

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

At the outset on behalf of the Executive Board, we extend a warm welcome to all of you and congratulate you on being a part of the AIPPM being simulated at CENMUN. The committee being simulated, would unlike most other simulations you must have heard of or been a part of; focus on political intellect, logical intellect, analytical application of thoughts, and strategic application of thoughts in addressing the issues at hand. This Introductory guide would be as abstract as possible, and would just give you a basic perspective on what you can expect from the committee and areas wherein your research should be focused at this given point in time. Given the extremely political and volatile nature of the agendas of the committee, your presence of mind and analytical aptitude is something that we at the executive board would be looking to test. Kindly do not limit your research to the areas highlighted herein but, ensure that you logically deduce and push your research to areas associated with and in addition to the issues mentioned. The objective of this background guide is to provide you with a 'background' of the issue at hand and therefore it might seem to some as not being comprehensive enough. We feel that 'study guides' are detrimental to the individual growth of the delegate since they overlook a very important part of this activity, which is Research. We are sure, however, that this background guide gives you a perfect launching pad to start with your research. This guide shall deal with a skeletal overview of the agenda.

DISCLAIMER: The Content provided in the BG is a compilation of various research and literary works of various authors and thinkers blend with the intellect of the executive board. It is to be noted that the content provided below in no way reflects the personal ideologies of the executive board and has been prepared keeping in mind a neutral point of view. Wishing you all very good luck.

Regards,

The Executive Board

AGENDA: Analysing the current status of democracy in India

Democracy in India:

India's government is loosely modelled on the British Westminster system. It consists of a president as head of state; an executive headed by the prime minister; a legislature consisting

of a parliament with an upper and lower house (the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha); and a judiciary with a supreme court at its head.

543 members are elected to the Lok Sabha through a first-past-the-post general election, held every five years. State representatives are indirectly elected to the Rajya Sabha on staggered six-year terms, so every two years around one-third are changed, elected by state legislatures. India's constitution sets out the country's political code, federal structure, powers of government and guarantees Indians' rights, including equality before the law and freedoms of speech, assembly, movement and others.

The system is complicated by India's caste system, a hierarchical social structure that divides the Hindu majority into groups, with 'Brahmins' at the top and 'Dalits' at the bottom of society. Last names often indicate to which caste a person belongs.

India's constitution banned caste discrimination and early governments introduced quotas to provide fairer allocation of jobs and education, but caste remains a powerful factor in politics. In some regions political parties still court voters according to castes, who tend to vote as a block.

Secularism and Democracy

India's constitution was adjusted to describe it as a secular state during the 1975 emergency, and a later court ruling found that India has been secular since independence. But India is understood to be a deeply religious country, with diverse religions represented in its population.

Recent times have shown that secularism has varied interpretations with many questioning the state of secularism in the country. Secularism is increasingly at risk in countries where democracy is weak, particularly when a ruling party holds a brute majority. In such environments, the dominance of one political faction can marginalised minority groups and undermine pluralism, leading to the erosion of secular values. This majority may impose its own ideological beliefs, prioritising them over the diverse tapestry of cultural and religious identities that constitute the nation. The lack of democratic checks and balances allows for the manipulation of laws and institutions, fostering an atmosphere where dissent is stifled and minority voices are silenced. As a result, the fundamental principles of secularism—freedom of belief and the separation of religion from state affairs—are jeopardised, threatening the very foundation of a fair and inclusive society.

Cases of breakdown of Democracy in India

1. Emergency 1975: The Emergency declared in India from 1975 to 1977 marked a significant turning point in the country's democratic history, leading to a breakdown of democratic norms and civil liberties. Announced by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Emergency was justified by the government as necessary to address internal disturbances, but it resulted in widespread political repression.

During this period, fundamental rights were suspended, and the press faced heavy censorship. Opposition leaders were jailed, protests were quelled, and dissent was brutally

suppressed. The government implemented a series of authoritarian measures, including mass sterilisation programs and forced relocations, which alienated large segments of the population. The ruling party's actions eroded public trust and stifled political pluralism.

The Emergency not only curtailed democratic processes but also set a precedent for the use of state power to silence opposition. The lack of free elections during this time allowed the ruling party to consolidate control without accountability. As a result, the democratic fabric of the nation was severely weakened, and many citizens experienced fear and uncertainty.

When the Emergency ended in 1977, the backlash against Indira Gandhi's regime led to a significant political shift, culminating in the rise of the Janata Party. The events of this period served as a crucial lesson about the fragility of democracy and the importance of safeguarding civil rights and institutional checks against the concentration of power. The legacy of the Emergency continues to influence India's political landscape and its commitment to democratic principles.

2. Manipur Crisis: The recent breakdown of democracy in Manipur has been marked by intense civil conflict, particularly between the Kuki and Meitei communities. Tensions escalated in May 2023 over issues such as land rights and political representation, leading to violent clashes and widespread unrest. The government's response included an internet ban aimed at curbing misinformation and controlling the situation, but this restriction has further exacerbated grievances and stifled communication among affected communities.

The civil conflict has not only resulted in significant loss of life and displacement but has also highlighted the fragility of democratic institutions in the region. Civil liberties, including the right to assemble and express dissent, have been curtailed as security forces have been deployed to maintain order. This has raised serious concerns about human rights violations and the erosion of democratic norms.

The situation reflects deeper systemic issues, including ethnic tensions and political marginalization, that undermine the social fabric of Manipur. The failure to effectively address these grievances through dialogue and inclusive governance has led to a breakdown in trust between communities and the state. As the conflict persists, the need for a comprehensive and equitable approach to peacebuilding becomes increasingly urgent, emphasizing the importance of restoring democratic processes and safeguarding civil liberties for all citizens in Manipur.

3. Jammu and Kashmir: The recent breakdown of democracy in Kashmir has been profoundly affected by the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, which granted the region a degree of autonomy. This decision not only altered the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir but also ignited widespread unrest and resentment among its populace. The Indian government's move to bifurcate the state into two Union Territories—Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh—further marginalized local political voices, consolidating central authority and diminishing regional autonomy.

Following the revocation, an extended internet ban was imposed, severely restricting communication and information flow. This blackout hindered civil society's ability to organise, voice dissent, or access news, effectively stifling democratic discourse. Political

leaders, including former chief ministers, were placed under house arrest or jailed, curtailing political engagement and participation in the democratic process.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has also been used to detain individuals under vague charges, often targeting dissenters and activists. This has created a climate of fear, where speaking out against government actions can lead to severe repercussions. Collectively, these measures represent a significant erosion of civil liberties and democratic rights in the region, fueling discontent and instability.

Caged Parrot - CBI and ED

Under NDA government

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, concerns about the misuse of investigative agencies have grown, particularly in relation to political dissent and civil liberties. The Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) have been criticised for being weaponized against opposition leaders, activists, and dissenters.

One prominent example is the case of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Several party members have faced investigations by the ED and CBI, particularly in relation to alleged corruption in the excise policy. Critics argue that these actions are politically motivated attempts to undermine a rival party rather than genuine efforts to address corruption.

Similarly, the arrest of prominent activist and journalist Siddique Kappan in 2020 highlighted the use of the UAPA and NIA in stifling dissent. Kappan was detained while on his way to report on the Hathras gang rape case, accused of attempting to incite communal tensions. His prolonged detention without a trial raised alarms about the erosion of press freedom and the right to dissent.

The situation is further compounded by the treatment of opposition leaders, such as former Congress President Rahul Gandhi. His questioning by the ED over alleged money laundering in the National Herald case has been perceived as an intimidation tactic to silence criticism of the government.

These instances exemplify a broader trend where investigative agencies, instead of functioning as independent bodies to uphold the rule of law, appear to be increasingly politicised. This misuse not only undermines the integrity of these institutions but also poses a significant threat to democratic processes and civil liberties in India, fostering an atmosphere of fear and repression.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has frequently been accused of being used as a tool against political rivals under the Modi government. High-profile cases illustrate this trend, raising concerns about the impartiality of the agency.

One notable example is the investigation into leaders of the Congress party, such as Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, linked to the National Herald case. Critics argue that these inquiries are politically motivated efforts to weaken the opposition, rather than genuine probes into corruption.

The ED has also targeted leaders from regional parties. For instance, the arrest of Shiv Sena leader Anil Deshmukh and former West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee on corruption charges has been viewed through a political lens, particularly in the context of ongoing electoral rivalries.

Additionally, the ED's investigations into Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, over alleged irregularities in the excise policy, have raised questions about the agency's role in suppressing dissent and political competition.

These actions contribute to a perception that the ED is being wielded as a weapon against political adversaries, undermining the credibility of the agency and raising serious concerns about the health of democracy in India. Critics argue that such tactics not only erode public trust but also threaten the very foundations of a fair and impartial judicial system.

Under UPA government

During the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, there were allegations of the misuse of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against opposition leaders, particularly from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Here are some key instances that illustrate this concern:

1. Arrests in the 2G Spectrum Case: The CBI's investigation into the 2G spectrum allocation scandal saw the arrest of several politicians and business figures. While the case was significant in exposing corruption, many BJP leaders claimed that the CBI was selectively targeting individuals connected to the opposition, especially in an effort to weaken the BJP's political stance.
2. Commonwealth Games Scandal: Several BJP leaders alleged that the investigations surrounding the Commonwealth Games corruption were aimed at discrediting political opponents. Although key figures from the UPA were also implicated, the timing of the investigations raised suspicions about their intent, particularly as the BJP sought to capitalize on public dissatisfaction with the UPA.
3. Coalgate Investigations: The CBI's actions in the coal block allocation scandal included scrutinizing various politicians from the BJP. Critics argued that the agency was under pressure to target opposition leaders while often overlooking corrupt practices within the UPA itself, suggesting a politically motivated agenda.
4. Political Pressure and Allegations: Many BJP leaders accused the CBI of operating under political influence, claiming that investigations were directed towards creating a narrative that favored the ruling party. The perception that the CBI was being used to silence dissent and intimidate political rivals was widespread, fostering distrust in the agency's impartiality.

These examples indicate a pattern of alleged misuse of investigative agencies by the UPA government to undermine opposition parties, raising significant concerns about the independence of institutions meant to uphold justice and accountability. Such actions

contributed to a growing perception of politicization within these agencies, which continues to affect public trust in their operations today.

Media

Under the Modi government, various reports and incidents have pointed to increasing suppression of media freedoms in India. Here are some key aspects illustrating this trend:

1. **Censorship and Control:** There have been instances of direct censorship, where journalists faced pressure to align their reporting with the government's narrative. Media houses have been known to self-censor due to fear of repercussions, which stifles independent journalism.
2. **Legal Threats and Intimidation:** Journalists reporting on sensitive issues, such as government policies or corruption, have faced legal action, including defamation suits and charges under laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). High-profile cases, like that of journalist Vinod Dua, reflect how legal threats are used to intimidate the media.
3. **Internet Shutdowns:** The government has frequently imposed internet shutdowns in regions like Kashmir and during protests, severely limiting journalists' ability to report. These shutdowns disrupt not only local reporting but also national and international coverage of critical events.
4. **Attacks on Journalists:** There has been a rise in physical attacks on journalists, particularly those covering dissent or critical issues. The targeting of journalists, sometimes leading to violence or harassment, creates a climate of fear that hinders press freedom. Eg - Gauri Lankesh
5. **Concentration of Media Ownership:** Many media outlets are owned by large corporations with close ties to the government, leading to concerns about biased reporting. This concentration can result in a lack of diverse perspectives in the media landscape.
6. **Promoting Pro-Government Narratives:** State-sponsored narratives often dominate public discourse, especially on social media, with efforts to discredit or silence critical voices. This creates an environment where dissenting opinions are marginalised.

These elements contribute to a climate where journalistic independence is increasingly threatened, raising concerns about the future of democracy and free speech in India.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/05/07/modi-media-journalists-freedom-press/>

<https://www.opindia.com/2018/12/barkha-dutt-manmohan-singh-the-print/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-55906345>

Free and Fair Elections Bengal Case

The question of free and fair elections in West Bengal has become a contentious issue in recent years, marked by allegations of violence, electoral manipulation, and political intimidation. Several key factors contribute to these concerns, undermining the democratic process in the state.

1. Political Violence:

West Bengal has witnessed significant political violence during election periods, often involving clashes between rival party supporters. Incidents of intimidation, threats, and even fatalities have been reported, creating a climate of fear that can deter voters from exercising their rights. Such violence is often politically motivated, aiming to establish dominance over certain regions and suppress opposition.

2. Electoral Manipulation:

Allegations of electoral manipulation, including vote rigging and tampering with electronic voting machines (EVMs), have surfaced in West Bengal. Opposition parties, particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Left Front, have accused the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) of orchestrating fraudulent practices to secure electoral victories. These claims raise serious doubts about the integrity of the electoral process and the reliability of outcomes.

3. Intimidation of Election Officials:

Reports suggest that election officials in West Bengal have faced pressure from political parties, particularly during crucial phases of the electoral process. Allegations of coercion to favor certain parties compromise the neutrality of the election machinery, undermining the fairness of the elections.

4. Role of Law Enforcement:

The deployment and behaviour of law enforcement agencies during elections have come under scrutiny. There are concerns about police partiality, where law enforcement may act in favor of the ruling party rather than maintaining law and order impartially. This partiality can deter voters and create a perception of bias, affecting public trust in the electoral process.

5. Media Freedom and Bias:

The media landscape in West Bengal also reflects significant challenges regarding the freedom of expression and impartiality. Allegations of media bias towards the ruling party have been widespread, where journalists face pressure to conform to certain narratives. The suppression of dissenting voices limits the scope for informed public debate and undermines the role of media as a watchdog in the democratic process.

6. Voter Suppression:

There have been instances of voter suppression tactics aimed at minority communities and opposition supporters. Tactics may include misinformation about voting procedures, aggressive questioning at polling stations, and even threats, all designed to dissuade individuals from voting. Such practices not only undermine the principle of universal suffrage but also exacerbate divisions within society.

7. Judicial Oversight:

The role of the judiciary in ensuring free and fair elections is crucial, yet concerns have been raised about the responsiveness of the legal system to electoral malpractices. Delays in addressing electoral disputes or complaints can perpetuate injustices, leaving voters disillusioned with the democratic process.

8. Electoral Commission's Role:

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is tasked with ensuring free and fair elections, but its effectiveness in West Bengal has been questioned. Criticism has arisen regarding the Commission's

responsiveness to complaints of violence, voter intimidation, and other irregularities. The perception of bias or ineffectiveness can further erode public trust in the electoral process.

Conclusion:

The combination of political violence, electoral manipulation, intimidation, and media bias creates a complex landscape that challenges the integrity of elections in West Bengal. Ensuring free and fair elections requires comprehensive reforms, including stronger protections for voters, greater accountability for political parties, and a commitment to upholding democratic norms. Only by addressing these issues can West Bengal hope to foster a truly democratic electoral environment, where every citizen feels empowered to participate without fear or intimidation.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/free-and-fair-polls-not-possible-in-wb-without-president-rule-vijayvargiya-120103001288_1.html

<https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/blog/democracy-free-fair-and-so-disproportioned-it-would-make-puttaswamy-cry/>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/broken-ballot-8822350/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMuicSm6ZFW&pp=ygUccG9saXRpY2FsIHZpb2xlbmNlIGluIGJlbmdhbA%3D%3D>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI6w6iNlEk&pp=ygUmcmcg2FyIG1lZGljYWwgY29sbGVnZnZSRb2xrYXRhIGV4cGxhaW4%3D>

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Breakdown of Federal Structure

1. **Robbing Democratic Mandates:** "Operation Lotus" refers to a controversial political strategy employed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to destabilize and topple opposition-led governments in various states through defections and the allure of political incentives. This tactic has raised significant concerns about the integrity of democracy and the sanctity of the electoral mandate. A prominent example occurred in Karnataka in 2019 when several Congress and JD(S) MLAs defected to the BJP, leading to the collapse of the coalition government. The BJP's maneuvering was seen as a direct attempt to undermine the electoral will of the voters who had chosen the coalition in the previous elections.

Another instance was in Madhya Pradesh in 2020, where the BJP managed to bring down the Congress-led government by enticing key Congress leaders to defect. This not only disrupted the political landscape but also prompted widespread criticism from opposition parties, who accused the BJP of using money and power to "steal" the people's mandate.

The impact of such operations extends beyond individual states, raising broader questions about the ethical implications of using state power to facilitate political realignments. Critics argue that these tactics erode public trust in the electoral process, as they suggest that electoral choices can be easily subverted for political gain, undermining the very foundation of democracy. As such, Operation Lotus symbolises the growing concern over the politicisation of state mechanisms and the fragility of electoral mandates in contemporary Indian politics.

2. Overthrowing Democratic Governments: Since Indira Gandhi's time, there have been several instances where central governments have intervened to overthrow state governments, raising concerns about the breakdown of democratic norms in India.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indira-gandhi-dismissed-elected-state-govts-50-time-s-congress-troubled-every-regional-leader-pm-modi/articleshow/97779242.cms>

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/politics/congress-govt-at-centre-dismissed-90-state-governments-pm-modi-10041501.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf8mG7GiimE&pp=ygUPT3BlcmF0aW9uIGthbWFs>

Suggested MOD topics

1. Challenges and threats to Indian Democracy.
2. Media and its relevance in democracy.
3. Misuse of Central Agencies.
4. Political violence and its implications on democracy.
5. Democracy in Manipur and Kashmir.
6. Ways to strengthen democracy in India.
7. Importance of Federal structure in democracy.
8. Discussion on status of Secularism in India

General Instructions

- Delegates are required to adhere to their party's official stance on the matters discussed.
- Languages permitted include Hindi, English, and other regional languages, subject to the Chair's discretion.
- For documentation: Amendments, resolutions, and communiqués will be drafted, either unanimously or reflecting bloc positions.
- Position papers will be accepted until the end of the first day of the conference, with further details provided during committee sessions.

Crisis and Zero Hour

Crisis: Delegates will be presented with a hypothetical scenario that requires them to formulate statements. This exercise will test the delegates' logical reasoning skills in relation to the agenda and political dynamics.

Zero Hour: There will be a designated period for open debate, allowing for discussions outside the main agenda between the ruling party and the opposition.

How to Research

- Begin by reviewing the background guide and any provided links.
- Engage in discussions with fellow delegates beforehand to identify which matters of debate (MODs) will be addressed.
- Explore articles on relevant topics to develop your speeches (aim for at least five).
- Utilise YouTube for a wealth of available content on these subjects.

MORE REFERENCES

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/04/democracy-india>

<https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/india>

<https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/news-and-updates/is-india-still-a-democracy/>

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2022>

<https://www.cfr.org/article/future-democracy-india>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9OswjzEbWQ&pp=ygURbWFuaXB1ciBleHBsYWluZWQ%3D>