

UPSC POLITICS OPTIONAL

SYLLABUS 2026

COMPLETE PAPER 1 & PAPER 2 GUIDE



Complete Syllabus

Paper 1 (Indian Government & Politics)
Paper 2 (Comparative Government
& Politics)



Detailed Topics

Unit-wise Breakdown
(Concepts, Theories, Thinkers)



Exam Pattern

Marks & Structure
(Compulsory and Optional sections)



Preparation Tips

Strategy & Resources
(Thinkers, Case Studies, PYQs)



UPSC Politics Optional Syllabus

PAPER-1

Political Theory and Indian Politics:

1. **Political Theory:** meaning and approaches.
2. **Theories of state:** Liberal, Neo-liberal, Marxist, Pluralist, Post-colonial, and Feminist.
3. **Justice:** Conceptions of justice with special reference to Rawl's theory of justice and its communitarian critiques.
4. **Equality:** Social, political, and economic; the relationship between equality and freedom; Affirmative action.
5. **Rights:** Meaning and theories; different kinds of rights; Concept of Human Rights.
6. **Democracy:** Classical and contemporary theories; different models of democracy—representative, participatory and deliberative.
7. **Concept of power:** hegemony, ideology, and legitimacy.
8. **Political Ideologies:** Liberalism, Socialism, Marxism, Fascism, Gandhism, and Feminism.
9. **Indian Political Thought:** Dharmashastra, Arthashastra, and Buddhist Traditions; Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Sri Aurobindo, M. K. Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, M. N. Roy.
10. **Western Political Thought:** Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, John S. Mill, Marx, Gramsci, Hannah Arendt.

Indian Government and Politics:

1. **Indian Nationalism:**
 - a) **Political Strategies of India's Freedom Struggle:** Constitutionalism to mass Satyagraha, Noncooperation, Civil Disobedience; Militant and Revolutionary Movements, Peasant and Workers Movements.
 - b) **Perspectives on Indian National Movement;** Liberal, Socialist, and Marxist; Radical Humanist and Dalit.
2. **Making of the Indian Constitution:** Legacies of the British rule; different social and political perspectives.
3. **Salient Features of the Indian Constitution:** The Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Duties, Directive Principles; Parliamentary System and Amendment Procedures; Judicial Review and Basic Structure doctrine.
4. (a) **Principal Organs of the Union Government:** Envisaged role and actual working of the Executive, Legislature, and Supreme Court.
(b) **Principal Organs of the State Government:** Envisaged role and actual working of the Executive, Legislature, and High Courts.
5. **Grassroots Democracy:** Panchayati Raj and Municipal Government; Significance of 73rd and 74th Amendments; Grassroot movements.
6. **Statutory Institutions/Commissions:** 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.
7. **Federalism:** Constitutional provisions; changing nature of center-state relations; integrationist tendencies and regional aspirations; inter-state disputes.

8. **Planning and Economic Development:** Nehruvian and Gandhian perspectives; Role of planning and public sector; Green Revolution, land reforms and agrarian relations; liberalization and economic reforms.
9. Caste, Religion, and Ethnicity in Indian Politics.
10. **Party System:** National and regional political parties, ideological and social bases of parties; Patterns of coalition politics; Pressure groups, trends in electoral behavior; changing socio-economic profile of Legislators.
11. **Social Movement:** Civil liberties and human rights movements; women's movements; environmentalist movements.

PAPER-2

Comparative Politics and International Relations, Comparative Political Analysis and International Politics:

1. **Comparative Politics:** Nature and major approaches; Political economy and political sociology perspectives; Limitations of the comparative method.
2. **State in Comparative Perspective:** Characteristics and changing nature of the State in capitalist and socialist economies, and advanced industrial and developing societies.
3. **Politics of Representation and Participation:** Political parties, pressure groups and social movements in advanced industrial and developing societies.
4. **Globalisation:** Responses from developed and developing societies.
5. **Approaches to the Study of International Relations:** Idealist, Realist, Marxist, Functionalist and Systems theory.
6. **Key Concepts in International Relations:** National interest, security and power; Balance of power and deterrence; Transnational actors and collective security; World capitalist economy and globalisation.
7. **Changing International Political Order:**
 - a) Rise of superpowers; Strategic and ideological Bipolarity, arms race and cold war; Nuclear threat;
 - b) Non-aligned movement: Aims and achievements.
 - c) Collapse of the Soviet Union; Unipolarity and American hegemony; Relevance of non-alignment in the contemporary world.
8. **Evolution of the International Economic System:** From Bretton woods to WTO; Socialist economies and the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance); Third World demand for new international economic order; Globalisation of the world economy.
9. **United Nations:** Envisaged role and actual record; Specialized UN agencies—aims and functioning; the need for UN reforms.
10. **Regionalisation of World Politics:** EU, ASEAN, APEC, AARC, NAFTA.
11. **Contemporary Global Concerns:** Democracy, human rights, environment, gender justice terrorism, nuclear proliferation.

India and the World

1. **Indian Foreign Policy:** Determinants of foreign policy; the institutions of policy-making; continuity and change.
2. India's Contribution to the Non-Alignment Movement Different phases; current role.
3. **India and South Asia:**
 - (a) Regional Co-operation: SAARC-past performance and future prospects.
 - (b) South Asia as a Free Trade Area.

- (c) India's "Look East" policy.
 - (d) Impediments to regional co-operation: River water disputes; illegal cross-border migration; Ethnic conflicts and insurgencies; Border disputes.
4. **India and the Global South:** Relations with Africa and Latin America; Leadership role in the demand for NIEO and WTO negotiations.
 5. **India and the Global Centres of Power:** USA, EU, Japan, China and Russia.
 6. **India and the UN System:** Role in UN Peace-keeping; Demand for Permanent Seat in the Security Council.
 7. **India and the Nuclear Question:** Changing perceptions and policy.
 8. **Recent developments in Indian Foreign Policy:** India's position on the recent crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, and West Asia, growing relations with US and Israel; Vision of a new world order.