

PSIR & GS-2

DAILY BRIEF

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.



PSIR OPTIONAL BY
Amit Pratap Singh
| ForumIAS |

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Brazil and urban governance reforms-lessons for India



Context Brazil started urbanising in 1988, made municipalities an autonomous tier of government. India's 74th amendment gave cities constitutional recognition but never gave them actual power.

Facts

■ Brazil reached an urbanisation rate of 32% around 1940; India reached in 2011 (31.16%). By 2025 Brazil's urbanisation climbed to 88%.

■ Article 18, Brazilian constitution 1988 - municipalities on an equal constitutional footing with states and the union, with political, administrative & financial autonomy.

■ The 74th CAA gave a 5 year term and a State Election Commission, but left state-appointed commissioner as chief executive & city plans dependent on state approval.

Analytical Crux

The real difference between Brazil & India is not the text of the constitution, it is who holds the executive chair in the city. Brazil put a popularly elected mayor in charge of the budget and the plan, and gave the municipality its own tax handles. India's 74th amendment fixed the electoral problem i.e. term, elections, supersession and left the power problem untouched. The deeper point is that Brazil made them a third order of government while India made them a 3rd tier of administration. The argument is not "implement the 74th amendment properly" but the 74th amendment as drafted cannot deliver what it promised, because it left functions, fund and functionaries to state discretion.

Verbatim Quotes

"Brazil's experience provides a useful template for moving from constitutional recognition to substantive reforms that strengthen India's cities & urban governance."

— Ramanath Jha

Navigating a changing world order for India



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Prerna Gandhi, Associate Fellow, VIF

Author



Prerna Gandhi,
Associate Fellow,
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Context

Today's inability is historical norm rather than the exception and India's real challenge is not growth but growing inside a world order that is fragmenting along national-security lines.

Facts

Geoeconomic fragmentation (IMF) - trade can still grow, but it reorganises on national security lines, unevenly across countries & sectors.

The 4 pillars of the post-Cold war order: US military preeminence, dollar dominance, Chinese manufacturing scale, stable maritime commons.

April 2026 NITI Aayog launched DPI @ 2047 roadmap, targeting a \$30 trillion economy with per capita income of \$18,000 by 2047.

Analytical Crux

For 30 years states optimised for efficiency because the system paid the security bill and the system has stopped paying it, redundancy has become rational. India's problem stops being a growth problem and becomes a composition problem i.e. a \$30 trillion GDP with no industrial depth and no technology stack of its own buys very little leverage. An unresolved land border, a closed Eurasian land route through Iran, and a third of the periphery facing the Indian ocean mean that India cannot pick a camp even if it wanted to. The maritime turn is the only grand-strategic option left. India's opening in this world is not size, it is being the state that can supply global public goods i.e. DPI, climate finance, digital governance when everyone else is hoarding.

Verbatim Quotes

"The paradox is that the stability that ensued with globalization led to extreme concentration of wealth & power."

- Preeti Gandhi

Donot write the obituary of international law yet

Do not write the obituary of international law yet

Is international law really dying? The question has become increasingly difficult to ignore. The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, instability in West Asia, violence against civilians, and the inability of international institutions to respond effectively, have led many to conclude that international law is no longer relevant.

International law was premised on the idea that relations between states should be governed not merely by power, but by rules and legal principles built on consensus. When wars still take place, the effectiveness of the system is naturally exposed to scrutiny. However, it would be too early to write an obituary for international law.

'It will prevail'

In July 2026, while addressing the International Law Commission recently, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres remarked that "international law is under pressure – but it will prevail". The second half of the statement deserves as much attention as the first.

International law undoubtedly faces serious challenges, but it continues to shape the conduct of states and remains the language through which international disputes are contested.

Paradoxically, wars actually demonstrate why international law still matters. Had it really become irrelevant, the states concerned would not bother to justify their actions by referring to international law. They invoke the UN Charter, sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-defence and international humanitarian law. Even states accused of violating international law rarely argue that the law itself is meaningless. Rather, they claim that their actions are consistent with it. A legal system under which states continue to justify their conduct cannot simply be described as dead.

International law scholars Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes argued that states often comply with international law not because they are threatened with sanctions, but because they



Jyoti Singh

Advocate based in Delhi and a former legal consultant to the Legal and Treaties Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

International law remains relevant in a troubled world

are influenced by the dynamics created within the treaty regimes to which they belong. It is a pertinent observation even today. The significance of international law cannot be determined only by instances of violation; it also lies in providing a framework through which state conduct is assessed, disputes are addressed and cooperation is sustained. The difficulty is that compliance goes unnoticed whereas violations dominate headlines.

The quiet power of international law

The quiet accomplishments of international law are visible every day. Aircraft fly across international boundaries because states comply with international aviation regulations. Ships sail across seas because of international maritime law. Diplomacy functions because governments observe established legal norms. International trade, communications and travel continue because states honour thousands of international obligations. Even as armed conflicts continue to dominate headlines, states still negotiate multilateral legal agreements. Recent endeavours such as the High Seas Treaty, international efforts towards pandemic preparedness, and the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime demonstrate that states continue to rely on international law. International law also affects individuals. The moment a person crosses an international border, international law begins to matter. The recognition of passports, consular assistance, international air travel and the protection of refugees all depend upon international legal rules. We often notice international law only when it fails, but millions of people rely on it every day.

The continued relevance of international law is perhaps most evident in the way states seek peace, which is built through negotiations, commitments and legal arrangements. Whether these are described as peace agreements, ceasefire arrangements, diplomatic understandings or negotiated settlements, even

adversarial states recognise the need for legal commitments that establish expectations and obligations for the future. India provides a good example in this respect. India's experience with the Indus Waters Treaty demonstrates that even during periods of political discord, legal frameworks continue to provide a basis for engagement between states. That is precisely why international law remains indispensable for India and the wider Global South. The problems of climate change, pandemics, cyber-attacks, and economic instability cannot be addressed unilaterally by any state. They require cooperation, which in turn depends on agreed rules of conduct. A rules-based international order provides an opportunity to developing states to protect and advance their interests through negotiations rather than power alone.

There are imperfections

The reality is that international law has never been perfect. It has always coexisted with political realities and has frequently been condemned for reflecting unequal power structures. Recent conflicts have reinforced these criticisms, revealing the structural limitations within the UN Security Council and the broader international legal order. However, these are not reasons enough for the abandonment of the system altogether. No legal system can guarantee perfect compliance. Its significance lies in establishing the standards against which conduct can be judged. History suggests that crises have rarely marked the end of international law. More often, they have prompted its adaptation and renewal.

International law is under pressure, but it is far from dead. The greater danger is the growing belief that its violations prove its irrelevance, a conclusion that serves only those who prefer a world in which might makes right. As long as states continue to invoke, interpret and rely on international law, its obituary is being written far too soon.

Context With Ukraine, Gaza and West Asia making international institutions look powerless, the widespread verdict of "international law is dead" mistakes visible violations for the whole picture, and ignores the enormous body of quiet compliance that never makes the news.

Facts

■ Abram Chayes & Antonia Chayes : states comply with international law because they are influenced by the dynamics created within the treaty regimes.

■ Multilateral legal endeavours: High Seas Treaty, international efforts towards pandemic preparedness, & United Nations convention against Cybercrime.

Analytical Crux

The argument is not that international law work ; it is the way we measure it is broken. We judge the system by its violations , which are loud and never by its compliance, which is silent and continuous. The violating state bothers to argue self-defence , sovereignty or humanitarian law is itself proof that law sets the terms of the conversation, because nobody builds a legal defence in a court they believe has been abolished. For India and the Global South a rules - based order is not a Western imposition to be resented but the arena in which a middle power can convert argument into leverage. The alternative is an order settled purely by capability, and there India is not yet the strongest party in the room.

Verbatim Quotes

“ A rules - based international order provides an opportunity to developing states to protect and advance their interests through negotiations rather than power alone.”

- 1. PSIR Paper II, 2025:** Collective security and responsibility to protect (R2P) are similar but different in scope, goals and methods. Explain.
- 2. PSIR Paper II, 2025:** Critically analyse the different phases of India's foreign policy since independence; how justified is S. Jaishankar's classification of the current phase as "energetic diplomacy"?
- 3. GS PAPER II, 2025:** "In contemporary development models, decision-making and problem-solving responsibilities are not located close to the source of information and execution defeating the objectives of development." Critically evaluate.
- 4. GS PAPER II, 2025:** "The reform process in the United Nations remains unresolved, because of the delicate imbalance of East and West and entanglement of the USA vs. Russo-Chinese alliance." Examine.
- 5. PSIR Paper II, 2024:** "India has of late, chosen to debunk non-alignment in its pursuit of multi-alignment." Comment.
- 6. PSIR Paper I, 2023:** "Discuss the major provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Do you think that the Act remains an 'unfulfilled dream'? Argue your case."



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