

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.