

**1. Do you think the implementation of a nationwide NRC would jeopardise India's relations with her neighbours? Critically examine.**

**Introduction**

Recently, according to the ministry of external affairs, India has reached out to countries across the world on the issues of the new citizenship law and the proposed National Register of Citizens as fears were being expressed that India's implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the whole country could hamper its relations with its neighbours especially Bangladesh.

**Body**

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) holds all the important information of the Indian citizens required for their identification which will be maintained by the Government of India. The legal framework for NRC is laid down in the Citizenship Act of 1955 as amended in 2004.
- In this regard, the implementation of a nationwide NRC would not jeopardise India's relations with her neighbours due to the following factors:
- NRC exercise would be completely an internal matter of India and as a sovereign nation which respects others sovereignty, India has every right to carry out actions internally, which it deems fit.
- Illegal immigration from Bangladesh, comprising both Hindus and Muslims, is an important issue from the national security perspective of India. A large number of Bangladeshi immigrants are illegally living in India. Bilateral dealings of such an important issue thus becomes important.
- The issue is further complicated as sometime back, the Rohingya refugees originally from Myanmar started infiltrating into India through Bangladesh. Association of some rohingyas with terrorist organisations makes it an internal security for India and needs to be dealt with concerned parties where relations will stabilise with resolution of the problem.
- Bangladesh has already documented its citizens and maintains a biometric record of them. The National Identity Registration Wing (NIDW) was created within the Bangladesh Election Commission for that purpose. India too is justified in undertaking a similar exercise. This will help India get a grip on the problem.
- Once the documentation of citizens is done in India, both sides can share their database. This will help manage the problem in a much more amicable manner. As the India-Bangladesh relationship is currently strong and trust levels on both sides are high, this is the right time to deal with the issue of illegal migration.
- As the NRC exercise would help in establishing a detailed database of citizens for India, it would help in dealing with illegal immigration and as the issue of illegal immigration is concerning majorly only with India-Bangladesh relations, India's relations with its other neighbours would largely be unaffected.

At the same time, many have argued that NRC exercise would jeopardized India's relations with its neighbours in the following manner:

- The partition of India along religious lines had left India with extraordinary challenges about sustaining religious harmony at home and maintaining reasonable relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh. This Pandora's box would open again affecting relations, especially with Bangladesh.
- India's Neighbourhood first and Act East policy could be affected as a result of the NRC exercise and its outcomes where Bangladesh and Myanmar might face the inflow of disenfranchised people from India.
- Regional destabilization could create serious ramifications not just for South Asia, but the wider Indo-Pacific as well. Bangladesh is already struggling under the weight of the refugee crisis of the Rohingya fleeing violence in Myanmar — any added people movement would be beyond its capacity to facilitate and require a significant international response.
- The rhetoric of minority persecution in neighbouring countries embedded in CAA-NRC exercise would certainly affect India's image and relations with concerned neighbours.
- This phenomenon is in line with the growing global trend where internal matters are affecting countries relations with others and in case of India, Bangladesh is clearly affected as India would handover illegal immigrants to it after the NRC exercise.
- China would certainly try to exploit the faultlines between India and its neighbours emerging out of the NRC exercise. This would help it in its string of pearls strategy against India in India's neighbourhood.

The issue of illegal migration in the neighbourhood relationships cannot be swept under the carpet. It will continue to be a stumbling block in the sustenance of a stable relationship. It will be better if all sides look at the issue dispassionately especially when the trust levels are high.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, India, as a country which follows the ideology of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', should not be hasty in taking decisions that can disenfranchise her citizens – contradicting its centuries-followed values. The need of the hour is that the Union Government should clearly chart out the course of action with all the stakeholders involved.

**Additional Information** - The long-standing issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh should be seen in the context of a report of the Group of Ministers on National Security, submitted in 2001, which estimated that post-1971 approximately 12 million Bangladeshis have illegally migrated into various states of northeast India. However, this number is expected to be much larger if one includes the illegal

Bangladeshi population residing in other parts of India. Moreover, the Bangladeshis have been illegally coming to India even after 2001.

## 2. What strategic leverage can India enjoy by maintaining close ties with the Maldives? Explain.

### Introduction

Recently, Indian PM's first overseas visit after taking the oath of office for a second term was to Maldives which is an important symbolic gesture reflective of the special relationship that exists between the two countries. This showcased strengthening and invigorating of the traditionally strong and friendly relations further nurtured by geographical contiguity, ethnic, historical, socio-economic and cultural ties between the peoples of the two countries.

### Body



- The given map shows the strategic location of Maldives in the Indian ocean as well as with respect to India. In this regard, India can have following strategic leverages by maintaining close relations with Maldives :
- Strategic location - In the Indian Ocean, Maldives archipelago comprising 1,200 coral islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan, and India. This can be leveraged by India in times of strategic need.
- At the Heart of International Geopolitics - Since China started to send naval ships to the Indian Ocean roughly 10 years ago and right up to the Gulf of Aden in the name of antipiracy operations Maldives' significance has steadily grown as it falls right in the middle of Ocean.
- Regional Security - As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region, India needs to cooperate with the Maldives in security and defense sectors. Further, India can tackle extremism in the region with the help of Maldivian authorities.

- Member of SAARC - It is important for India to have the Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region especially in SAARC due to the constant acrimony with Pakistan.
- Diaspora - There are 25,000 Indian nationals living in the Maldives (second largest expatriate community). Indian tourists also account for close to 6% of tourists Maldives receives every year.
- UNSC Support - Maldives has extended its support for India's candidature for permanent membership of an expanded and reformed UN Security Council. The Maldives also has reiterated support for India's candidature for a non-permanent seat for the year 2020-21.
- China's footprint: The Maldives has undoubtedly emerged as an important "pearl" in China's "String of Pearls" in South Asia. This can be countered by having a close strategic relationship with Maldives.

Consequently, India has taken the following measures to boost the India-maldives Strategic relationship:

- The signing of the US\$800 million Dollar Line of Credit Agreement in March 2019, for assisting the Maldives to achieve sustainable social and economic development.
- The recent joint exercise Ekatha conducted in April 2019 to strengthen coordination in enhancing maritime security in the region, through coordinated patrolling and aerial surveillance, exchange of information, and capacity building.
- Technical agreement on sharing 'White Shipping Information' between the Indian Navy and the Maldives National Defence Force was also signed, enabling the exchange of prior information on the movement of commercial, non-military vessels.

### Conclusion

It is important for India to have Maldives in its sphere of strategic influence. India should reach out to all governmental and nongovernmental actors of the atoll in economic, socio-cultural and political arenas. Governmental dialogue mechanisms are not sufficient in themselves, which should in the first place be regularised and supplemented with other means.

### 3. How is the issue of Rohingya Muslims affecting Indo-Myanmar relations? Discuss.

#### Introduction

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has described Rohingyas "one of, if not the, most discriminated people in the world". Rohingya are one of Myanmar's many ethnic minorities.

Though they have been living in the South East Asian country for generations, Myanmar considers them as persons who migrated to their land during the Colonial

rule. So, it has not granted Rohingyas full citizenship. According to the 1982 Burmese citizenship law, a Rohingya is eligible for citizenship only if he/she provides proof that his/her ancestors have lived in the country prior to 1823. Else, they are classified as “resident foreigners” or as “associate citizens” (even if one of the parents is a Myanmar citizen).

Since they are not citizens, they are not entitled to be part of civil service. Their movements are also restricted within the Rakhine state.

Myanmar is only country that sits at the intersection of India’s “Neighborhood First” policy and “Act East” policy. India believes it can use Myanmar to strengthen trade links and increase engagement with the regional grouping – but sees Myanmar as a neighbour first, and an ASEAN member second.

## Body

### Issue of Rohingya Muslims affecting Indo-Myanmar relations

- India believes it can use Myanmar to strengthen trade links and increase engagement with the regional grouping – but sees Myanmar as a neighbour first, and an ASEAN member second.
- India views the Rohingya crisis from both a humanitarian and security perspective.
- PM Modi has said that India shares Myanmar’s concern of ‘extremist violence’ in Rakhine State.
- India underlined the need for the ‘safe, speedy and sustainable’ return of the Rohingya refugees during the Indian foreign minister’s visit to Myanmar in mid-May.
- Last year India committed US\$25m of development assistance, to be transferred over five years, to help the ‘restoration of normalcy’ in Rakhine State, and the return of the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.
- This followed the signing of an agreement between India and Myanmar for a development programme in Rakhine State.
- India is currently building pre-fabricated housing for refugees returning there.
- India has also provided relief materials for refugees in Bangladesh including food and mosquito nets.

## Conclusion

Rohingya Muslims issue has not adversely affected Indo-Myanmar relations. India has diplomatically found ways to help the Rohingyas and raised humanitarian issue, without any diplomatic fallout with the state of Myanmar.

**4. How can India’s soft power be leveraged in the subcontinent and to what advantage? Suggest.**

## Introduction

Soft power is the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without resorting to force or coercion. Soft power lies in a country's attractiveness and comes from three resources: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies.

### Body

#### How can India's soft power be leveraged in the subcontinent?

- India's spiritualism, yoga, movies and television, classical and popular dance and music, its principles of non-violence, democratic institutions, plural society, and cuisine have all attracted people across the continent.
- International Day of Yoga reflects yoga's immense popularity worldwide, underscoring its richness as a soft power resource.
- Indo-ASEAN music festival in Delhi was a bridge between the youth of India and ASEAN
- India is a civilization which has offered refuge to cultural and religious freedoms to Jews, Parses, Christians and Muslims.
- Buddhism is an important bridge between not just India and South East Asia and East Asia, but also with South Asia.
- India is a country in which all major religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism - coexists which has been the strength of India's soft power.
- India is dipping into its soft power resources in its diplomatic engagements abroad.
- Offer subsidized courses in foreign capitals to teach appreciation of Indian culture
- Indian Diaspora is seen as ambassadors of carriers of our soft power.
- To project New Delhi's soft power across world capitals, the MEA has embarked on a program to build diplomatic missions and cultural centres using the country's diverse styles of architecture.
- India's successful Aadhaar programmes which can help countries do similar things and India's IT capabilities are huge source of soft power.
- Student exchange programs, increase in scholarships, medical tourism and research scholars have resulted in a vibrant democracy. Indian Diaspora is seen as ambassadors of carriers of our soft power.

#### India's Soft Power proposal in budget 2020-21

- Proposal to consider issuing Aadhaar Card for NRIs with Indian Passports on their arrival without waiting for 180 days.
- Mission to integrate traditional artisans with global markets proposed, with necessary patents and geographical indicators.
- 18 new Indian diplomatic Missions in Africa approved in March, 2018, out of which 5 already opened. Another 4 new Embassies intended in 2019-20.
- Revamp of Indian Development Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) proposed.
- 17 iconic Tourism Sites being developed into model world class tourist destinations.

- Present digital repository aimed at preserving rich tribal cultural heritage, to be strengthened.

#### **What advantage will be gained by India through soft power?**

- Diplomacy need not be backed by the military and economic hard power. This presents a 'technology' in our hand to compete and overtake Chinese 'check book' diplomacy.
- It gives moral high ground at world forum especially due to non-violent manner in which we had achieved our independence.
- International Support for tough decisions like abrogation of article 370.
- It keeps India distant from world conflicts like recently in Syria, Sudan, Israel-Palastain issue. So India earns god will from all country.
- Helps India balance its relationships keeps balance in relations. At the time of cold war, India got aid from NATO and USSR both.

#### **Conclusion**

It is imperative that India expands its soft power and civilisational strength, both for national unity and to gain the proper place in the continent for its magnificent heritage that can benefit all humanity. India has the cultural and civilizational depth to lead the world to a new era of peace and higher consciousness, but needs the political will and the diplomatic skill in order to do so.

#### **5. What are the major issues of convergence and confrontation between India and Sri Lanka? Examine.**

##### **Introduction**

India and Srilanka have a relation more than 2500 yrs old and have a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction. Though, Trade and security being the vital aspects of convergence of interests, there are certain aspects of conflicts due to historical and political reasons.

##### **Body**

##### **Issues of convergence and confrontation:**

- Strategic confrontation: India is apprehensive of Srilanka's relationship with China. For e.g.
  - As part of Maritime Silk Route (MSR) policy, China built two ports, one in Colombo and another in Hambantota.
- building of Colombo international container terminal by China Harbor Corporation.
- Fisherman problem: Srilanka express concerns of Indian fishermen venturing into Srilankan waters in search of fish catch and very frequently arrests them. India also detains Sri Lankan fishermen for the illegal fishing.

- Katchatheevu island: ceded to Srilanka by India in 1974 still causes conflicts as Tamilnadu fisherman and government traditionally believed that it belongs to them and therefore want to preserve the right to fish there.
- IDPs rehabilitation and War crimes: Painfully slow pace of rehabilitation of Tamil refugees is a sore point with India. Tamil Nadu is pressurizing New Delhi to bring punish Sri Lanka for war crimes. Repatriation of Srilankan refugees who came during the civil war is to be facilitated, but the clear roadmap for the same is missing.
- Srilanka is apprehensive and allege the big brotherly attitude of India. There were tensions on alleged meddling in Srilankan elections by India in 2015.
- The Indian support to Srilankan government during civil war was seen with resentment by the rebel group and there are tensions when they come into the power.
- Ethno-religious nationalism: The election of Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa —ushers in an authoritarian populist regime that upholds a form of ethno-religious nationalism. His closeness to Beijing worries India.
- Sri Lanka's security dilemma: Growing too close to China could create problems with India while leaning too much in favor of India could affect Chinese military sales to the country and other aspects of their bilateral relationship.
- Economic issues: India wants to go ahead with an Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) with Sri Lanka, replacing the aborted Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project: Aside from environmental and livelihood concerns of its fishermen, Sri Lanka is more concerned about the loss of container traffic at its Colombo and Galle ports.

### Conclusion

India has been maintaining a healthy relation with Srilanka and have supported in international forums like abstaining from voting on resolution of alleged war crimes by Srilanka, signing civil nuclear agreement and so on. The 2 countries should work on mutual interest like signing Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), comprehensive solution to Fisherman issue by means of accommodation, people – people connect through e-visa, ferry services and so on.