

Discuss the role of smaller states like the Maldives in the India-China geopolitical rivalry. How have these states used the rivalry to their advantage in internal politics?

Introduction: Briefly describe context of the question

Body: Role of smaller states in geopolitical rivalry and how they use it to their advantage?

Conclusion: Way forward

Smaller nations, such as the Maldives, are important players in the greater geopolitical struggle between China and India, though their position is complex. These two Asian superpowers are now engaged in a strategic rivalry centred around the Indian Ocean region, which includes the Maldives.

Role in Geopolitical Rivalry

- **Strategic Location:** Because of their location, smaller states—such as island republics like the Maldives—have greater strategic significance. Due to its strategic location along important sea lanes, the Maldives is attractive to China and India in terms of trade, energy security, and naval might. Through this region passes more than 97% of India's total international trade by volume and 75% by value.
- **Economic Dependency:** When it comes to investments, development initiatives, and financial assistance, these smaller governments frequently rely on China and India. Both countries provide economic help to these governments to gain influence, resulting in a complicated web of economic linkages.
- **Security Implications:** The dynamics of security between China and India have an impact on the Maldives and other smaller states. To make sure their security issues are taken care of without offending anyone, they strike a careful balance.
- **Indian Diaspora:** There is a sizeable population of people descended from India living in Maldives. There are numerous Indians employed in the Maldives' education and medical care systems, as well as in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Utilizing Rivalry for Internal Politics

- **Bargaining Power:** Smaller governments use the China-India rivalry to their advantage in negotiations. By pitting one power against the other, they can get advantageous terms in business agreements, infrastructure development projects, and diplomatic ties.
- **Diversification of relationships:** Diversifying diplomatic and economic relationships is a common goal for smaller powers. Through active engagement with both China and India, they ensure a wider base of support for their national objectives and avoid being dependent on a single state.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Smaller states could leverage the competition to draw in infrastructure funding. By strategically allying with one or both of these countries, governments can gain from enhanced connectivity and economic development as India and China frequently fight to fund and construct important infrastructure projects.
- **Diplomatic Manipulation:** Smaller nations use diplomacy to pressure China and India into providing assistance and concessions. They can obtain resources, technology, and diplomatic support without fully committing to one side by deftly managing ties.

Conclusion

The Maldives' strategic location in the Indian Ocean makes it essential to India's interests. However, since China's growing dominance in the Indian Ocean region, the partnership has faced new difficulties. While taking into account the Maldives' sensitivities, India must vigorously promote its ties with the country.

Analyze the multi-agency coordination and innovative strategies employed in the Silkyara tunnel rescue operation in Uttarakhand. Discuss how such approaches can be standardized for future disaster response scenarios in India.

Introduction: Briefly describe the rescue operation

Body: Strategies involved in operations and future response scenarios

Conclusion: Way forward

After 17 days of relentless effort, the successful rescue of 41 trapped laborers in an under-construction tunnel at Silkyara in Uttarkashi district on November 28, 2023, marks Operation Zindagi in Silkyara as the longest-ever rescue operation in the country for evacuating workers from a tunnel or mine.

Coordination and innovative strategies employed in operations

- **Unified Command System:** NDRF, SDRF, BRO, RVNL, SJVNL, ONGC, ITBP, NHAIDCL, THDC, Uttarakhand State Government, District Administration, Army, Air Force, workers played an important role in the rescue work in Mission Silkyara. This unified command system ensures that all involved organizations work together under a single, coordinated effort.
- **Technological Innovation:** The use of auger technology involved the use of rotating metal shafts with blades to scrape or cut debris and carving paths for rescuers. Drift technology was employed for the creation of horizontal passages or tunnels in a mountain, hill, or underground structure.
- **Rat hole mining technique:** Using the side-cutting technique, these "rat miners" excavate little tunnels on hill slopes that miners enter to access the coal seam. The last 15 meters of the collapsed tunnel at Silkyara were dug by hand to build the evacuation channel, which is when this technology came in handy.
- **Community Engagement:** Rescue operation included involving nearby communities in disaster preparedness and response activities. Communities can offer important information about the local terrain and conditions, and they frequently play a crucial role in early reaction.

How such approaches can be standardized for future operations

- **Clear Communication Protocols:** It's critical to put in place efficient communication protocols. To prevent misunderstandings, this entails creating uniform channels of communication, outlining roles and duties, and using consistent language.
- **Training & Exercises:** Coordinating efforts between several agencies might be improved with regular joint training exercises. These exercises aid in detecting deficiencies in reaction plans, communication channels, and resource distribution.
- **Technological Integration:** Using tools like GIS mapping, drone surveillance, and communication to share information in real time can greatly enhance situational awareness and decision-making.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration between government agencies and private organizations can enhance the overall capacity for disaster response. Private entities often possess unique resources and expertise that can complement government efforts.

Conclusion

It's crucial to take into account the region's particular difficulties and features, include relevant parties, and customize plans to the particulars of each disaster situation. Improving and standardizing disaster response activities requires constant learning, adaptability, and teamwork.

Discuss the role of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code in empowering operational creditors, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in recovering their dues. How can the IBC be made more effective for the benefit of SMEs?

Introduction: Define IBC briefly

Body: Highlight its role in empowering SMEs and how can it be made more effective

Conclusion: Way forward

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was enacted in 2016, and it replaced all the existing laws with a uniform procedure to resolve insolvency and bankruptcy disputes. The code aims to address the issue of Non-performing Assets (NPAs) and debt defaults.

Role of IBC in empowering creditors, especially SMEs

- **Level Playing Field:** The IBC offers operational creditors, such as SMEs, a legal framework that guarantees a level playing field. It enables them to file for bankruptcy on behalf of noncompliant debtors.
- **Time-Bound Resolution:** To cut down on the time and resources needed by creditors to collect their debts, the IBC requires time-bound resolution procedures. This is especially helpful for SMEs, as they do not have the resources to fight protracted legal battles.
- **Professionals in Insolvency:** Hiring insolvency specialists guarantees a clear and methodical approach to the settlement procedure. For SMEs who might not have the necessary experience to handle complicated bankruptcy procedures, this can be helpful.
- **Maximization of Asset Value:** IBC aims to maximize the value of the debtor's assets, ensuring that creditors, including operational creditors, receive a fair share during the resolution process.

Improving IBC for the Benefit of SMEs:

- **Simplified Processes:** Introduce simplified and cost-effective processes specifically tailored to the needs and capacities of SMEs. This can include reducing procedural complexities and lowering associated costs.
- **Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity building for SMEs to enhance their understanding of the IBC processes. This can involve conducting awareness programs, workshops, and providing accessible information on insolvency procedures.
- **Fast-Track Mechanism:** Establish a fast-track mechanism within the IBC for smaller cases involving SMEs. This can expedite the resolution process, ensuring quicker recovery of dues.
- **Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs):** Strengthen Debt Recovery Tribunals to handle smaller cases efficiently. This can provide a more accessible and specialized forum for SMEs to resolve their insolvency-related issues.

Conclusion

In conclusion, even while the IBC has greatly improved the standing of operational creditors, particularly SMEs, continued improvements and focused initiatives can increase its efficacy in addressing the unique difficulties encountered by smaller businesses.

Discuss the challenges in establishing the correctness of EVMs and the implications for election security. How can India balance technological advancements with electoral transparency?

Introduction: Describe EVM briefly

Body: Highlight challenges before EVM and measures to improve its effectiveness

Conclusion: Way forward

Electronic voting machines, or EVMs, are used in state and general elections in India to allow voters to cast ballots without disclosing their identities. In India, it has taken the place of paper ballots in municipal, state, and national (parliamentary) elections. The Election Commission of India only purchases EVMs from these two central government undertakings, Bharat Electronics Limited and Electronics Corporation of India Limited.

Challenges in establishing the correctness of EVMs and the implications for election security

- **Absence of voter verifiability:** Electronic voting machines do not provide a paper trail that enables voters to independently confirm their ballots. Election results can be difficult to audit or validate without a paper trail, which casts doubt on the validity and integrity of the voting process.
- **Hacking susceptibility:** EVMs are vulnerable to manipulation and hacking. The legitimacy of the results is compromised if malevolent individuals can tamper with the voting machines, undermining the electoral process as a whole.
- **Limited Transparency:** EVM source code is frequently confidential and not available for public inspection. It is challenging for individuals and independent specialists to evaluate the security and dependability of EVMs due to a lack of transparency in their design and operation.
- **Inadequate Security Measures:** EVMs may be susceptible to cyber and physical attacks if they lack strong security measures. The voting process may be compromised by unauthorized access, physical manipulation, or cyberattacks, which could produce unreliable results.

Measures that can be considered to balance technological advancements with electoral transparency

- **Make VVPAT more reliable:** The appropriate VVPAT protocol entails enabling voters to review and approve the VVPAT slip before their vote is officially cast. Additionally, it should offer an option for voters to cancel their vote if they observe any discrepancies.
- **Open-Source Code Review:** Promote openness by allowing the general public to see the source code of EVMs. This makes it possible for impartial specialists to evaluate the technology's accuracy and security.
- **Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA):** These audits can be carried out for cross-checking the electronic tally with VVPAT counts. This proactive approach helps in maintaining the integrity of the voting process.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** Educate the public on EVM technology, security measures, and steps for a transparent electoral process to build crucial confidence in electronic voting systems.

Conclusion

The ECI is well known throughout the world for its flawless track record of holding large-scale, free, and fair elections. To make the election process in India error-free and foolproof, the ECI has spearheaded novel inventions such as voting IDs and EVMs. All political parties and citizens must be persuaded of the process's integrity and transparency.

Analyze the evolution of India's foreign policy towards the Israel-Palestine conflict. How has India's stance impacted its international relations, particularly with the countries in the Global South?

Introduction: Brief context to the question

Body: Explain evolution of India's foreign policy and how it has impacted its relations with Global South

Conclusion: Way forward

India's foreign policy towards the Israel-Palestine conflict has evolved over the years, reflecting a nuanced approach. Traditionally, India maintained a pro-Palestinian stance during the Cold War era. However, in recent decades, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more balanced and pragmatic position.

Evolution of India's Foreign Policy

- **Historical Support for Palestine:** India emphasized sympathy with the Palestinian people's quest for self-determination and supported the Palestinian cause vigorously during the Cold War. India historically

supported the Palestinian cause, opposing the partition of Palestine in 1947. It was the first non-Arab state to recognize the PLO and one of the earliest to acknowledge the State of Palestine in 1988.

- **Normalization of Relations:** India's relations with Israel started to improve in the 1990s, and in 1992, full diplomatic connections were established. Economic and geopolitical factors drove this change.
- **Balanced Approach:** Since then, India has retained a neutral position, encouraging robust military, economic, and scientific connections with Israel while concurrently endorsing the establishment of an autonomous and sovereign state for the Palestinian people.
- **Multifaceted Engagement:** India maintains a multifaceted relationship with both Israel and Palestine, focusing on defense cooperation, agriculture, technology, and counterterrorism. India has invested heavily in financial aid, sports, healthcare, education, and capacity building, as well as material and diplomatic support to Palestine.

Impact

- **Global South Relations:** India has been able to interact with nations all around the Global South thanks to its impartial stance. India stays neutral toward other countries that might have different opinions about the conflict by keeping relations with both Israel and Palestine.
- **Diversification of Partnerships:** India's ties with Arab and Islamic countries have not been hampered by its involvement with Israel. India's standing in international fora has been enhanced by its capacity to negotiate a variety of geopolitical environments.
- **Economic and Technological Gains:** India has benefited economically and technologically from closer ties with Israel. In sectors like agriculture, water management, and defense technologies, Israel is a crucial partner.
- **Collaboration in the fight against terrorism:** India and Israel are both subject to similar terrorist threats. India's standing in the international world has improved and bilateral relations have been strengthened via cooperation in counterterrorism operations.

Conclusion

India has adopted a pragmatist and impartial stance in its growing foreign policy regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict. India's diplomatic flexibility and good engagement with countries in the Global South have been facilitated by this approach, which has allowed India to retain diplomatic contacts with both parties. India's standing on the international scene has been strengthened by its capacity to handle challenging geopolitical situations.

Critically evaluate the arguments for a bigger versus smaller role of the state in inclusive development. Discuss the impact of the Indian state being 'people-thin' but 'process-thick' on policy implementation and the delivery of public services.

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Highlight arguments for and against the bigger role of the State and its impact on policy implementation.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Indian state is often labelled as a paradox of too big and yet too small. This fact can be gauged from the excessive legal requirement or bureaucratic process to do business in India while on the other hand, the country has the smallest number of civil servants per capita among the G20 nations. On the economic front, the Indian state is relatively small on metrics, such as the tax-GDP ratio and public expenditure-GDP ratio. 'People-thin' suggests a shortage of personnel for efficient governance, while 'process-thick' implies a bureaucratic system with intricate procedures.

Arguments for a Bigger Role of the State

- **Equitable Resource Distribution:** Advocates contend that a larger state is more capable of ensuring the equitable distribution of opportunities, money, and resources. As it contributes to closing the wealth gap, this is especially crucial for inclusive growth.
- **Social Welfare Programmes:** A larger state can establish and oversee extensive social welfare initiatives that tackle challenges such as homelessness, housing, healthcare, and education. These initiatives promote inclusive development by directly affecting vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Arguments for a Smaller Role of the State

- **Decreased Bureaucracy:** It is anticipated that a smaller state will have less bureaucracy, which will lead to quicker decision-making and more responsive governance. Faster policy implementation and a more flexible response to shifting needs may result from this.
- **Budgetary Responsibilities:** Those who favour a reduced state size stress the value of budgetary responsibilities. They contend that a leaner government is more suited to preserve economic stability, which is essential for inclusive growth over the long run and is less prone to accrue excessive debt.

Impact of the Indian State Being 'People-Thin' but 'Process-Thick'

- **Policy Implementation Challenges:** Limited personnel in a 'people-thin' state can cause delays and corruption, hindering inclusive development.
- **Barriers to Service Delivery:** A 'process-thick' state with complex procedures may discourage access to crucial services, affecting marginalized communities.
- **Corruption and Accountability Issues:** A large bureaucracy and intricate processes can foster corruption, compromising transparency and hindering inclusive development.
- **Inequality and Regional Disparities:** A 'people-thin' state may struggle to address diverse needs, leading to unequal development and impeding inclusivity.

Conclusion

To truly achieve inclusive development in India, it is imperative to tackle the "people-thin" and "process-thick" components of the state to overcome implementation barriers and guarantee that public services are provided to all sections of the populace.

Analyze the challenges faced by India in balancing its development priorities with its environmental commitments, especially in the context of its reliance on coal for energy needs. How does India's position on coal at the international level reflect its domestic economic and energy realities?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: What are the challenges in balancing development goals and environmental commitments?

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, on the sidelines of COP 28 In Dubai, India has reaffirmed its commitment to mitigating global warming while highlighting the fundamental tenets of its climate diplomacy: equity and justice. India has been unequivocal about the role of coal in the country's economy and will not buckle under international pressure at the cost of national development.

Challenges in Balancing Development Priorities and Environmental Commitments

- **Energy Demand vs. Environmental Sustainability:** India must balance its burgeoning energy needs to support economic growth with its obligations under international environmental agreements. It is difficult to strike a balance between the requirement for energy security and ecological practices.
- **Dependency on Coal:** India's energy demands are primarily met by coal, which presents a serious environmental risk because of carbon emissions, air pollution, and its role in climate change. This dependence makes achieving environmental goals more difficult.

- **Renewable Energy Transition:** Infrastructure development and significant expenditures are needed to make the switch from coal to renewable energy sources. India must quickly change its energy mix without sacrificing its current rate of economic expansion.
- **Air Quality and Public Health:** The utilization of coal leads to air pollution, which has an impact on public health. An important problem facing India is striking a balance between economic progress and the health and well-being of its people.

India's Position on Coal at the International Level

- **Internal Economic Realities:** India's internal economic priorities are reflected in its international attitude on coal. Because of its accessibility and affordability, coal continues to be an essential part of India's energy mix, especially for the country's vast population with a variety of energy needs.
- **Poverty Alleviation and Energy Access:** India highlights its commitment to ensuring that all of its residents, particularly those living in distant locations, have access to energy. Because it is a reasonably priced energy source, coal is essential for reducing energy poverty and promoting economic growth.
- **Financial and technology Barriers:** India is investing in renewable energy, but the shift is being impeded by funding and technology issues. India needs international financing and technology transfer to speed its move away from coal.
- **Developmental Aspirations:** India emphasizes the need for economic growth to pull millions out of poverty when arguing in international forums for the idea of "common but differentiated responsibilities." This position asks for understanding from the international community on its continued use of coal while going through a transition.

Conclusion

India faces the difficult challenge of reconciling its environmental obligations with its socioeconomic goals, especially in light of its coal-dependent economy. The nation's foreign policy is a reflection of its realistic approach, which emphasizes the need to address domestic economic and energy realities while understanding the difficulties of switching to greener energy sources. To promote sustainable development and make a significant contribution to global environmental goals, India must strike a balance between these interests.