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1. Young Love- On Weaponisation of the POCSO Act- POCSO Act Must Not Allow Parental Pushback (TH)

General Studies 2- International Relation

Topic- Social Empowerment, Communalism, Regionalism & Secularism.

Sub Topic- Issues relating to Women and Children; Role of family and kinship in social control. against adolescents

Balancing Adolescent Autonomy and Protection- The POCSO Act Dilemma

Introduction

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, enacted to shield children from sexual abuse, is facing scrutiny for its unintended weaponization against consensual adolescent relationships. The Supreme Court's recent acknowledgment of this issue highlights a critical conflict- a law designed for protection is being misused to enforce parental authority, thereby undermining the autonomy of adolescents and criminalizing consensual intimacy.

I. Judicial Recognition of Misuse

Supreme Court's Observation (Jan 9, 2026)- The Apex Court has formally acknowledged the growing trend of the POCSO Act being "weaponized" by families.

Stakeholder Concerns- Legal scholars, child rights experts, and young adults have raised alarms that the law is increasingly used to punish young men involved in consensual relationships rather than predatory offenders.

Shift in Focus- The judiciary notes that the law is drifting from its core purpose of preventing exploitation to becoming a tool for enforcing social and familial control.

II. Structural Flaws in the POCSO Framework

Rigid Age of Consent- The Act sets a strict age of consent at 18 years, adhering to international standards but failing to account for evolving adolescent maturity.

Strict Liability Model- Under current provisions, the consent of a minor is legally irrelevant. This means consensual acts between peers (e.g., a 17-year-old and a 19-year-old) are treated with the same severity as predatory abuse.

Mandatory Minimum Sentences- Provisions intended to deter heinous crimes compel judges to impose harsh sentences indiscriminately, even in cases of non-exploitative teenage romance.

III. Familial Control and Social Boundaries

Weaponization by Families- Parents opposing relationships often file false charges of kidnapping and sexual assault against the partner.

Social Policing- This misuse is particularly prevalent in cases of elopement across caste or religious lines, effectively using state machinery to punish socially "undesirable" matches.

Blurring Lines- The legal framework struggles to distinguish between "consensual intimacy" and "coercive abuse," allowing parental resistance to override adolescent agency.

IV. Institutional Responses & Recommendations**Law Commission (2023 Report)**

Nuanced Approach- While it rejected lowering the general age of consent, it strongly warned against equating teenage intimacy with predatory violence.

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Judicial Discretion– Recommended introducing "guided judicial discretion" for sentencing in cases involving adolescents aged 16–18 years.

Supreme Court's Directive– The Court has ordered its judgment to be shared with the Law Secretary to facilitate policy corrections and curb misuse.

V. The Need for Non-Punitive Interventions

Support Deficit– Adolescents caught between personal desires and family expectations currently lack institutional support.

Service Gaps– There is a severe shortage of

1. Confidential counseling services.
2. Comprehensive sexuality education.
3. Family mediation mechanisms.

Consequences of Neglect– Over-reliance on policing and prosecution exacerbates vulnerability, leaving young couples exposed to familial retaliation and the stigma of criminalization.

Conclusion

The current application of the POCSO Act risks perpetuating harm rather than preventing it. To safeguard the true rights of adolescents, the state must shift from a purely punitive approach to one of proportionality. Legal reforms introducing judicial discretion must be accompanied by robust social infrastructure—education, counseling, and mediation—to protect young people from both exploitation and over-criminalization.

Source– <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/young-love-on-a-weaponisation-of-the-pocso-act/article70497928.ece>

2. Express view on India-US relation- Hope ties with US hit reset, but hope isn't strategy (IE)

General Studies 2– International Relation

Topic– Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Sub Topic– Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; India-US Strategic Partnership

India-US Relations– Moving Beyond Optimism to Strategic Depth

Introduction

India-US relations currently stand at a pivotal juncture defined by geopolitical flux and economic reconfiguration. While high-level diplomatic engagements have generated significant optimism, the partnership now requires a transition from rhetorical goodwill to concrete strategic depth. A mature relationship cannot rely solely on leadership chemistry; it must be anchored in institutional mechanisms, policy predictability, and a mutual respect for each other's strategic constraints.

I. Context and Evolution of Ties

Transformation Arc– Over the last two decades, the relationship has fundamentally shifted from a period of "estrangement" to deep "engagement," spanning defence, technology, and education.

Current Geopolitics– The partnership is now being tested and shaped by macro-factors– protectionist trade trends, the restructuring of global supply chains ("China plus one"), conflicts in Europe/West Asia, and Chinese assertiveness.

Indo-Pacific Convergence– India's rise as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific aligns perfectly with US interests, yet this strategic convergence is occasionally tested by divergences on trade, immigration, and climate commitments.

II. Key Areas of Engagement & Friction

1. Trade and Economic Engagement

Friction Points– Despite rising bilateral trade volumes, structural irritants persist–

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Tariffs & Market Access– Ongoing disputes over agricultural and industrial goods.

Digital Taxation– Differences over data localization and digital services taxes.

Visa Policies– H-1B visa issues affecting Indian professionals.

Opportunities– The focus on "friend-shoring" and supply chain resilience offers a pathway to deeper integration.

Gap– The absence of a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or broad trade framework limits the potential for long-term economic synergy.

2. Strategic and Defence Cooperation

Foundational Agreements– The signing of LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA (detailed below) has institutionalized military cooperation.

Shift in Dynamic– There is a pressing need to move from a "buyer-seller" relationship to one based on **co-development and co-production**.

Emerging Domains– Future cooperation must focus on high-tech domains like Cyber Security, Space, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) rather than just traditional hardware.

3. Strategic Autonomy vs. Alignment

India's Stance– India strictly adheres to "Strategic Autonomy," engaging with the US while maintaining historical ties with Russia and leadership within the Global South.

US Expectations– The US often expects closer alignment on global geopolitical issues (e.g., Ukraine, Iran).

The Challenge– The core diplomatic challenge lies in managing these divergences without allowing them to breed mistrust.

4. Domestic Reforms as Foreign Policy Enablers

Internal-External Link– India's external diplomatic weight is directly proportional to its internal economic strength.

Reforms– Improvements in labour laws, ease of doing business, and regulatory certainty are not just domestic economic tools but foreign policy assets that enhance India's credibility and leverage.

III. Broader Analysis of the Partnership

Multi-Alignment Paradigm– The relationship should be viewed through the lens of multi-alignment rather than traditional alliance politics. India acts as a bridge between the West and the Global South.

New Pillars– Technology cooperation—specifically in semiconductors, clean energy, and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)—is replacing traditional aid/trade as the central pillar.

Values vs. Interests– While "shared democratic values" provide the normative glue, hard transactional interests (security and economics) continue to dictate actual policy outcomes.

IV. Challenges Ahead

Political Unpredictability– Leadership changes in the US can lead to policy shifts (e.g., isolationism vs. interventionism).

Divergent Worldviews– distinct approaches to dealing with systemic rivals like China and historical partners like Russia.

Regional Balance– Balancing commitments to the QUAD (India, US, Japan, Australia) while managing sensitivities of other neighbors and regional powers.

V. The Foundational Defence Agreements

Agreement	Full Form	Year	Key Purpose
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement	2016	- Allows mutual access to military bases for refueling and supplies. - Note– Does <i>not</i> allow permanent basing; usage is case-by-case. - Critical for HADR (Disaster Relief) and operational reach.

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COMCASA	Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement	2018	• Enables transfer of encrypted, secure communication equipment. • Allows real-time sharing of high-end military data (air/sea/land). • Enhances interoperability between militaries.
BECA	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement	2020	• Facilitates sharing of geospatial intelligence (maps, satellite imagery). • Crucial for the accuracy of missiles, drones, and precision weapons. • Acts as the final pillar for high-tech warfare cooperation.

VI. Way Forward

Institutionalize Frameworks- Build mechanisms that survive political cycles and leadership changes in both capitals.

Sector-Specific Agreements- Instead of a massive FTA, focus on mini-deals in technology, space, and critical minerals.

"Make in India" for Defence- Aggressively pursue defence co-production (e.g., jet engines, drones) to reduce dependency and boost local manufacturing.

Climate & Green Tech- Deepen cooperation on climate finance and technology transfer for the green transition.

Conclusion

India-US relations have outgrown the phase of platitudes. To convert mutual optimism into a durable partnership, both nations must exercise strategic patience and invest in institutional depth. As the adage suggests regarding this partnership- "Hope is good, but hope backed by strategy is better."

Source- <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/express-view-on-india-us-relation-hope-ties-with-us-hit-reset-but-hope-isnt-strategy-10468226/>