

Marx

Gramsci

Hannah Arendt

SECTION B

Indian Government and Politics



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 01

Indian Nationalism

10 topics

40 PYQs since 1993

(A) POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Constitutionalism

Mass Satyagraha

Non-cooperation

Civil Disobedience

Militant and revolutionary movements

Peasant and workers' movements

(B) PERSPECTIVES ON THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Liberal

Socialist and Marxist

Radical humanist

Dalit



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 02

Making of the Indian Constitution

2 topics

13 PYQs since 1997

Legacies of the British rule

Different social and political perspectives



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 03

Salient Features of the Indian Constitution

7 topics

53 PYQs since 1992

The Preamble

Fundamental Rights and Duties

Directive Principles

Parliamentary system

Amendment procedures

Judicial review

Basic structure doctrine



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 04

Principal Organs of the Union and State Government

6 topics

46 PYQs since 1991

(A) UNION GOVERNMENT: ENVISAGED ROLE AND ACTUAL WORKING

Executive

Legislature

Supreme Court

(B) STATE GOVERNMENT: ENVISAGED ROLE AND ACTUAL WORKING

Executive

Legislature

High Courts



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 05

Grassroots Democracy

4 topics

22 PYQs since 1993

Panchayati Raj

Municipal government

Significance of the 73rd and 74th Amendments

Grassroot movements



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 06

Statutory Institutions and Commissions

10 topics

22 PYQs since 1992

Election Commission

Comptroller and Auditor General

Finance Commission

Union Public Service Commission

National Commission for Scheduled Castes

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

National Commission for Women

National Human Rights Commission

National Commission for Minorities

National Backward Classes Commission



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 07

Federalism

4 topics

30 PYQs since 1994

Constitutional provisions

Changing nature of centre–state relations

Integrationist tendencies and regional aspirations

Inter-state disputes



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 08

Planning and Economic Development

5 topics

31 PYQs since 1991

Nehruvian and Gandhian perspectives

Role of planning and public sector

Green Revolution

Land reforms and agrarian relations

Liberalisation and economic reforms



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 09

Caste, Religion and Ethnicity in Indian Politics

3 topics

33 PYQs since 1991

Caste in Indian politics

Religion in Indian politics

Ethnicity in Indian politics



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 10

Party System

6 topics

44 PYQs since 1992

National and regional political parties

Ideological and social bases of parties

Patterns of coalition politics

Pressure groups

Trends in electoral behaviour

Changing socio-economic profile of legislators



PAPER I · SECTION B · UNIT 11

Social Movements

3 topics

25 PYQs since 1993

Civil liberties and human rights movements

Women's movements

Environmental movements



COMPLETE NOTES PDF

Notes for every Paper I and Paper II unit, all four sections

₹1,180 ~~₹2,000~~

[Get the Notes →](#)

PAPER II

250 MARKS

3 HOURS

Comparative Politics and International Relations

Comparative politics and international relations, then India's own place in the world.

SECTION A Comparative Political Analysis and International Politics · 11 units **SECTION B** India and the World · 8 units **79** topics

SECTION A

Comparative Political Analysis and International Politics



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 01

Comparative Politics: Nature and Approaches

4 topics

22 PYQs since 2004

Nature and major approaches

Political economy perspective

Political sociology perspective

Limitations of the comparative method

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Political Theory



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 02

State in Comparative Perspective

4 topics

13 PYQs since 1991

The state in capitalist economies

The state in socialist economies

Advanced industrial societies

Developing societies

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Theories of the State

Federalism



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 03

Politics of Representation and Participation

3 topics

33 PYQs since 2001

Political parties

Pressure groups

Social movements

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Democracy

Party System

Social Movements



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 04

Globalisation

2 topics

17 PYQs since 2000

Responses from developed societies

Responses from developing societies

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Political Ideologies

Planning and Economic Development



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 05

Approaches to the Study of International Relations

5 topics

52 PYQs since 1991

Idealist

Realist

Marxist

Functionalist

Systems theory

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Political Ideologies

Western Political Thought



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 06

Key Concepts in International Relations

5 topics

61 PYQs since 1992

National interest

Security and power

Balance of power and deterrence

Transnational actors and collective security

World capitalist economy and globalisation

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Concept of Power



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 07

Changing International Political Order

8 topics

61 PYQs since 1991

(A) THE COLD WAR ORDER

Rise of super powers

Strategic and ideological bipolarity

Arms race and Cold War

Nuclear threat

(B) NON-ALIGNMENT

Non-aligned movement: aims and achievements

(C) AFTER THE COLD WAR

Collapse of the Soviet Union

Unipolarity and American hegemony

Relevance of non-alignment in the contemporary world

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Concept of Power



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 08

Evolution of the International Economic System

4 topics

26 PYQs since 1991

From Bretton Woods to WTO

Socialist economies and the CMEA

Third World demand for a new international economic order

Globalisation of the world economy

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Planning and Economic Development



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 09

United Nations

3 topics

37 PYQs since 1991

Envisaged role and actual record

Specialised UN agencies: aims and functioning

Need for UN reforms

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Rights



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 10

Regionalisation of World Politics

5 topics

34 PYQs since 1991

EU

ASEAN

APEC

SAARC

NAFTA



PAPER II · SECTION A · UNIT 11

Contemporary Global Concerns

6 topics

58 PYQs since 1991

Democracy

Human rights

Environment

Gender justice

Terrorism

Nuclear proliferation

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Justice

Equality and Liberty

Rights

Social Movements

SECTION B

India and the World



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 01

Indian Foreign Policy

3 topics

40 PYQs since 1991

Determinants of foreign policy

Institutions of policy-making

Continuity and change

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Indian Political Thought

Principal Organs of Government

Federalism



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 02

India's Contribution to the Non-Alignment Movement

2 topics

18 PYQs since 2001

Different phases

Current role

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Indian Political Thought

Indian Nationalism



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 03

India and South Asia

7 topics

70 PYQs since 1991

SAARC: past performance and future prospects

South Asia as a Free Trade Area

India's "Look East" policy

(D) IMPEDIMENTS TO REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

River water disputes

Illegal cross-border migration

Ethnic conflicts and insurgencies

Border disputes

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Caste, Religion and Ethnicity



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 04

India and the Global South

4 topics

36 PYQs since 1992

Relations with Africa

Relations with Latin America

Leadership role in the demand for NIEO

WTO negotiations

BUILDS ON PAPER I

Planning and Economic Development



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 05

India and the Global Centres of Power

5 topics

61 PYQs since 1992

USA

EU

Japan

China

Russia



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 06

India and the UN System

2 topics

22 PYQs since 1996

Role in UN peace-keeping

Demand for a permanent seat in the Security Council



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 07

India and the Nuclear Question

1 topic

31 PYQs since 1991

Changing perceptions and policy



PAPER II · SECTION B · UNIT 08

Recent Developments in Indian Foreign Policy

6 topics

42 PYQs since 1993

INDIA'S POSITION ON THE RECENT CRISES

Afghanistan

Iraq

West Asia

GROWING RELATIONS

With the US

With Israel

Vision of a new world order



PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

1,470 PYQs sorted into these 40 units, 1991–2026

₹59

Get the PYQ book →

How Paper I feeds Paper II

Paper II puts Paper I to work: the theories of Section A become the approaches of comparative politics and IR, and Indian government becomes the ground of India's foreign policy. Each line joins a Paper I unit to the Paper II unit where the same ideas come back.

PAPER I · POLITICAL THEORY AND INDIAN POLITICS

- 1A-01 Political Theory
- 1A-02 Theories of the State
- 1A-03 Justice
- 1A-04 Equality and Liberty
- 1A-05 Rights
- 1A-06 Democracy
- 1A-07 Concept of Power
- 1A-08 Political Ideologies
- 1A-09 Indian Political Thought
- 1A-10 Western Political Thought
- 1B-01 Indian Nationalism
- 1B-02 Making of the Constitution
- 1B-03 Salient Features of the Constitution
- 1B-04 Principal Organs of Government
- 1B-05 Grassroots Democracy
- 1B-06 Statutory Institutions / Commissions
- 1B-07 Federalism
- 1B-08 Planning and Economic Development
- 1B-09 Caste, Religion and Ethnicity
- 1B-10 Party System
- 1B-11 Social Movements

PAPER II · COMPARATIVE POLITICS AND IR

- 2A-01 Comparative Politics
- 2A-02 State in Comparative Perspective
- 2A-03 Representation and Participation
- 2A-04 Globalisation
- 2A-05 Approaches to IR
- 2A-06 Key Concepts in IR
- 2A-07 Changing International Order
- 2A-08 International Economic System
- 2A-09 United Nations
- 2A-10 Regionalisation of World Politics
- 2A-11 Contemporary Global Concerns
- 2B-01 Indian Foreign Policy
- 2B-02 India and NAM
- 2B-03 India and South Asia
- 2B-04 India and the Global South
- 2B-05 Global Centres of Power
- 2B-06 India and the UN System
- 2B-07 India and the Nuclear Question
- 2B-08 Recent Developments in IFP

— Links from Section A — Links from Section B

SAME SYLLABUS IDEA, BOTH PAPERS

THEORIES OF THE STATE

Liberal, Marxist, pluralist and post-colonial theories of the state



STATE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Changing nature of the state in capitalist, socialist and developing societies

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Liberalism and Marxism as ideologies



APPROACHES TO IR

Idealist, Realist and Marxist approaches to IR

CONCEPT OF POWER

Hegemony, ideology and legitimacy



CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Unipolarity and American hegemony

PARTY SYSTEM

Parties, pressure groups and electoral behaviour in India



REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Parties, pressure groups and social movements across societies

PRINCIPAL ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT

Executive and legislature: envisaged role and actual working



INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Institutions of foreign policy-making

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Human rights and environmentalist movements



CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CONCERNS

Human rights and environment as global concerns

Cover this syllabus with LotusArise

Two resources built on this exact syllabus: notes to learn every unit, and a complete system to practise writing on it.

COMPLETE NOTES PDF

PSIR Optional Complete Notes

Syllabus-mapped notes for UPSC Mains, written in one voice for concept clarity, revision and answer writing.

- ✓ All four sections: 5,628 pages across 234 chapters
- ✓ Every one of the 40 units, in syllabus order
- ✓ Previous year questions after the chapters



SCAN TO OPEN

₹1,180 ~~₹2,000~~

Get the Notes →

MAINS MASTER KIT 2027

PSIR Optional Mains Master Kit

One self-study system built on this syllabus, with access until UPSC CSE Mains 2027.

- ✓ Complete notes for Paper I and Paper II, online and PDF
- ✓ Topic-wise PYQ bank now; trend analysis and probables by December 2026
- ✓ Practice questions, answer toolkit, thinker and example banks, revision booklets



SCAN TO OPEN

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Get the Master Kit →