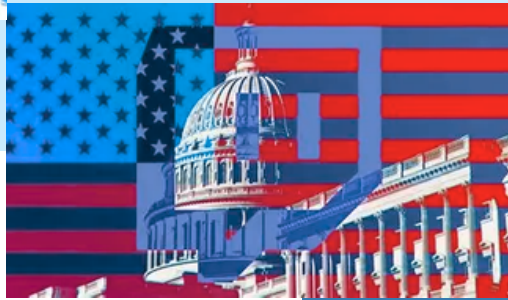
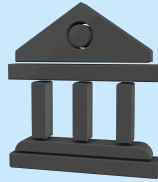
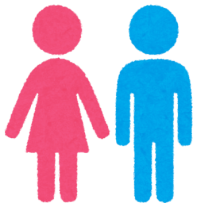




NICKELED & DIMED

CENTRE FOR NEW ECONOMICS STUDIES



EDITORS' NOTE

Nickeled and Dimed, the official research platform of the Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES) at Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, serves as an open academic forum. It offers well-researched, balanced commentaries on critical political, economic, social, and legal issues across seven research clusters: Public Policy, International Relations, Legal Studies, Environment & Social Issues, Gender & Society, History & Culture, and Finance & Economics.

In an era of abundant information but scarce clarity, **Nickeled and Dimed** bridges academic inquiry with public discourse. This edition comprises of insightful articles that address contemporary issues and examines their broader implications through books, critical commentaries, and audio-visual narratives.

- **Public Policy**- "Judicialisation of Campus: Do Internal Complaint Systems Reform Caste Discrimination – or Regulate It?"
- **Legal Studies**- "Rethinking ISDS: Regulatory Chill and the Case for State-State Dispute Settlement"
- **Environment and Social Issues**- "Tick TickBoom?"
- **History and Culture**- "A Recipe for Cultural Transmission Across Time Zones"
- **International Relations** - "Sovereignty by Design: Rethinking Asylum in the European Migration Crisis"
- **Gender & Society**- "Gendered State and Parochial laws: The Rape that a State Commits"
- **Economics and Finance**- "Gold as Strategic Insurance: Why Central Banks Are Buying at Record Levels"

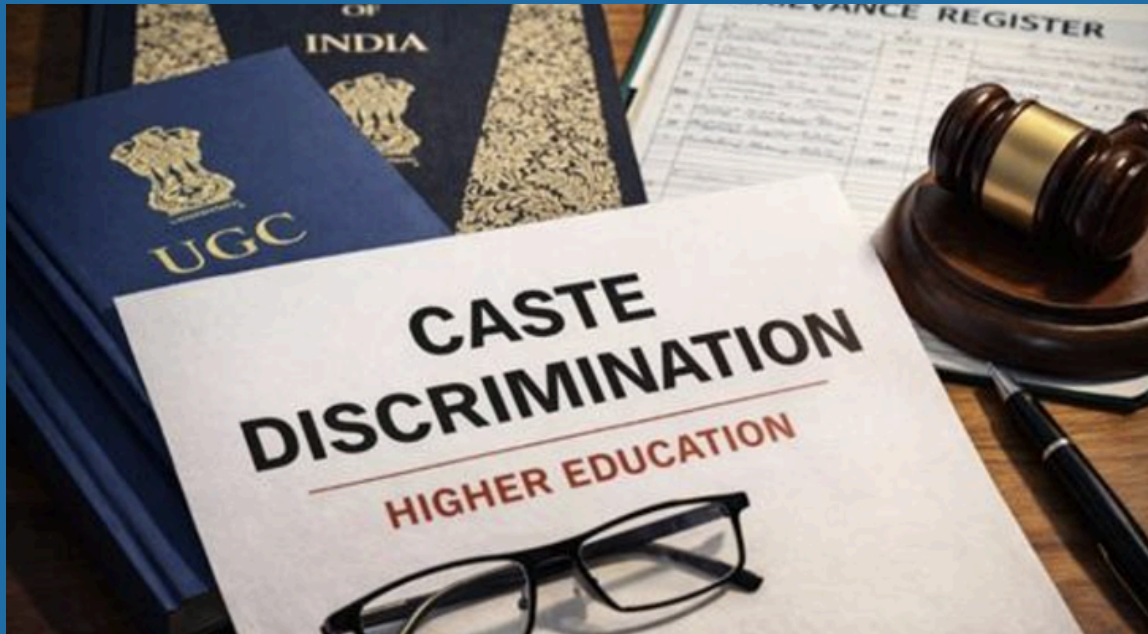
TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGENO.
PUBLIC POLICY CLUSTER	04
LEGAL STUDIES CLUSTER	09
ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES	15
HISTORY AND CULTURE CLUSTER	19
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN POLICY CLUSTER	26
GENDER AND SOCIETY CLUSTER	30
ECONOMICS AND FINANCE	35
CREDITS	41

PUBLIC POLICY CLUSTER

JUDICIALISATION OF CAMPUS: DO INTERNAL COMPLAINT SYSTEMS REFORM CASTE DISCRIMINATION – OR REGULATE IT?

BY AKSHARA GUPTA



INTRODUCTION

It was informed by the University Grants Commission to the Supreme Court recently that in the past five years, there has been more than 118% increase in the number of reports of caste-based discrimination. This tension poses a fundamental question: Are these internal processes aiding a meaningful social revolution, or are they merely “judicialising” on the campus—replacing substantive justice with procedural box-ticking?

At first glance this institutionalization appears to be progressive; it can recognize caste discrimination as a structural problem rather than a personal grievance. However, an important question emerges would this bring about a successive social reform or whether it will result in the judicialization of campus life?

This article argued that while the mechanisms produced by the Supreme Court promise, redressals simultaneously transform the university into a Quasi- courtroom where procedural compliance often outweighs social transformation.

JUDICALIZATION IN UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

It was informed by the University Grants Commission to the Supreme Court recently that in the past five years, there has been more than 118% increase in the number of reports of caste-based discrimination. This tension poses a fundamental question: Are these internal processes aiding a meaningful social revolution, or are they merely “judicialising” on the campus—replacing substantive justice with procedural box-ticking?

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A SHIFT FROM SOCIAL TRUTH TO LEGAL EVIDENCE

Discrimination within universities is rarely very clear or in the form of isolated incidents; it is often seen to be operating through subtle and diffused patterns which are mostly seen in the institutional culture. It is camouflaged behind patterns like persistent grading, bias, subtle humiliation, exclusion from academic groups, isolation in hostels or even classrooms, constant cases of bullying through micro aggressions and coded language. The data from Parliament releases that about 13500 students have dropped out of the top education, educational institutions, including IITs, NITs and IIMs. It is mostly lived as an atmosphere rather than an incident. These experiences constitute what can be called social truth, which cannot be addressed to the internal complaint system as it operates within a framework that demands legal evidence, identifiable and accused persons and documented proofs.

The burden of proof shifts to the complainant who must demonstrate not merely the discomfort or exclusion that he must have faced, but also actionable discrimination. In this translation, most of the cases subtly become illegible.

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AS A PROFESSIONAL ACT

The institutionalisation of the complaint system transforms grievance into bureaucratic performance. Filing a complaint with an institutional mechanism requires a certain degree of procedural literacy. Students are required to draft a formal complaint, understand the regulatory framework which becomes an arduous task. The act of seeking justice becomes bureaucratically structured and requires similarity with the legal procedures. For many students which are already marginalised by cast hierarchy, these procedures create a strict boundary. N.Sukumar in his book, 'Caste Discrimination and Exclusion in Indian Universities: A Critical Reflection' argues that universities often treat caste discrimination for a procedural compliance that places the burden of proof on marginalised students.

In this sense, grievance then transforms into a professional act rather than emerging through a collective protest or mobilisation. Complaints must be expressed through institutional formats, and the incident then becomes a case, and university becomes the adjudicating authority. What was once articulated through debates or collective action becomes translated into administrative practice and inquiry reports.

INDIVIDUALIZATION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

Caste is historically embedded in collective patterns of exclusion and power. Anti-caste movements, student mobilization, and Ambedkarite assertions have framed discrimination in collective injustice, which aims at bringing social transformation. But the internal complaint systems have individualised a collective experience as it slowly becomes a singular case file. And something which requires a political demand becomes an administrative Inquiry. This individualisation translates systemic inequality into manageable disputes. It might be possible that committees address the specific allegations, but the broad culture of caste discrimination will remain intact.

This also creates a paradox of visibility. If the case related to caste is formally written and complaint mechanisms make cast visible within institutional discourse, it might be named and codified official documents, yet the visibility will only be seen if there is a complaint about it. And something which is not formally reported will remain outside the institutional gaze. In this way judicialization might produce an appearance of solving problems, but at a deeper Cultural level, they remain active.

IS JUDICIALIZATION COMPLETELY NEGATIVE?

My argument does not suggest that internal complaint systems are completely unnecessary. On the contrary, in the absence of these formal mechanisms, universities have historically denied or minimized caste-based grievances. These procedures safeguard and prevent arbitrary dismissal of complaints. The issue, therefore, is not whether such systems should exist, but whether they should dominate the institutional response to caste. Procedure is necessary, but it is not completely sufficient and should not remain the primary mode of response.

When procedure becomes the dominant method, social reform is risked to regulation only. Universities only focus on whether rules have been followed rather than on whether cast hierarchies have been meaningfully changed. This method of transformation does not bring any changes at grassroot levels.

THE 2026 REGULATION: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

The rise of internal complain systems for caste discrimination presents a double-edge sword for development. It showcases formal recognition of cases and ways of redressal, but it shifts the main idea from political contestation to a procedural compliance.

The challenge, therefore, is to bring about a broader institution of change and to resist reduction of caste reform to institutional framework. The complaint systems should remain only a part of broader commitment, other than a substitute for structural change. Universities should go beyond Pure Judicialization and to also reclaim reform. Universities are not courts. Their primary function is educational and transformative. When legal logic overshadows social introspection, the space of learning might become an area of adjudication.

CONCLUSION

The 2026 Regulation, although signal recognitions and creates accountability, still shows failures in many domains. The regulation fails to address discrimination with the same gravity as that of ragging. It has failed to address the hidden ways in which discrimination operates in higher universities through curricular choices and behaviour of faculties.

The challenge for universities is that the internal complaint system not only addresses the caste discrimination on the formal level but also manages to dismantle caste completely in the Indian Education System.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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LEGAL STUDIES CLUSTER

RETHINKING ISDS: REGULATORY CHILL AND THE CASE FOR STATE-STATE DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

BY SHREYA MAHESHWARI



INTRODUCTION

Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) was established with the intention of providing a neutral platform for resolving disputes between investors and countries. However, this platform is often used by investors as a sword, especially against developing countries and their laws, by penalising their reforms with financial penalties. This forces many countries, owing to financial constraints, to shift to state-to-state dispute settlement to prioritise their sovereignty and welfare laws. Currently, the UNCITRAL Working Group III, in its 2026 meetings, will be reviewing the draft statutes to address the ongoing legitimacy crisis. This raises a question as to whether this legitimacy crisis in ISDS justifies a shift towards state-to-state dispute settlement. The article examines this by analysing the ongoing sovereignty crisis in ISDS and the 2016 Indian BIT model.

REGULATORY CHILL: WHEN PUBLIC HEALTH MEETS PRIVATE LITIGATION

Apart from bias and inconsistent concerns, ISDS also impacts the state's decision-making, especially in public policy. This influence is highlighted through the phenomenon of regulatory chill. It suggests that governments avoid enacting laws on public issues, including health and the environment, out of fear of being sued by foreign investors in ISDS. Further, even if the law is enacted only for the public good, it creates a risk of costly arbitration for the government, making them cautious about re-enacting such laws.

These overburdened developing economies lack adequate financial resources to support such legal enforcement mechanisms. Further, despite winning the case, the government will be overburdened with a significant legal bill. As seen in Philip Morris v. Uruguay, where Uruguay introduced strict cigarette packaging laws to save its public health. However, this was challenged by Philip Morris International under ISDS. While Uruguay won the case, it had to bear a huge cost, requiring the government to rely on external funding to support the dispute.

This highlights how sometimes democratic processes of enacting laws are held hostage by private capital, as countries might refrain from enacting such laws if they harm private players owing to fear of expensive arbitration. While the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development is helping developing countries financially by supporting them with arbitration costs, it does not help with mitigating the effects of regulating chill, where governments refrain from enacting public policy. Thus, these mechanisms do not resolve the deeper concerns of constraints that ISDS places on states' autonomy to regulate themselves. Thus, impacting both the state and its people.

FROM SCRUTINY TO SOVEREIGNTY: THE 2016 MODEL BIT

The structural concerns of ISDS extend beyond regulatory chill and heavily impact the legal system of developing countries. This is highlighted in White Industries Case.

White Industries Australia Limited entered into a contract with Coal India Limited for a coal mining project. Later, this contract was terminated, and this case went to Arbitration in the year 2002, where White Industries was granted an award of \$206.6 million. However, owing to a prolonged delay in enforcing the award, India was sued under the India-Australia Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) for its inability to provide an effective means of enforcement. Hence, in the second case, it was awarded \$4 million in damages.

In this case, White Industries used judicial delays as a sword under the ISDS model to penalise a developing country's court system and disregard the institutional and economic constraints of a developing nation. This shows how even ISDS overlooked the limitations of a developing nation, thereby creating a one-size-fits-all approach and particularly putting developing economies at a disadvantage. Further, in the case of India mentioned in its Model, the BIT gives importance to national law; the tribunal rejected the claim by mentioning that domestic law does not override international treaty obligations. This creates a hierarchical and legitimacy crisis for the nation, where its laws are challenged.

This case impacted India's sovereignty by directly exposing the country's judicial system to scrutiny and leading India to adopt the BIT Model 2016. The 2016 model's article 15.1 mentions that before going to an international tribunal, the investor must approach domestic courts or authorities for 5 years. Further, if an investor can prove that domestic authorities cannot provide them with effective remedies, then they do not have to approach domestic courts. This five-year window ensures that institutional and financial constraints of developing nations are considered, along with balancing the interests of foreign investors as they are allowed to bypass mechanisms by establishing the ineffectiveness of the domestic courts.

This strikes a balance between investor rights and the sovereignty of domestic countries.

Additionally, if a country does not relieve itself within these 5 years, then it can approach state-to-state negotiations under Article 30. This ensures that disputes are handled by the diplomats who understand the policies of the nations, unlike arbitrators who might view these disputes from only a one size fit for all nations. Thus, a state's interests and policies are safeguarded. Further Article 3.2, which ensures that a host can be held accountable only in cases of a high threshold when there is a clear denial of justice or violation of due process of law. This helps to ensure international tribunals cannot easily bypass state policy decisions unless there is a serious breach, protecting state sovereignty.

DIPLOMACY OVER DOLLARS: THE CASE FOR SSSDR

Allowing investors to directly bring claims can provide them with agenda-setting power that can be directly used for broader interpretations of investment protection, which go beyond the intention of treaties. However, these powers have to be restrained to safeguard the interests of nations and their people. Further, if a treaty clause is interpreted too broadly in SSSDR, then two states via SSSDR can issue a joint interpretative statement, which will help to protect the interests of both nations. However, an investor is not bound by diplomatic claims and can use the treaties as a sword for favouring themselves. Additionally, by direct involvement of states in such disputes, their diplomats would operate on the concerned matter in strategic proportionality.

For example, if the White Industries case had been handled by SSSDR, the outcome might have been different. While determining the verdict, Australia might have chosen not to support it, as it might have negatively impacted its Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement and would have considered existing constraints in India, as it might indirectly impact it.

Hence, SDR would have ensured that the legal agenda of private investors would have been set by looking at the national interests of both countries and not merely private interests by disregarding the conditions of either of the parties. Further, the aim of creating ISDS to depoliticise disputes by not leaving them for the diplomats to decide is disregarded because of the volume and aggressiveness of investor claims in politicising the system, leading to regulatory chill. However, by using diplomacy under SDR, a shared interpretive authority can be exercised by using joint interpretive statements. If an investor wants to use a treaty as a sword by affecting public welfare laws, then the governments of both countries can decide mutually by considering their benefits and costs accordingly. Thus, a transition to SDR under a model like the 2016 BIT model ensures that both national and private interests are served with equity by considering other factors, including the socio-economic conditions of the country.

CONCLUSION

The legitimacy crisis centred around ISDS reflects a deeper structural imbalance between private interests and the interests of nations, where all nations are treated under one size fits ignoring their developing nations. As highlighted in Philip Morris v. Uruguay and White Industries v. India, ISDS has evolved into a biased dispute mechanism that indirectly constrains public welfare laws, particularly in developing economies. Further, the constraints created are not limited to finance but create a negative institutional impact. In this context, the shift towards State-State Dispute Settlement emerges as a recalibration of authority within international economic law. It further restores accountability and balances national interests. The 2016 Indian BIT model depicts how providing procedural safeguards creates a balance between private and national interests by considering other relevant aspects, including prevailing economic conditions. Such a transition does not eliminate disputes but restructures the forum in which they are addressed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shreya Maheshwari is a second-year B.COM LLB student at O.P Jindal Global University. She is interested in law and public policy, with a focus on emerging regulatory frameworks in India.



ENVIRONMENT CLUSTER

TICK TICKBOOM?

BY SIDDARTH POOLA



INTRODUCTION

There is something theatrically unsettling about a clock that measures proximity to annihilation. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock (A Doomsday Clock is a symbolic and non literal timer started in 1947 trying to measure how close humanity is to self annihilation), now set at 85 seconds to midnight in 2026, is described as the closest humanity has ever been to global catastrophe. The 2026 statement cites nuclear tensions, climate destabilization, and technological risks as converging threats.

The symbolism is powerful because it captures something deeper than numbers. It reflects accumulated choices. Treaties abandoned. Fossil fuels expanded. Ecosystems neglected. Information manipulated. Wealth concentrated.

We are not drifting accidentally toward danger. We are walking, occasionally jogging, sometimes sprinting. And often we are doing so while applauding ourselves for economic growth.

Yet clocks are not prophecies. They are warnings. And warnings presume agency.

NUCLEAR UNRAVELING AND THE RETURN OF MIDNIGHT POLITICS

For decades, nuclear arms control functioned as one of the few arenas where geopolitical rivals cooperated with sober restraint. The New START Treaty (a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and Russia) between the United States and Russia limited deployed strategic nuclear warheads and provided mechanisms for verification. It's weakening signals more than diplomatic tension. It signals erosion of guardrails that once prevented escalation by miscalculation.

The Bulletin's historical timeline shows the Clock's fluctuations since 1947, mapping how arms races and détente shaped humanity's perceived proximity to catastrophe. We have been here before. The Cold War nearly consumed the planet through brinkmanship and miscommunication. What distinguishes the present moment is the layering of risks. Nuclear instability now intersects with climate crises, cyber warfare, and political polarization that nuclear and environmental risks compound rather than cancel each other out.

Meanwhile, public discourse is increasingly shaped by concentrated media ownership and elite influence. Policy debates often prioritize short-term political victories over long-term survival.

The 1 percent does not necessarily wake each morning plotting apocalypse (they're too busy with the little ones), but systems of concentrated wealth and influence tend to reward extraction and dominance rather than restraint.

The clock ticks not because humanity lacks intelligence, but because power structures often discount future generations in favor of quarterly returns.

CLIMATE DESTABILIZATION AND THE ARITHMETIC OF NEGLECT

If nuclear risk threatens sudden devastation, climate change promises a slower, more pervasive unraveling. The United Nations Environment Programme states clearly that the world is in a climate emergency, with rising temperatures, intensifying storms, and accelerating sea level rise.

The Climate Clock, installed in cities worldwide, visualizes the narrowing window to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Its countdown does not offer comfort. It offers urgency.

Yet beyond temperature lies another destabilizing phenomenon that receives far less public attention: aquatic deoxygenation (human-driven decline of dissolved oxygen in oceans, coastal waters, and freshwater ecosystems). Oceans and freshwater systems are losing dissolved oxygen at alarming rates, threatening marine ecosystems and food systems. This is systemic suffocation.

Climate disruption illustrates how “neutral” economic institutions perpetuate harm. Markets allocate resources efficiently, we are told. They do not, however, price future habitability with moral clarity. Fossil fuel expansion continues because it remains profitable. Regulatory capture ensures that polluters influence policy frameworks. Decisive action is repeatedly deferred. It would be almost impressive if it were not existential.

DISTRACTION, DENIAL, AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF ELITE CAPTURE

One might assume that a civilization facing planetary destabilization would prioritize collective survival. Instead, public attention is frequently diverted toward cultural skirmishes and partisan outrage. Media ecosystems reward spectacle over structural critique. Concentrated wealth amplifies this distortion. Political donations, lobbying, and ownership patterns allow economic elites disproportionate influence over regulatory and legislative agendas. The result is a form of managed distraction. We argue over symbols while atmospheric carbon accumulates with admirable consistency.

The Doomsday Clock’s 2026 statement underscores misinformation as a compounding threat, weakening public trust and complicating coordinated responses. When facts become negotiable, survival strategies become partisan. Systems designed to protect us seem increasingly unmoored. Experts warn. Scientists model, reports are published, yet policy inertia persists. There is something tragic about a species capable of mapping the cosmos but hesitant to reduce emissions. Still, history reminds us that collapse narratives often underestimate human adaptability and resistance.

HOPE AS DISCIPLINE, NOT DELUSION

Hope is frequently dismissed as naïve. But I think hope is a deliberate stance, one that persists not because circumstances are favorable but because resignation guarantees failure.

Hope does not deny the clock. It refuses to worship it.

Across the world, examples of civic courage challenge the narrative of inevitable doom. Youth climate activists have successfully pressured governments to adopt stronger emission targets. Indigenous communities defend forests and waterways against extraction. Scientists continue refining renewable technologies despite political headwinds.

And sometimes, heroes appear in forms both literal and symbolic. Skyline, a modern-day superhero figure, represents resilience in urban spaces often defined by inequality and crisis. Whether fictionalized or real, such figures matter because they embody collective aspiration. They remind communities that agency is not reserved for institutions.

History is filled with unlikely turning points. The Montreal Protocol was a treaty aimed at reversing ozone depletion through coordinated global action. Nuclear arms reductions during the late Cold War emerged from persistent diplomacy amid tension.

Hope, then, is not an emotion. It is a strategy. It requires organizing, voting, innovating, educating, and sometimes simply refusing to disengage. It requires resisting narratives that portray catastrophe as preordained.

Even the Doomsday Clock timeline reveals fluctuation. Midnight has approached before. It has also receded.

If doom were inevitable, the Clock would have stopped long ago. It continues to move because it reflects human choices. And choices can change

CONCLUSION

It is tempting to narrate our moment as the final act. Nuclear guardrails are weakening while climate systems destabilize and ecosystems lose oxygen. Political institutions bend under concentrated wealth. The clock reads 85 seconds to midnight, and the metaphor feels less theatrical than statistical.

Yet humanity's story has always oscillated between brinkmanship and breakthrough. The same systems that generate risk also generate resistance. Communities come together, scientists have breakthroughs, and activists mobilize against tyranny.

The 1 percent may influence policy, but they do not monopolize conscience. Structural change rarely begins with those most comfortable in the present order. It begins with those who refuse to accept inevitability.

We are marching toward danger, yes. But marches can change direction.

The clock ticks. It does not command.

In the end, doom is a possibility, not a destiny. The difference lies in whether we treat warnings as entertainment or instruction.

So when the headlines grow apocalyptic and the seconds feel heavy, remember that every turning point in history began with someone choosing action over despair.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Siddarth Poola is an undergraduate student doing law in Jindal Global Law School, with a deep interest in Water Sports and a Compunctious regard for Sports Law.

HISTORY AND CULTURE CLUSTER

A RECIPE FOR CULTURAL TRANSMISSION ACROSS TIME ZONES

BY APOORVA LAKSHMI KAIPA



ABSTRACT

In an age of technological disruptions and cultural fragmentation, the post-modernistic households and families learn to work between preservation and adaptation, proximity and distance, tradition and innovation. When my mom is making a specialty dish that she doesn't normally make she immediately calls my grandma and asks what the next step would entail. Every time my sister misses home, or when she has a doubt regarding a dish she is making that our mom always makes when it is daytime here in India, she always video calls my mom to figure out what to do. When my sister is cooking while we are sleeping here in India, she googles the dish and tries to figure it out. Each method shows distinct postmodern conditions. The blending and shrinking of time and space through telecommunication, the extension of cultural authorities beyond the heads of families, the move from tacit embodied knowledge to explicit codified information

and the transformation of private domestic practices into the public digital performances. Instead of viewing technological change as cultural loss, this article shows how diaspora generations strategically navigate multiple knowledge systems to build flexible hybrid identities. The recipes my mom or my sister makes may differ from my grandmother's original, but these dishes represent adaptation, not failure. The ongoing work of maintaining cultural connection under conditions of displacement, mediation, and transformation defines contemporary existence.

Dish: Sunnundalu

Ingredients:

One cup of Minapapappu. (Black Gram)
One and a quarter cup Bellam (Jaggery)
Two illachi (cardamom)
Cup of Ghee (clarified butter)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fry minapappu till you get a nice aroma and it turns light brown in colour.

This instruction is based upon the assumption that you know how brown the light brown is. It assumes you have done this before and/or have watched someone else make this previously, or you have someone beside you to confirm it. Like most recipes passed down in families, this is written for somebody who already knows how to cook it.

For festivals, when my grandma comes to my house or when we go to hers, there are always confirmations taken for the recipes being made, smelling the dish made by the other to check if it's perfect, a kind of well-rehearsed dance so you don't step on each other's feet. But when my mom is at home in

Hyderabad and my grandmom is in front of her TV, watching Abhiruchi in the afternoon before taking a nap in the bed I spent my summers in, she has to mute her show to answer her daughter's call.

“Amma, when do I switch the gas off for frying the dal?”. She responds as usual, “You'll know it when it starts smelling like when your grandma made it back in '88”.

How do you write down a smell? How do you measure a memory back from '88? This is what David Sutton calls “synesthetic memory”; the knowledge that is built along multiple senses simultaneously and avoids cataloguing into steps and perfect measurements. My grandma's “You'll know” is not vague but a precise embodied expertise that can't be jotted down. This phone call is not only transferring information, and is more than just resolving a doubt, but it is also what Purnima Mankekar describes as “transnational intimacy”, maintaining familial bonds and hierarchies through everyday practices like cooking.

My mom does not write the recipe down; she won't need to. The recipe already lives in her hands from decades of observation when she sat on the counter admiring how fast her mom made ladoos, she just needs her mother's voice to trust herself. The next time she makes these ladoos, the same call will go again; the recipe doesn't account for the love and updates.

2. Grind it into fine powder with illachi and add powdered jaggery.

My sister lives in Chicago, where it's 11 AM when it's 10:30 PM here in India. She is attempting these same ladoos, but unlike our mom, she didn't spend '88 with our grandma and great grandma overlooking the process; she wasn't even born then. She watched my mom make them, but watching and doing are very different.

She needs visual confirmation about the way she is making t

hem for her friend's potluck party. She video calls my mom and shows her the mixture, "Amma, does this look okay?" My mother says, "Did you fry the dal for too long? It looks darker than it is supposed to. "No ma, the dal here to start out was much darker in colour than what we get". This represents how diaspora families adapt, maintaining their original roots while building new lives.

"Are the ingredients sticking to each other?" my mom asks. This is the strength and limitation of video. My mother can see but cannot smell, touch or taste. She is analysing through a single sense and correlating it with her own memory. She is trying to access tactile information through a proxy. Madianou and Miller describe this as "polymedia". The strategic choice of a communication platform based on specific needs. My sister chose a video call over the phone because she needed that visual confirmation and needed our mother to see the rights and wrongs.

Beyond just practicality, Loretta Baldassar writes about diaspora families creating "co-presence" through shared activities across distance. My sister is not only having the recipe trickle down to our generation, but she is also reliving the kitchen she left behind. This technology driven co-presence is more fragile, dependent on good connectivity, time zones and deliberate scheduling; but these connections are consciously chosen and actively maintained. Through the screen, my mother can see that her daughter is doing well on her own, and my sister can see the dinner my mother made, served on the same steel plates that we got from our grandparents' house. Having these visible objects become a way to prove that home still exists, that traditions still continue. Even while staying at student accommodation, having the same cutlery I use for having midnight cravings as I did as a kid gives me the assumed sense of proximity to my family back home. Having my family see this on video call portrays the more effortful and more deliberate and valued expression of love.

3. Pour it into a big bowl and add melted ghee.

It's 2 AM in India, my mother is asleep, and my sister needs to make these ladoos. She types up "Sunnundalu recipe" on Google and hopes for the best. Loads of websites and videos pop up. She opens up one and finds comments saying "Very nice recipe :)", "this was my mother's signature dish". She opens up another one, which has the exact same recipe, but the comments differ. "This is NOT how you make it." "The ghee is too much!" Here, we identify what Arjun Appadurai mentions. The moment you pen a piece in writing, you realise that there is no one authentic version but multiple versions. The proportions in a recipe may vary from family to family.

While watching a YouTube video, my sister can see the aunty's hands shaping a perfectly round ladoo, but she can't feel the texture and can't know if her mixture is too dry or wet until she experiments on her own. This is what Berger and Luckmann mention as recipe knowledge, the practical and taken-for-granted knowledge we inherit to navigate everyday tasks; and what Shaffer's refinement of the same talks about how recipe knowledge is not only procedural but relationally and morally embedded. The embodied intuition of cooking comes only from repetition, which comes from experience that is validated through relationships that give it meaning.

Digital platforms like YouTube and Google have given a platform for various channels/websites like Archana's Kitchen, Hebbar's Kitchen, etc., which have become digital archives, preserving regional Indian recipes that might have otherwise disappeared as people move away. Signe Rousseau presents this as a shift from private domestic labour to public performance. My sister and I have taken cooking videos of my grandma and mom to keep as a memory, for future reference, and can potentially be shared online with anyone with internet access.

4. Finally, shape them into ladoos.

My mother's and grandmother's ladoos taste pretty similar. That "similar" and not identical owes to the tiny variations that accumulate, the way each generation adapts. My sister's might taste slightly different because of the ingredient differences in the countries, and maybe even my aunts from my dad's side might taste different as they learnt it differently. Immigrant women especially have the double burden of maintaining traditions while adapting to new places, as written by Vallianatos and Raine. Every ladoo has its own uniqueness and need not be authentic to one main dish but to one's experience.

Abbots describes cooking heritage recipes as 'edible nostalgia'. It is a way to reconstruct home and belonging through sensory experiences. Whether it is learning in-person, by phone call, video call or YouTube, each ladoo holds its own cultural maintenance of belonging. The tradition continues, though transformed, but never broken.

Each method reflects the material conditions of its moment. Traditions cannot be held as a singular rock that must remain untouched. It has to adapt to sustain cultural continuity across changing landscapes. Technology, in particular, hasn't killed tradition; it has created hybrid forms we are still working towards understanding as valid. The recipe learnt on call and through an online forum might be different, but both maintain the work of diaspora, staying connected across distances and shaping identity through food. The recipes continue to grow as we learn and adapt to different cultures. The methods will differ. The table will forever grow longer, across distances to still eat together as a family.

(The exact recipe my mom sent me)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Apoorva is a second-year student at JGLS majoring in business administration and law. She is an avid reader and artist, actively trying to incorporate creative fields into her everyday work.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CLUSTER

SOVEREIGNTY BY DESIGN: RETHINKING ASYLUM IN THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS

BY SHREYA MAHESHWARI



INTRODUCTION

The 2015-2016 European migrant crisis was one of the most direct tests of international human rights post-World War 2. During this period, there were 1.83 million irregular crossings at the EU's external borders, where the majority of the population was from Syria and Afghanistan, and was fleeing from war and conflict. Thus, having valid claims under the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, EU nations, despite being a signatory to the 1951 convention, responded with policy measures including the introduction of mandatory visas, use of force at the border to prevent people from reaching their borders. The article examines the 1951 Refugee Convention and the EU's response to the 2015-2016 migration crisis to understand the structural limitations of International Migration Law. It also focuses on how the migration crisis highlights tensions between national sovereignty and human rights.

STRUCTURAL GAPS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE PRIMACY OF SOVEREIGNTY

The 2015 migrant crisis highlighted how countries often leverage structural ambiguities in legal frameworks to prioritise national sovereignty over preventing global human rights violation. As seen in 2015 EU states leveraged structural ambiguities in the 1951 Refugee Convention. It is important to understand that the Convention does not make it a mandatory right of a person to be accepted as a refugee. This highlights a structural paradox in the Convention, as it imposes non-refoulement on countries thereby preventing them from sending back asylum seekers back to persecution, however it is not mandatory for them to admit asylum seekers.

This gap was significantly exploited by EU states for denying entry to many migrants through measures including digital policing of borders while remaining a signatory to the 1951 convention. Further Article 14 of UDHR recognises the right to seek and to enjoy asylum in other countries. However, as a non-binding (soft law) it provides countries an easy mechanism to bypass this provision. This highlights that while the international law framework recognises right to asylum, its actual enforcement is dependent on the country's discretion. This creates a tension between human rights violation and sovereignty, where countries tend to prioritise sovereignty as migrants are often viewed as threats to national security.

Thus, rendering migrants helpless despite the existence of a legal framework for their protection. This provision was also used by EU members to safeguard their sovereignty at the cost of migrant lives.

Additionally, the Dublin System which forms the core component of EU law shifted responsibility on EU states with external borders by making them responsible for processing most asylum claims. This led to system collapse as external border states were overburdened with a huge volume of migrants. Hence, they were forced to exercise measures including putting fences on its border to restrain migrants. This also resulted in gross human rights violation as frontline states created hotspots where people were concentrated in inhumane conditions. Thus, to protect its sovereignty of inner EU states migrants were either concentrated in the bordering states or were denied entry due to overburdening.

EXTERNALIZING BORDERS: SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH STRATEGIC COMPLIANCE

The crisis also showed limits of EU border management. It depicted how EU states began operationalising legal ambiguities by externalizing migrants to other countries to safeguard their sovereignty as well as maintaining compliance with international law. One of the key examples of this is the 2016 EU Turkey Agreement. This agreement required Turkey to readmit irregular migrants who crossed its borders to enter Greece for consideration for €6 billion in funding. The EU argued that this agreement was aimed to end human suffering by offering alternative asylum to migrants in Turkey which is a safe country. However, it ignored the paradox that Turkey despite being a signatory to 1967 Geneva convention, only recognises refugees originating from European Countries. This puts non-European migrants right at risk as they are not legally recognised in Turkey.

Further this agreement violates Article 39(2)(a) of EU Asylum Procedures Directive which requires that a third safe country must ratify the Convention without any geographical limitations. Thus, the EU exercised its sovereignty in the guise of protecting human rights of refugees, thereby bypassing obligations under International Law. This highlights limitations of International Migration Law as its operation are entirely dependent on state's discretion.

THE LIMITS OF SUPERNATURAL INTEGRATION UNDER SOVEREIGNTY PRESSURE

The crisis also exposes structural limitations of European Migration Governance. The Schengen Agreement which mentions that signatory countries removes passport and border controls at shared boundaries forms an important aspect of European Migration Law. This agreement was temporarily suspended in the wake of the 2015 crisis by EU member states which is allowed under exceptional circumstances. Many EU nations reimposed border restrictions highlighting how supranational integration can become reversible under the pressure of exercising sovereignty. This highlights how securitization of migration where state's security and sovereignty was prioritized over individual rights. This helps nations enforce restrictive mechanisms while providing them a justification to prove they are following international law. These developments show how European states prioritised sovereignty over right to seek asylum despite existence of several legal frameworks

CONCLUSION

The above analysis highlights how international law including the 1951 Refugee Convention can operate as a state centric design prioritising state sovereignty. As the 2015 migrant crisis depicts how EU states exploited gaps in international law to prioritise its sovereignty over its international commitments. Additionally, it shows how states selectively comply with international law thereby preventing a meaningful compliance with the objective of laws. Thus, the right to seek asylum in a safe country exists merely as a formal principle rather than a reality. This raises concern about the effectiveness of international law where the protection of migrants or refugees' rests on state discretion rather than actual law.

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GENDER AND SOCIETY CLUSTER

GENDERED STATE AND PAROCHIAL LAWS: THE RAPE THAT A STATE COMMITS

BY MANUSHREE MAHAT



INTRODUCTION: THE LIMITED DEFINITION OF RAPE, AND WHAT CONSTITUTES RAPE

In 2025, in a ‘landmark’ decision, the government of France amended the definition of rape and sexual assault to include ‘consent’ in its legal definition. This decision was propelled by the highly publicised rape trial of Gisele Pelicot, who was raped and sexually assaulted by over 72 men (50 of whom were convicted), through her own husband, who would regularly drug her during these incidents, while raping her himself. The fact that a ‘developed and modern’ country like France would not have ‘consent’ in their legal dictionaries until 2025, to define rape, shows how sexual and gender violence is often sidelined in lawmaking.

Many countries like Italy, Latvia and Romania, still use coercion, and a proof of resistance to define rape. Under these

definitions of rape, victims who have been assaulted under the influence of drugs and alcohol, or have been taken advantage of in a vulnerable position, or simply were unable to voice out their lack of consent, are completely deprived of their path to justice.

The state in this regard literally assumes that consent is a given for any man. When a woman doesn't explicitly vocalize her lack of consent, the assumption is that a man can take it. The state essentially reproduces and perpetuates parochial ideas of subservience, by dismissing the language and nuances of consent. To make matters worse, marital rape is not even considered rape in many countries like India—which is another singular example of victimization where the state is literally an active member and not just an observer, but an aggressor by specifically providing marital exception to rape.

Furthermore, countries like Saudi Arabia puts the burden of proof on the women to prove rape. In 2007, a married woman and her male friend were gang raped by a group of men. While the rapists were convicted, the woman and her friend were also sentenced to 90 lashes—citing 'illegal mingling' as their reason. For the state, the 'purity' of a woman precedes the sexual violence she has been subjected to, and one can even argue that the state itself reduces the value of women to sexual objects. In the gendered state, the identities of people are segregated into 'ideal' gendered roles, recycling patriarchal norms.

Victims of sexual violence often undergo 'secondary victimization' by state apparatuses that are complicit in victim-blaming, and abandoning victims when they need continued support from state and institutions. In the case of the gang rape of woman in Saudi Arabia—the victim was continuously asked about the nature of her relationship with the man she had been raped alongside. This is a common act of 'second rape' committed by actors of the state, like the judiciary who question the 'character' of the woman who has been raped, instead of the rapists themselves.

MARITAL RAPE: JUSTICE DENIED

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) provides an exemption to sexual violence, if such an act is committed between a married couple. The revocation of consent in a married institution is patriarchy at its finest; that a law specifically provides an exception to a man to do as he wants with his partner, demonstrates how a woman's voice is quite literally treated as white noise in the process of lawmaking. It begs the question—just why exactly are the repercussions of a violent act justified in a married dynamic? Isn't the state legitimising the patriarchal norms of subservience, by taking the autonomy and voice of a married woman—into the hands of her husband, who it seems can exercise full autonomy of her body by law? Furthermore, this decision from the supreme court is explained away by 'not wanting to destabilise the institution of marriage'. This goes on to show how marriage is viewed as an untouchable institution when it comes to the treatment of women. While states often regulate marriage through marriage certificates, divorce, and even the control of reproductive health—they choose to uphold patriarchal values when it comes to rape. The sexual power and autonomy of a woman is snatched away.

QUEER IDENTITIES AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Now that we have delved into the dynamic of rape and sexual assault between a 'man' and 'woman', it is important to discuss the widespread elimination of queer identities in legal dictionaries. Countries like India still define rape as occurring against a woman by a man, while a research revealed that most of the 22 countries in the League of Arab States (LAS) still define rape as 'a man having sexual relations with a woman without her consent'—which not only erases male victims, but also eliminates sexual assault of people not identifying under these strict binaries.

Noted in a research by Mazursky, Tener, Nadan and Aviram has also shown us that people from queer communities feel the pressure of being victim-blamed by society for their sexual assault even more. Legal definitions of domestic violence often don't include same-sex couples, while many countries still criminalise same-sex relationships. The gendered state shows itself in the gender strata where queer individuals who have been extensively vilified and criminalised for expression of their identities, now face its consequences through erasure of their legal rights.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN: WHEN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM DOESN'T TAKE RAPE OF MEN SERIOUSLY

In 2024, Rebecca Joynes, a 30-year-old high school teacher was found guilty of sexually abusing two 15-year-old boys. The boys who had been sexually assaulted and victimised by their own teacher, had to then read comments from people stating that they should be happy that a young female teacher was into them. The reality of male victims of sexual abuse is slightly different—they are either met with disbelief when they reveal their assault, or manipulated to take it lightly and be 'proud' of the violence committed on them. This is often based on the narrow perception that only women can be raped—often putting male victims on a dilemma of disbelief regarding their own assault.

Society's perception of 'manhood' is closely linked to toxic masculinity, which attributes 'toughness' and 'aggression' as the epitome of masculinity. Toxic masculinity puts down femininity, but it also creates a black hole for men asking for help. Because 'toughness' is masculine, emotionality is suppressed in toxic masculinity—and because men are 'tough', they cannot be subjected to violence like sexual abuse.

Under patriarchy, women are viewed as passive subjects of society—therefore under this system, only women can be the object and victims of rape. The very conception of men as 'unrapeable' therefore can also be attributed to patriarchy—where this system doesn't think that a man can be subjected

to victimisation on a sexual level. A research conducted in the UK also revealed that male victims of sexual abuse find the Criminal Justice system ill-equipped to handle their victimisation, and instead found them to be re-traumatising. The gendered state perpetuates and recycles patriarchal values by its routine inability to rightfully punish sexual offenders based on pre-conceived notions of gendered behaviour.

CONCLUSION : STATE AS A PRIMARY VICTIMISER

We can argue that the state, in its complicity of re-victimising rape victims, commits an act of rape itself. Rape is a physical violation of the body, and the psyche—and the gendered state that willingly chooses to turn a blind eye to their gendered laws is systemically raping the victims by failing to protect them. Victims are raped by their rapists, and raped further by a system that blissfully denies them justice.

Although ‘secondary victimisation’ has been previously discussed in this article, I would like to argue that the state itself is also a primary victimiser. Victims depend on the state and its laws to hand them justice—but when the very laws that are supposed to protect them abandon them, it is a betrayal and a victimisation of the highest order.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ECONOMICS AND FINANCE CLUSTER

GOLD AS STRATEGIC INSURANCE: WHY CENTRAL BANKS ARE BUYING AT RECORD LEVELS

BY DHRUV SOLANKI



ABSTRACT

Central banks across the world are buying gold at the fastest pace in modern history. This shift is not accidental or temporary. It reflects inflation shocks, geopolitical tensions, sanctions risk, diversification away from excessive dollar dependence, and the search for financial credibility in uncertain times. By using real-world data, policy developments, and country-level examples, this article explains why gold has regained importance in reserve management. It argues that gold today functions as strategic insurance rather than nostalgia for the past.

RECORD-BREAKING TURN TOWARD GOLD

Something unusual has been happening quietly inside central banks. Vaults are filling up, not with euros, but with gold. In 2022, central banks bought 1,136 tonnes of gold, the highest annual purchase on record. Many assumed it was a one-year reaction to global uncertainty, which was not the case. In 2023, central banks added another 1,037 tonnes, confirming the shift was structural rather than temporary. To put this into perspective, these are the largest sustained purchases since modern record-keeping began in the 1950s. Central banks are not speculative investors instead they move slowly and carefully. When they act in such volumes, it signals a deep reassessment. For decades, foreign exchange reserves were dominated by U.S. Treasury bonds and other government securities. Gold had a presence, but often secondary, however that balance is now changing. Countries across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are increasing the share of gold in their reserves. This is not nostalgia for the gold standard, rather it is risk management.

INFLATION SHOCKS AND THE RETURN OF HARD ASSETS

The pandemic disrupted economic assumptions as governments increased spending, central banks expanded money supply, and supply chains broke down. Inflation surged worldwide. In the United States, it peaked at 9.1% in June 2022, the highest level in four decades, while Europe experienced similar spikes following the Ukraine war. Rising inflation erodes purchasing power and reduces the real value of bonds and currency reserves. Gold behaves differently because its supply is limited and cannot be printed. History shows that during inflationary periods, including the 1970s, gold preserved value while real bond returns declined. Reflecting this logic, the Reserve Bank of India has increased its gold reserves to nearly 800 tonnes to strengthen financial stability.

SANCTIONS RISK AND THE LESSON FROM RUSSIA

If inflation reopened the conversation about gold, geopolitics accelerated it. In 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Western governments froze approximately \$300 billion of Russia's foreign exchange reserves held abroad. The mechanics and legal background of these assets froze, which shocked policymakers globally. Foreign exchange reserves are meant to provide security during crises, yet Russia discovered that reserves held in foreign institutions could become inaccessible almost overnight. That changes how reserve safety is perceived. However, gold is different, if stored domestically, it cannot be frozen by foreign governments. It does not rely on foreign payment systems or diplomatic relations. Importantly, Russia had already been increasing its gold holdings after earlier sanctions in 2014. Data from the World Gold Council's country holdings database shows that Russia significantly raised the share of gold in its reserves over the past decade. That strategy reduced exposure to U.S. Treasuries and dollar assets. Even those not directly involved in geopolitical conflicts began reassessing their vulnerability. Reserve managers asked themselves a difficult question: What happens if political tensions escalate? Gold provides one answer. If political tensions escalate, assets held abroad can become restricted or politically vulnerable, but gold held domestically remains under national control and outside the reach of foreign sanctions.

DIVERSIFICATION BEYOND THE DOLLAR

It is important to be clear. The U.S. dollar remains the dominant global reserve currency.. The dollar still accounts for the largest share of global reserves. However, its share has gradually declined over the past two decades. This does not signal collapse, it signals diversification. Reserve managers prefer balance because overexposure to a single currency creates concentration risk.

If U.S. interest rates rise sharply or fiscal policy weakens confidence, reserve values fluctuate. Gold offers neutrality because it is not issued or controlled by any single government. It is not tied to the monetary policy of any single government. Gold carries no credit risk because it is not a liability issued by any government or institution. In 2023, gold overtook the euro as the world's second-largest reserve asset by market value. Poland provides a compelling case study, as the National Bank of Poland has been one of the most aggressive buyers in recent years. According to official data from the National Bank of Poland's reserve reports, gold now constitutes a significantly higher share of its reserves than a decade ago. Polish officials have publicly stated that gold strengthens national financial security and credibility. Diversification is not dramatic. It is prudent. And gold fits that purpose well.

EMERGING MARKETS AND CURRENCY VULNERABILITY

Emerging markets often face stronger currency volatility than advanced economies. When global investors pull capital out, exchange rates fall. When external debt becomes harder to service and inflation rises, gold serves as an anchor. Turkey is a striking example of this dynamic. During periods of severe lira depreciation and high inflation, Turkey's central bank increased its gold reserves. The World Gold Council documents Turkey's active gold purchases and policy adjustments in its country-level reserve data. For Turkey, gold helped strengthen reserve adequacy during currency stress. Kenya has also announced plans to include gold in its reserve portfolio to diversify away from heavy dollar reliance. This policy direction was reported by Reuters on Kenya's central bank gold strategy. For developing economies, increasing gold reserves is a practical strategy because gold helps stabilize reserve value during periods of global monetary tightening. When the U.S. The Federal Reserve raises interest rates, capital flows back to the United States. Emerging markets often suffer during periods of global tightening, and gold holdings help cushion that impact. It does not eliminate risk, but it reduces dependency.

PSYCHOLOGY, TRUST, AND FINANCIAL SIGNALING

Financial systems rely not only on quantitative metrics but also on confidence, and gold carries psychological weight because it is widely perceived as a safe haven during periods of market stress and geopolitical uncertainty, a role highlighted in analysis by the European Central Bank. During crises, investors instinctively move toward it. In 2008, during the global financial crisis, gold prices surged as confidence in banking systems fell. During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, gold again rose sharply as uncertainty spread. Central banks understand this behavior, and holding gold signals preparedness and financial strength. It reassures markets that reserves are backed by tangible assets. An analysis by the European Central Bank on gold's role in reserves explains that gold's performance during periods of geopolitical stress increases its attractiveness as a diversification tool. The ECB highlights how gold behaves differently from financial assets during market turmoil. This signaling effect matters especially for smaller economies. If investors believe a country has solid reserves, borrowing costs decline. When investor confidence improves, currency pressure tends to ease, and stronger gold holdings reinforce that perception of stability. In other words, gold is not only insurance, but it is also reassurance.

CONCLUSION

The renewed central bank interest in gold reflects a changing understanding of financial security in the global economy. In recent years, policymakers have witnessed inflation erode purchasing power, sanctions freeze sovereign assets, and currency volatility disrupt markets. These developments exposed vulnerabilities in relying heavily on foreign currency reserves and financial assets issued by other governments. Gold's growing presence in central bank reserves signals a shift in priorities. Stability is no longer defined only by liquidity or returns, but also by resilience.

Unlike many financial assets, gold does not depend on the creditworthiness of another government and remains outside the structure of modern financial obligations. This makes it particularly valuable during periods of geopolitical or economic stress. Although gold will not replace the dollar or revive the gold standard, it is regaining strategic importance in reserve management. By increasing gold holdings, central banks are strengthening their financial buffers in a world where economic and geopolitical uncertainty has become more persistent.

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Dhruvi Solanki is a second-year Economics and Finance student at Symbiosis School of Economics and a member of the Economics and Finance Cluster of Nickered & Dimed. She is an avid student of economic policy and market behaviour, with a strong interest in fiscal policy, consumer economics, and the real-world impact of taxation on markets and households.

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