



Sanskriti IAS



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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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TOPICS:-

- 1. The fate of the Washington Consensus, once talisman**
(GS Paper II - International Relations)
- 2. On climate change, mind the science-policy gap**
(GS Paper III - Environment and Ecology)
- 3. Duty of care**
(GS Paper II - Governance)

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1. THE FATE OF THE WASHINGTON CONSENSUS, ONCE TALISMAN

(GS Paper II - International Relations)

This editorial ‘**The fate of the Washington Consensus, once talisman**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 14th Mar 2026, highlights how the Washington Consensus has **lost its claim** to universal validity, giving way to more **context-sensitive** and strategic **economic policymaking**.

What the Washington Consensus promised

- The **Washington Consensus** was framed as a near-universal remedy for macro stability, market-led growth and crisis recovery in beleaguered states.
- Coined by **John Williamson** in **1989**, it bundled ten prescriptions around fiscal discipline, tax reform, liberalised interest rates, trade opening, privatisation and deregulation.
- Institutions in the West treated this as a favoured policy template, captured in the slogan **liberalise, privatise, deregulate**.
- Three decades later, that formula appears overtaken by events and no longer adequate as a universal guide.

Its political history and damaging legacy

- The framework was never merely technical; it was tied to **conditionality**, bargaining power and the ideological climate of Reaganism and Thatcherism.
- Its principles were pushed through the **Bretton Woods Institutions**, especially the **World Bank** and **International Monetary Fund** and echoed by regional lenders.
- The doctrine spread with limited scrutiny during debt crises and macroeconomic instability across developing countries.
- Its consequences proved destabilising in many cases, with the **Asian financial crisis (1997)** and **global financial crisis (2008)** exposing deep systemic flaws.
- Breakdowns at **Seattle (1999)** and **Cancun (2003)** further revealed the widening rift between developed and developing countries under this model.

Why the model failed many developing countries

- One of its most damaging features was the categorical rejection of **industrial strategy**, which narrowed the policy space of developing countries.

- Deregulation and free-market idealism were promoted even where market institutions were weak or absent, especially across **Africa** and least developed countries.
- The claim that inequality could be ignored because growth would eventually **trickle down** proved deeply harmful in practice.
- **Structural Adjustment Programmes** hit poorer nations especially hard, often eroding the limited institutional foundations on which reform depended.
- The framework itself was conceived largely in Western capitals, with too little meaningful consultation with countries that bore its heaviest burdens.

Loss of faith and the rise of alternatives

- The conditionalities imposed by the **BWIs** and the rigidity of **WTO** rules fed widespread discontent across the **Global South** through the 1990s and beyond.
- Backlash against globalisation later also surfaced in advanced economies, with movements such as **MAGA** and **Brexit** reflecting broader disillusionment.
- Countries that industrialised successfully, including **South Korea**, **Taiwan**, **Singapore** and earlier the **United States** and **Japan**, did not follow the Consensus in their formative phases.
- Their experience showed the importance of **state-led strategies**, targeted industrial policy and selective intervention rather than doctrinaire market opening.

What is replacing it

- No single new orthodoxy has emerged; instead, policymaking is becoming more **context-sensitive**, eclectic and politically grounded.
- Education, public health, infrastructure investment and even **infant industry protection** remain central, while newer challenges such as digital trade, climate resilience and **AI governance** demand fresh frameworks.
- Two broad currents are visible: a **post-Washington consensus** emphasising accountability, social safety nets and redistribution and a **Beijing-style** alternative built around state-led intervention and targeted industrial policy.
- The return of tariffs, subsidies and supply-chain redesign shows that **geopolitics**, national security and domestic politics now shape economic policy far more openly.
- The default policy question has shifted from “what is **liberalised?**” to “what protects our interests?”

The larger takeaway

- The myth that one ready-made economic template can guide every nation has been **shattered**.
- Markets still matter, but they require rules, institutions and buffers; national security can justify strategic decoupling and politics can justify **tariffs**.
- The earlier narrative of liberalise, privatise and deregulate has given way to a wider policy toolbox shaped by national capacity, global constraints and **distributional goals**.
- Success now depends less on subscribing to doctrine and more on designing policies that fit domestic realities in a **multipolar**, digital and ecologically fragile world.

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Lessons for developing countries in a post-Washington Consensus world

- **Preserve policy space:** Developing countries need greater **economic autonomy**, as UNCTAD defines policy space as freedom to pursue context-specific social and economic strategies.
- **Use industrial policy strategically:** State support for **infant industries** can matter, as **South Korea** used export promotion, directed credit and targeted incentives in its industrial rise.
- **Build institutions before deregulating:** Market reforms work best with strong **state capacity**, as World Bank work on the **East Asian Miracle** linked success to capable institutions, not pure liberalisation.
- **Protect social sectors during reform:** Growth strategies must safeguard **health and education**, as IMF evaluations themselves note long-running concerns over social-spending squeeze in adjustment programmes.
- **Balance openness with resilience:** Trade integration should build **competitiveness** without eroding resilience, as the **1997 Asian financial crisis** exposed risks in weakly buffered liberalisation.
- **Avoid doctrinaire policymaking:** Development requires **context-sensitive** strategies, as UNCTAD has repeatedly argued against one-size-fits-all external reform templates.
- **Link growth with distributional justice:** Long-term legitimacy of reform depends on **inclusion**, as post-Washington thinking increasingly stresses accountability, safety nets and redistribution over trickle-down assumptions.

2. ON CLIMATE CHANGE, MIND THE SCIENCE - POLICY GAP

(GS Paper III - Environment and Ecology)

This editorial ‘On climate change, mind the science-policy gap’ was published in **The Indian Express** on 14th Mar 2026, highlights how **climate science** is pointing to **faster and harsher warming risks** while policy frameworks and negotiations still lag behind that evidence.

Science is warning of sharper risks

- Debate over the recent acceleration in warming has been clarified by new analysis linking it to both **global warming** and **El Niño**.
- A study in **Geophysical Research Letters** finds that the Paris Pact’s **1.5°C** limit could be out of reach by **2030**.
- It also suggests sea-level rise driven by global heating may be higher than earlier estimates, including some **IPCC** assessments.
- Another study in **Environmental Research: Health** says nearly one-third of the world’s population lives in areas, including large parts of India, where heat severely limits human activity.

Policy has not kept pace with science

- The **1.5-degree** target itself took careful diplomacy to enter the Paris framework, but diplomacy has since moved slower than science.
- The gap is visible again in the **net-zero** debate, where policymakers and scientists rely on different methodologies.
- A simplified political method has been criticised for ignoring how multiple entities can claim the same **emission cuts**.
- This mismatch has created confusion in climate negotiations and weakened alignment between scientific evidence and policy design.

The cost of delay is rising

- Every fraction of a degree of warming will make **adaptation** more expensive as temperatures keep rising.
- Extreme heat will affect not only the elderly but also the young and healthy, widening the public-health burden.
- The findings also raise concern for agriculture, energy demand and broader climate **resilience** planning.

Need for better use of scientific input

- Public health experts, agricultural scientists and energy specialists already provide important **blueprints** for resilience.
- The immediate challenge is for policymakers to make better and faster use of these scientific inputs.

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Need for science-based climate governance

- **Update policy with latest science:** Climate strategy must reflect **current evidence**, as the **IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report** warns that risks rise with every increment of warming.
- **Align targets with robust accounting:** Net-zero pathways need credible **emissions accounting**, as India's **LT-LEDS** itself was submitted as a structured long-term strategy under the UNFCCC.
- **Strengthen adaptation planning:** Governments must treat **adaptation** as urgent, because India's own long-term strategy includes adaptation in urban design and resilient development pathways.
- **Integrate sector-specific expertise:** Climate action should use **health, agriculture and energy** science together, as India's **LT-LEDS** links low-carbon growth with transport, buildings and industry.
- **Improve heat-risk governance:** Public systems need stronger **heat action plans**, as NDMA says HAPs are India's primary response to heat-wave management.
- **Enhance early warning and local resilience:** Better **forecasting and preparedness** can cut losses, as 23 heat-prone States are already implementing Heat Action Plans with NDMA and IMD support.
- **Bridge science and diplomacy:** Climate negotiations must better reflect **scientific urgency**, otherwise policy will keep lagging behind evidence on warming and sea-level risk.

3. DUTY OF CARE

(GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial '**Duty of care**' was published in **The Hindu** on 14th Mar 2026, highlights how the Supreme Court's push for a **no-fault vaccine injury compensation framework** strengthens the state's duty of care in public health programmes.

A shift in public liability

- The Supreme Court's directive in **Rachana Gangu** asks the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to design a **no-fault compensation** scheme for serious adverse events following immunisation.
- This marks a move from a purely **fault-based liability** approach to recognition of state responsibility in mass public health programmes.
- The case arose from petitions by families claiming death or serious injury after **COVID-19 vaccination**.

Why the Court intervened

- **Rachana Gangu** concerned the 2021 deaths of two women aged 18 and 20, allegedly linked to vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia or **VITT**.
- Affected families had long argued that India lacked a dedicated mechanism to compensate harm arising from a state-run programme.
- The government had resisted such a policy, claiming vaccination was voluntary, serious **AEFI** cases were extremely rare and civil suits against manufacturers remained available.
- That position has now been rejected as impractical for ordinary individuals seeking relief.

Evidence weakened the earlier government stance

- The ruling also builds on **Jacob Puliyl (2022)**, where emergency approvals were upheld but the need to make AEFI data public was emphasised.
- In **2024**, AstraZeneca acknowledged in a United Kingdom court document that **Covishield** could, in rare cases, cause VITT.
- Since most Indians were vaccinated with **Covishield**, this admission weakened the claim that links between vaccination and certain deaths were merely unproven or coincidental.

India's policy gap

- Despite conducting one of the world's largest immunisation efforts, India has long lacked a dedicated national **vaccine injury compensation** programme.
- Many countries, including the **U.S.** and **U.K.**, use compensation systems where claimants need not prove negligence, only a plausible link to vaccination.
- Even the global **COVAX** facility created a no-fault mechanism for 92 low- and middle-income countries.
- During the pandemic, the government reported over **1,100 deaths** following vaccination across **219 crore doses** administered.
- In a welfare state, even rare adverse cases require an accessible legal and policy response.

What the ruling means

- The Court has clarified that its directive does not adjudicate specific causation in individual deaths or replace all **fault-based liabilities** in public health.
- Its significance lies in setting a precedent for future vaccination drives, including the new one for **HPV**.
- The larger principle affirmed is that when the state endorses medical interventions for the public good, it cannot evade its **duty of care**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Need for a humane and credible public health compensation system

- **Ensure accessible no-fault relief:** Vaccine-injury support should not depend on proving **negligence**, as the **Supreme Court** in *Rachana Gangu* asked the Centre to frame a no-fault policy.
- **Strengthen trust in public health:** A fair **compensation framework** can improve confidence, as the Court linked such a policy to mass immunisation and public-health responsibility.
- **Recognise welfare-state responsibility:** When the state promotes vaccination for the **public good**, it must also respond to rare but serious harm, which is the core logic of the ruling.
- **Avoid impractical legal burdens:** Civil suits against **manufacturers** cannot be the main remedy, as the Court found ordinary families cannot realistically pursue such litigation.
- **Support future immunisation drives:** A standing **policy mechanism** is necessary, as the ruling's logic extends beyond COVID-19 to later vaccination programmes too.
- **Build transparent AEFI governance:** Better **adverse-event reporting** and disclosure are essential, as *Jacob Puliyel* had already stressed making AEFI-related information public.
- **Learn from global models:** India need not start from zero, as **COVAX** created a no-fault mechanism for 92 lower-income economies and the **U.K.** runs a vaccine damage payment scheme.