

PYQ Vault

560

questions

50

days

10

years of PYQs

DAY 38

Contemporary Global Concerns — II · 7 questions

Every question carries a Flow Snapshot — and a handwritten model answer on the channel.

“No PYQ will be unfamiliar.”

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2015 · 20 marks

Do you endorse that the conventional discourse on human rights has failed to include women's rights? Explain in the context of feminist theories.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1** universalism only apparent → **Okin**: rights of "man and male household heads" → endorse the failure
- R2** the neutral human subject was male → **de Beauvoir**: "becomes a woman" → male bias built into rights

Body flow

Okin: framework defends male household heads → **de Beauvoir**: gender constructed, male experience as standard → public/private dichotomy, UDHR Art. 12 shields the home → women's harms fall outside the state → **Charlesworth**: all three generations built on male life → evidence: reproductive rights scant, Amnesty on pregnancy deaths

Counter-view

failure is a defect to fix, not fatal to rights → CEDAW (1979) + Beijing (1995) reframe gender as a human-rights issue → **Walby**: transform the framework itself

Conclusion routes

- R1** discourse failed by universalising a male subject + privatising women's suffering → feminism exposes and repairs
- R2** not abandonment but a transformed, gender-sensitive conception of rights (**Walby**) → the exclusion is corrigible

The human rights framework claims to protect every person, but feminists argue its universalism is only apparent. Susan Moller Okin states that its founding treaties and principles were written to defend "the rights of man and male household heads".

The neutral human subject of rights was, in practice, a man. The root of the problem lies in how gender is built. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* (1949), argues that "one is not born, but becomes, a woman", and that women are defined in relation to men. Rights language absorbed this bias & took the male experience as the standard for everyone.

The mechanism of exclusion is the public/private dichotomy. UDHR Article 12 shields privacy, the family & the home and keeps the domestic sphere, where women's harms are concentrated, beyond the reach of the state.

According to Hilary Charlesworth, all three generations of rights carry this flaw. They rest on male life experiences & do not answer the risks women most face.

Reproductive rights find scant provision, & Amnesty International records that pregnancy-related causes are the leading killer of girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide.

CEDAW (1979) obliged states to remove discrimination against women and the Beijing Conference (1995) reframed gender equality as a human rights issue, moving the focus from women to gender. According to Sylvia Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), genuine equality requires transforming the framework of rights itself.

The conventional discourse did fail women, by universalising a male subject & privatising their suffering. Feminist theory exposes the failure and shows how a gender sensitive conception of rights can repair it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2016 · 20 marks

Why does global human security need to be emphasised along with economic security? Explain with examples.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1** security once state + military → **Buzan**: environment + human welfare now core → referent shifts state → individual
- R2** human security = safety from chronic threats + sudden disruptions → economic base necessary, but material well-being ≠ dignity/safety/freedom → hence emphasise alongside

Body flow

economic security necessary but not sufficient → growth coexists with violence, exclusion, rights violations (income figures hide insecurity) → non-traditional threats bind both (**Caballero-Anthony**: economic + food + health + human + energy security, non-military sources) → climate / degradation / migration hit livelihoods + safety together → examples: Horn of Africa displacement + food insecurity, Pakistan floods, pandemics (health + economy) → gendered burden: women/girls at conflict-climate intersection → threats transnational → no single state secures alone → SDGs frame poverty/inequality/health/environment as connected

Counter-view

older state-centric, growth-as-sufficient view → corrected: material growth can mask violence, exclusion and lived insecurity

Conclusion routes

- R1** durable security needs both economic well-being + wider human-security protections
- R2** neither alone suffices → economic and human security as two faces of one non-traditional agenda

Security once meant the defence of the state through military means. Barry Buzan shows that the environment and human welfare have become core elements of the security agenda.

Human security means protection from chronic threats such as hunger, disease & repression and from sudden disruptions to ordinary life. Economic security supplies the material base for this, but material well-being alone does not guarantee dignity, safety or freedom. This is why human security must be stressed alongside economic security, not treated as its by-product.

Growth can coexist with violence, exclusion & the violation of rights & rising income figures may hide deep insecurity in daily life. What binds the two together is the rise of non-traditional threats.

According to Caballero - Anthony, economic, food, health, human & energy security all face threats from non-military sources.

The examples make this plain. Climate-induced displacement & food insecurity in the Horn of Africa, and the floods in Pakistan, destroyed incomes & lives together. Pandemics disrupt health systems and economies alike. The burden is also uneven, as women & girls are disproportionately exposed where conflict and the climate crisis overlap.

The SDGs frame poverty, inequality, health and environment as connected human-security goals rather than separate targets.

Therefore, durable security calls for both economic well-being and the wider protections of human security.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 20 marks

Critically evaluate the notion of “Asian Values” in the context of the ongoing debates on human rights.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1** Asian Values = sharpest cultural-relativist challenge to universal rights → tiger economies + Bangkok Declaration (1993)
- R2** not a rejection but a qualification of universality → resistance to humanitarian interference in sovereign affairs

Body flow

Lee Kuan Yew + Mahathir (community/order over individual) → **Tu Weiming** (Confucian grounding) → **Freeman** (“weapon of cultural hegemony”) → **Sen** (diverse, not monolithic; constructed narrative for authoritarian rule) → **Ruthven** (culture over women’s rights = control of women) → relativist caution not baseless (duties precede rights in Confucian/Vedic traditions) → **Donnelly** (rights inherent/inalienable; Western double standards; relativism as guise for abuse)

Counter-view

relativism has genuine force: culture shapes the ordering of rights, universalism can be hegemony (**Freeman**) — set against rights as inherent and universal (**Sen, Donnelly**)

Conclusion routes

- R1** reconcile, not choose → **Coomaraswamy** (non-Western values reconciled with rights)
- R2** adopt and adapt (**Panikkar**) → fails as authoritarian defence, but caution against imposed rights holds

The notion of Asian Values is the sharpest cultural-relativist challenge to the claim that human rights are universal. It grew out of the Asian "tiger" economies and was out in the Bangkok Declaration (1993).

Lee Kuan Yew & Mahathir Mohamad held that Asian nations should place collective well-being and social order above individual freedom, since Western individualism can weaken social harmony and economic progress. Tu Weiming grounded the position in Confucianism, stressing social responsibility, respect for authority & community welfare. Freeman argues that universal rights can become a "weapon of cultural hegemony", with Asian values offered as an alternative standard.

Amartya Sen showed that Asian societies are diverse, not monolithic. A single "Asian values" identity is a constructed narrative used by elites to justify authoritarian rule. Malise Ruthven added that placing cultural rights above women's rights is poor bargain, since fundamentalism works through the social control of women.

However, the relativist caution is not baseless. Culture shape how rights and duties are ordered. In Confucian & Vedic traditions duties precede rights. Jack Donnelly argues that rights are inherent & inalienable, but Western double standards keep the relativist argument alive.

The debate therefore settles on reconciliation & not on choosing a side. Radhika Kumaraswamy urged that non-Western values be reconciled with the basic concepts of human rights.

Raimon Panikkar held that rights, though Western in origin, must be adopted and adapted to each culture. Asian values fails as a defence of authoritarian power, but its objection to rights imposed from outside remains valid.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 15 marks

Discuss the Trump-Kim Singapore Summit on the prospects of denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1 Korean denuclearisation sits at intersection of security model + deterrence + nuclear norms → summit must be judged against these logics
- R2 NK nuclear-armed, outside NPT → Singapore opens a channel → delivery hinges on *why* Pyongyang holds its arsenal

Body flow

security model (**Morgenthau/Waltz**): weapons = survival, so no denuclearisation via one meeting → deterrence (**Schelling/Brodie**): credible retaliation lowers incentive to relinquish → identity/status (**Wendt**): arsenal signals standing + regime security, more than a bargaining chip → verification = central obstacle + peaceful-use loophole (civilian → military route) → diplomacy (**Keohane/Nye**): dialogue valuable but needs enforceable mutual guarantees

Counter-view

liberal engagement case (dialogue + confidence-building can move behaviour) vs realist-structural case (survival, deterrence, unverifiable commitments make summitry alone insufficient)

Conclusion routes

- R1 summit a beginning, not a settlement → durable denuclearisation needs verification + enforceable guarantees
- R2 **Tannenwald**: sustained stigma beats one-off deals → **Sagan**: coercive diplomacy + arms control + norm-building together → summitry can start, not complete

The denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula sits at intersection of the security model, deterrence and the norms surrounding nuclear weapons. North Korea remains one of 9 nuclear armed states and stays outside the NPT.

According to Hans Morgenthau & Kenneth Waltz, a state facing threats it cannot otherwise meet treats nuclear weapons as essential to survival. For such a regime, complete denuclearisation cannot be secured through a single meeting.

Deterrence deepens the problem. Thomas Schelling & Bernard Brodie show that the value of these weapons lies in a credible threat of retaliation, which lowers any incentive to relinquish them. Alexander Wendt argues that for North Korea the arsenal signals standing and regime security, not merely for defence and is more than a bargaining chip.

Even where intent exists, verification is the central obstacle. Without intrusive oversight, commitments remain hard to confirm. and civilian programmes offer a route back to military capability. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye stress dialogue and confidence building, but durable denuclearisation needs enforceable, mutual guarantees.

The summit is therefore a beginning, not a settlement. As Nina Tannenwald suggests, sustained pressure & stigma shift behaviour more than one-off agreements.

Scott Sagan holds that more nuclear states will make the world worse where institutions are weak. Prevention need concive diplomacy, arms control & norm-building together.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

Discuss the importance of personal data protection in the context of human rights.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1** data protection seen as technical/commercial → actually a defence of privacy → UDHR + Puttaswamy into Article 21
- R2** privacy a recognised right → in a data-driven world exercised through control of personal data → protect data to protect the right

Body flow

data-driven world, data shapes choices/elections (Cambridge Analytica) → control of data = control of choices → surveillance curbs free expression (Snowden/NSA, China) → profiling + breaches enable discrimination (race/sex/religion, Equifax) → rights above market/profit (**Dworkin** — “rights are trumps”) → GDPR + DPDP Act 2023 give legal form

Counter-view

developing countries lack comprehensive law → citizens exposed to multinational exploitation → right recognised in principle, unevenly realised

Conclusion routes

- R1** data protection and rights organically linked → strong law a prerequisite for rights in digital globalisation
- R2** privacy the gateway to freedom, dignity, equality → without data protection these rights turn insecure

Personal data protection is often treated as a technical or commercial matter, but at its core it defends a recognised human right i.e. the right to privacy.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects individuals from arbitrary interference in their private life & communications.

In India, the SC read this right into Article 21 in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India. Liberty is not secure if a person's information is held hostage. Protecting data is protecting the freedom, dignity & equality that rights promise.

Edward Snowden's 2013 revelations exposed the NSA's mass surveillance of ordinary citizens, while heavy state monitoring in China deters online speech. The misuse enables discrimination.

Algorithmic profiling can sort people by race, sex, religion or origin, and breaches such as Equifax leave millions open to fraud.

This is why data protection laws place individual rights above market and profit. Ronald Dworkin argues "rights are trumps".

The EU's GDPR and India's DPDP act, 2023 give this claim legal form.

Many developing countries still lack comprehensive law, leaving citizens exposed to exploitation by multinational firms.

Data protection & human rights are organically linked. Strong laws are a prerequisite for rights in the age of digital globalisation.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 15 marks

Discuss the efficacy of global conventions to combat international terrorism.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1 conventions have multiplied since 1963 → terrorism has not receded → efficacy only partial
- R2 a widening web of counter-terror law built → but the keystone, an agreed definition, is missing → efficacy capped

Body flow

phased instruments (1963 aircraft treaty, first of its kind + five sectoral in the 1970s → aviation/shipping) → post-9/11 widening (bombings, financing, nuclear) → institutional support (FATF grey-listing, SCO's RATS, UNSC 1267/1373/1624 → freezes, incitement) → instruments do curb finance and safe havens → definitional deadlock (no comprehensive convention, CCIT stalled, one state's terrorist another's freedom fighter → **Heywood**, "essentially contested concept") → selective enforcement (China vs Hafiz Saeed listing under 1267 → "double standards," BRICS/India protest) → persistence (Afghanistan, Syria)

Counter-view

conventions genuinely constrain terrorist finance, movement and safe havens ↔ set against definitional deadlock + politicised, selective enforcement + terrorism still engulfing whole regions → net verdict is partial efficacy, not decisive result

Conclusion routes

- R1 conventions manage terrorism, do not defeat it → finalise CCIT + end "good"/"bad" distinction + tie enforcement to rule of law
- R2 **Annan** → a global scourge demands a global response → grounded in law and human rights, not selective convenience

Global conventions against terrorism have multiplied since 1960s, but the threat has not receded. They have built a working framework of counter-terror law, but cannot deliver decisive results.

Early instruments like the 1963 aircraft convention, the first such treaty and five more in the 1970s secured aviation and shipping. After 9/11 the scope widened to bombings, financing & nuclear terrorism. Institutional support like FATF grey-list states over terror funding, the SCOs RATS drives regional action, and UNSC Resolutions 1267, 1373 & 1624 impose asset freezes and criminalise incitement.

The world has no comprehensive convention. One state's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. Andrew Heywood calls terrorism an "essentially contested concept" as disagreement over the definition blocks binding common action.

China's resistance to listing Hafiz Saeed under Resolution 1267 shows the "double standards" that BRICS and India protest.

Terrorism has engulfed regions as large as nations, from Syria to Afghanistan, putting efficacy in doubt.

The framework manages terrorism without defeating it. Greater efficacy needs the CCIT finalised, the "good/bad" terrorist distinction ended and enforcement tied to the rule of law.

Kofi Annan states that a global scourge demands a global response grounded in law & human rights, not selective convenience.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 15 marks

The withdrawal of the United States of America from the World Health Organization is set to have far-reaching impacts on global health. Reimagining the existing WHO is vital for the global health agenda. Discuss.

FLOW SNAPSHOT *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

- R1** US founded WHO (1948), principal funder + agenda-driver (surveillance, PEPFAR) → exit raises existential questions for global health governance
- R2** withdrawal as latest US unilateralism (like Paris exit) → deepens democratic deficit in global governance

Body flow

immediate impacts (funding gaps, reduced US influence, widening health inequities, weakened pandemic coordination, eroded trust) → domino/legitimacy risk (populist/nationalist agendas superseding multilateralism; US loses surveillance + early-warning access) → these expose **Stiglitz's** accountability deficit (opaque, unaccountable institutions) → reimagining begins → diversify + stabilise financing (no single donor) → transparency + streamlined decisions + Independent Panel recommendations → greater voice for emerging economies + non-state actors (representation)

Counter-view

nationalist-unilateralist retreat (sovereignty over multilateral commitments) vs. interdependence (borderless threats, shared vulnerability, no one safe until all safe)

Conclusion routes

- R1** no population secure until all protected → **Linklater's** post-national community of shared problems → multilateral solidarity as safeguard
- R2** crisis as opportunity → reimagine a more representative, better-financed, more effective WHO

The U.S. helped found the WHO in 1948. It remains a principal funder and agenda-driver of global health, from disease surveillance to programmes like PEPFAR.

Its withdrawal therefore raises existential questions for global health governance & belongs to a wider pattern of US unilateralism. Like the earlier Paris exit that deepens the democratic deficit in global governance.

Funding gaps threaten global health programmes, US influence recedes, & health inequities widen. The withdrawal carries a domino risk, signalling to other states that populist and nationalist agendas may supersede multilateral action.

These vulnerabilities expose the accountability problem Joseph Stiglitz identified in the IMF and World Bank. Reimagining WHO must begin here.

Decision-making must become more transparent & streamlined, and the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Pandemics Preparedness & Response implemented.

In an interconnected world, no population is secure until all are protected. Pandemics are the shared, borderless problem on which Andrew Linklater's post-national community is based.

The crisis is therefore an opportunity to build a more representative, better financed and more effective WHO, anchored in multilateral solidarity as the most robust safeguard.

All 7 questions — PDF + handwritten answers

The complete Day 38 set — every PYQ with its Flow Snapshot and the handwritten model answer — in one PDF on the channel, free.

Download on Telegram
@psirbyamitpratap

560 questions · 50 days · ten years of PYQs — nothing left out

Tomorrow — Day 39. Don't break the chain.



PSIR OPTIONAL · FOR MAINS 2026

ATS 2026

AUGMENTED TEST SERIES

BATCH 3 05 JULY

BATCH 4 19 JULY

BATCH 5 26 JULY

TEST SERIES INCLUDES

- ◆ Sectional + Full-Length Tests + Simulators
- ◆ In-depth discussion with Model Answers
- ◆ One-to-one expert evaluation & mentorship

TO ENROL OR FOR GUIDANCE, CALL

93117 40432

AMIT PRATAP SINGH

PSIR FACULTY · FORUMIAS

PSIR OPTIONAL · FOR MAINS 2027

OCP 2027

OPTIONAL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

COMMENCES

6 JULY 2026

BATCH 1 · ONLINE & OFFLINE

PROGRAMME INCLUDES

- ◆ 35 live classes – entire PSIR syllabus
- ◆ 35 Daily Answer-Writing Tests
- ◆ Full-Length Tests with Model Answers
- ◆ One-to-one evaluation & mentorship

TO ENROL OR FOR GUIDANCE, CALL

93117 40432

AMIT PRATAP SINGH

PSIR FACULTY · FORUMIAS