

PSIR & GS-2 Daily Brief

About this initiative : Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.

PSIR
Optional by
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Singh
| ForumIAS |



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Article - 1: Ensuring federalism within delimitation

Ensuring federalism within delimitation

Article 81 of the Constitution states that seats should be distributed among States and within constituencies based on population such that "the ratio between the number and the population of the State is, so far as practicable, the same for all States". That ratio was similar in 1951 and 1971, since State populations had not diverged much. However, that situation does not hold any longer.

As India has become the world's most populous nation, and since Census 2026 is right around the corner, the delimitation exercise will also become due shortly. The 84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 extended the freeze on the number of seats in Parliament and State Legislatures from 2000 to 2026, stating that, "keeping in view the progress of family planning programmes in different parts of the country, the government, ...decided ...as a motivational measure to enable the state governments to pursue the agenda for population stabilisation." Hence, Lok Sabha seats shall "remain unaltered till the first Census to be taken after the year 2026." The Census results will be declared by October 2028, after which the Delimitation Commission (DC) will be constituted. After the outcome is declared, the 2029 Lok Sabha elections will follow.

Equal share to all
Given the constitutional amendment, it is legitimate to consider how much convergence has been achieved between fertility rates over the last two decades. The author examined which States had achieved a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) needed to stabilise population growth, that is, 2.1 births per woman. The National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) were used for this analysis. As per the findings of the third NFHS (2005-6), which is the closest survey to the 2002 constitutional amendment, in



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2005, nine States (Himachal, Punjab, Delhi, Goa, Andhra (incl. Telangana), Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu) had achieved a TFR of 2.1 or less. By 2021, most major States had achieved a TFR of 2.1 except five States (Bihar, U.P., Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Manipur).

Clearly, while there was an improvement in the TFR across the country, the mean TFR among States below the national TFR mean was 1.64, while the corresponding mean for States above the national mean was 2.38. Thus, those States which have a higher mean than the national mean, in the latest NFHS-5 (2019-21), are still 45% higher, with respect to fertility rates, than that of early achievers. Therefore, based on the 2002 constitutional amendment, and in light of this analysis, it is being suggested here that seat allocation should, post the 2026 Census, also be partially subject to this differential performance. However, how much weight should be given to States' population stabilisation efforts in determining seat allocation in the delimitation exercise?

Here, the logic underlying the Finance Commission (FC) can be considered. The FC uses, in addition to total population size (50% weight), various other criteria for allocating finances to States such as demographic performance, which rewards States for improved population growth. The delimitation exercise could also reward/penalise States for demographic performance. To arrive at the number of seats allotted per State, the DC could propose the following based on population size and the Demographic Performance (DemPer) of States.

No change is to be made to the seat allocation by State for the prevailing 543 seats in the Lok Sabha as of 2024; the DemPer principle can be applied only to the additional seats (over the existing 543), meaning that the population principle still remains overwhelmingly dominant.

Moreover, there are dimensions to the DemPer principle – first, early achievement (TFR of 2.1 or less before 2005), should be given only 10% weightage in the estimation of seat allocation to a State, and second, the rate of decline in TFR between 2005 and 2021 should be given 90% weightage. The main outcome of the application of these principles is that all States experience an increase in the number of seats, with the more populous States receiving more seats in absolute terms than the less populous ones. This system also ensures that the share of States that performed well in bringing down population growth do not lose their seat share. This is fair federalism.

Upholding federalism
What the DemPer principle acknowledges is that States are meaningful political units, and that democracy is about fair voice, and not just raw numbers. Federal stability matters as much as electoral arithmetic. Applying DemPer to the Lok Sabha would balance democratic equality with federal fairness, reduce regional resentment, protect incentives for good governance, and improve the quality of representation without undermining legitimacy.

However, what is the ideal Lok Sabha size after expansion? The average population per seat in a State in 1971 was between 10 and 11.1 lakh. But then the total population of India was barely 541 million; it is now almost three times as large (1.4 billion). If India is to keep democracy vibrant with serious time allocated to deep debate, then the Lok Sabha size cannot be permitted to increase beyond 700.

Moreover, the delimitation exercise should no longer be seen as a north-south matter. A host of States across India, such as Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, Goa etc., had adopted the goal of containing their population, not just the southern States. Therefore, fair federalism is critical to the survival of our Union.

Context India's upcoming delimitation

post - 2026 Census must balance population - based seat allocation with rewards for states' demographic performance in stabilizing fertility rates. The article proposes applying a "DemPer" principle to additional seats beyond the current 543, ensuring fair federalism without penalizing population control.

Facts

The Freeze: The 84th Amendment (2002) froze Lok Sabha seat allocation until first census after 2026 to encourage population stabilization.

Census 2026 results are expected by 2028, with Delimitation Commission forming shortly after to prepare for 2029 elections.

Fertility divergence: By 2021, most states reached the replacement level (TFR of 2.1); The top 5 states (including Bihar and UP) have fertility rates 45% higher than early achievers.

Analytical Crux

The article argues that relying solely on population for seat allocation after 2026 could unfairly penalise States that successfully controlled population growth. It proposes a balanced approach where traditional seats are distributed using both population size and demographic performance, similar to how the Finance Commission allocates funds. This ensures that while larger states get more seats, better-performing states do not lose representation. Such an approach promotes "fair federalism", reduces regional tensions (especially North-South divide) and preserves incentives for responsible governance, while maintaining democratic legitimacy.

Verbatim Quotes

"the ratio between the number and the population of the State is, so far as practicable, the same for all states."

"democracy is about fair voice and not just raw numbers. Federal stability matters as much as electoral arithmetic."

Article - 2 : From Periphery to Gateway

From Periphery to Gateway: Reframing India's Northeast in the Indo-Pacific

AUTHOR : RAKHEE BHATTACHARJEE

Expert Speak Raisina Debates

Published on Mar 30, 2026

India's Northeast is shifting from a conflict periphery to an Indo-Pacific gateway, driven by peace, infrastructure, and investment, despite persistent structural and regional constraints



Author



Context This article outlines strategic shift in the narrative of India's North east from an isolated, conflict-prone frontier to a "vibrant & connected borderland."

Facts

Economic Surge : In 2023, Assam recorded a growth rate of 19%; even Arunachal Pradesh (11%) outperformed major states like Punjab & West Bengal (9% each).

Global Integration : Assam participated in World Economic Forum in Davos in 2026, marking a historic shift in region's international investment profile.

Revenue Gaps : Despite high growth, resource management is a challenge; Manipur recorded lowest score (0.036) on the Resource Management Index.

Strategic Corridors : Beyond traditional Siliguri Corridor, a new railway network connecting Western Assam to Bhutan is being developed.

Analytical Crux

The central thesis is that the Northeast's transformation is driven by "public-expenditure-led growth" and a strategic pivot toward the Indo-Pacific. By leveraging traditional economies (tea, bamboo, rubber) through modern technological initiatives like UNNATI and NECTAR, the region is moving from the periphery to the core of the "Viksit Bharat" vision. However, this progress remains highly contingent on "stable and conducive relations" with neighbors like Bangladesh and Myanmar, requiring India to develop alternative regional strategies - such as the Bhutan link - to mitigate the risks of cross border political instability.

Verbatim Quotes

"The transformation of the Northeast from a conflict-isolated, underdeveloped frontier region of 6 decades ago into a stable, vibrant & connected borderland has not been easy."

"Centring India's Northeast in efforts to advance trans-border engagement through trade & investment is contingent upon conducive relations with its immediate neighbours."

Article - 3 : The Iran war risks triggering a new wave of nuclear proliferation

The Iran war risks triggering a new wave of nuclear proliferation

States may be tempted to pursue their own nuclear weapons as they seek deterrence against attacks amid uncertainty over US guarantees.

EXPERT COMMENT PUBLISHED 30 MARCH 2026 — 4 MINUTE READ



Context The ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict is unfolding amid a weakening global nuclear order, raising concerns about the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

Facts

● Regional ripple effect: Saudi may pursue nuclear weapons if Iran does.

● Iran may reconsider its commitments under the NPT amid conflict escalation.

● The New START Treaty has expired without replacement, weakening arms control.

● Countries like Turkey, Poland and South Korea show rising support for nuclear weapons.

Analytical Crux

The article argues that recent conflicts are sending a dangerous signal to the world: nuclear weapons may be the ultimate guarantee of security. Countries that gave up or lacked nuclear weapons (like Ukraine, Iraq, Libya) faced military action, while nuclear-armed states like North Korea have avoided it. This perception, combined with weakening arms control agreements and doubts about U.S. protection of allies, is pushing more countries to consider developing their own nuclear deterrents. However, the article cautions that proliferation is risky and costly, potentially triggering sanctions, instability and even pre-emptive strikes. Thus, the global non-proliferation system is under severe strain & its weakening could lead to a more dangerous and unstable world.

Verbatim Quotes

"Observers may take the lesson that Iran would not have been attacked if it had a nuclear deterrent already."

"The path to nuclear deterrence is neither quick nor cost-free in the interim, a state acquiring a weapon is more likely to attract pre-emptive action than to deter it."

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Focus will be on conceptual clarity and building of the candidates to interlink the current developments.

Upcoming Batch: 9th June, 2026

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