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Q7(b)

How do the constituent states influence the foreign policy making process in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Indian Foreign Policy

Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants of foreign policy; institutions of policy-making; continuity and change.

Core demand of the question

- How do the constituent States of India influence its foreign policy?
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

Diplomacy is a Union power; influence is political.

Tamil Nadu-Sri Lanka and West Bengal-Bangladesh are classic pairs.

North-eastern States shape the Myanmar and refugee files.

Kerala's Gulf link is diaspora diplomacy from below.

Coalitions raise State leverage; a strong Centre can still override.

Introduction

The Constitution puts foreign affairs in the **Union List**. In practice, border States, diaspora States, and coalition politics push New Delhi. Influence is partisan and geographic. It is not a second External Affairs Ministry in every capital.

Body

Formal design

- Treaty-making, war, and diplomacy are Union subjects. The Centre can still be politically unable to ignore a State.
- Inter-State Council and occasional chief-minister visits are weak formal channels. The real channel is party and protest.

Border and ethnic files

- **Tamil Nadu** shapes Sri Lanka policy through the Tamil question and fisheries.
- West Bengal affects Bangladesh on **Teesta**, migration, and border haats.
- Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir sit on the Pakistan and people-to-people file.
- North-eastern States shape Myanmar policy, the Free Movement Regime, and refugee shelter, as in **Mizoram**'s Chin inflows.

Economic and diaspora States

- **Kerala and the Gulf**: remittances and evacuation diplomacy.
- **Gujarat and Maharashtra**: ports, investment, and some neighbourhood commerce.

- IT States lobby on visas to the United States and the UK.

Coalition and federal politics

- When the Centre needs State parties, a regional veto can delay a treaty or a water-sharing signature.
- **Para-diplomacy:** States open trade offices and court NRIs. They cannot recognise States or send ambassadors.

Limits

- Doklam and Galwan were Union military files. States did not set the LAC.
- A determined Centre can override, at a political cost.

Flow diagram

Union List diplomacy -> Foreign policy
Border States -> Identity water migration
Diaspora States -> Remittance visa
Identity water migration -> Foreign policy
Remittance visa -> Foreign policy

Conclusion

Constituent States influence Indian foreign policy where identity, water, migration, and diaspora meet the border or the Gulf. The Union still owns the legal core. Federal politics is the transmission belt, especially under coalitions.

Facts & figures

Union List

Foreign affairs, treaties, and war as central subjects under the Constitution.

Tamil Nadu

Repeated pressure on Delhi over Sri Lankan Tamils and fishermen.

Teesta

Water-sharing with Bangladesh delayed in part by West Bengal's stance.

Mizoram

Shelter politics toward Chin arrivals from Myanmar, a State-level face of a foreign crisis.