

GENERAL STUDIES II

Responsible Nations Index 2026: India Ranks 16th — From Global Power to Global Responsibility

Faculty/Author: Faculty Editorial Board**Date:** 13 October 2026**Platform:** Civil Service Gurukul Research Wing**Reading Time:** 5 Mins

The Responsible Nations Index (RNI), launched in New Delhi by the World Intellectual Foundation, introduces a new approach to measuring national progress by shifting attention from economic and military power to responsibility towards people, the planet, and the international community. Developed with JNU and IIM Mumbai, the index evaluates 114 countries using 58 indicators. India ranks 16th, while Singapore tops the index. This UPSC article explores its methodology, global rankings, ethical governance, sustainable development, India's civilizational values, and relevant previous-year examination themes.

CIVIL SERVICE GURUKUL

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS 2025

GS II & GS IV

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Why Is the Responsible Nations Index in the News?

The Responsible Nations Index (RNI) was launched on 19 January 2026 in New Delhi under the aegis of the World Intellectual Foundation.

The index was formally launched by former President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind.

It introduces a framework for evaluating countries according to their responsibilities towards citizens, the environment and the international community.

UPSC Relevance: International Relations, Ethical Governance, Sustainable Development, Global Institutions, Environmental Ethics, and India's Global Role.

2. What Is the Responsible Nations Index?

The Responsible Nations Index is a global framework that assesses how responsibly countries exercise power and fulfil their obligations.

Its central philosophy is a shift from measuring national power to evaluating national responsibility.

Core Philosophy: FROM POWER TO RESPONSIBILITY

The index argues that national strength should not be judged solely by economic output, military capabilities or geopolitical influence.

Instead, the responsible conduct of a nation towards its people, the planet and the world should also be considered.

Developing Institutions

- World Intellectual Foundation (WIF)
- Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)
- Indian Institute of Management Mumbai

3. Methodology and Framework of RNI

The index evaluates 154 countries through a multidimensional responsibility framework.

154

Countries Evaluated

58

Indicators

13

Sub-Themes

7

Themes

3

Main Dimensions

2026

Report Year

Three Main Dimensions

PEOPLE

Internal Responsibility

PLANET

Environmental Responsibility

WORLD

External Responsibility

A. Responsibility Towards People

Focuses on the welfare, rights, dignity and development of citizens.

B. Responsibility Towards the Planet

Focuses on environmental protection, sustainability and ecological responsibility.

C. Responsibility Towards the International Community

Focuses on responsible international conduct, peace and global cooperation.

4. Responsible Nations Index 2026: Global Rankings

Country	Global Rank
Singapore	1
Switzerland	2
Denmark	3
India	16
United States	66
China	68

Key Observations

- Singapore secured first position.
- Switzerland and Denmark ranked second and third.
- European nations featured prominently among the top-performing countries.
- India secured 16th position.
- The United States ranked 66th.
- China ranked 68th.

Key Insight: Economic size or military strength does not automatically translate into higher responsibility scores under the RNI framework.

5. India's Performance in RNI 2026

India ranked 16th among 154 countries in the Responsible Nations Index.

The supplied report analysis associates India's performance with several development and governance initiatives.

Major Strengths Highlighted

1. Healthcare accessibility.
2. Social equity programmes.

3. Environmental initiatives.
4. People-centric governance.
5. International cooperation.

International Solar Alliance

The International Solar Alliance is an example of India's international engagement on renewable energy and sustainable development.

Such initiatives illustrate how international cooperation can complement domestic development efforts.

UPSC Analytical Point: India's rank can be used as a case study of responsibility-based international comparisons, while recognising that ranking depend on the chosen methodology.

6. Limitations of Traditional National Power Indicators

Framework	What It Measures	Limitation Highlighted
GDP	Economic output	Does not directly capture all dimensions of inequality, environmental harm or welfare.
Military Power Indices	Defence capabilities	Do not necessarily measure peacebuilding or responsible international conduct.
Democracy Indices	Selected democratic characteristics	Some methodologies face debate over measurement, normative assumptions and contextual interpretation.
Responsible Nations Index	Responsibility towards people, planet and world	Results depend on indicator selection, weighting and data quality.

Critical Perspective: GDP, military power indices, democracy indices and RNI measure different dimensions. They should be viewed as potentially complementary, rather than automatically treated as substitutes.

7. Significance of the Responsible Nations Index

A. Ethical Governance

Encourages governments to evaluate policies through the principles of responsibility, inclusion and fairness.

B. Sustainable Development

Highlights environmental responsibility alongside economic development.

C. International Cooperation

Emphasises peace, collective action and obligations towards the global community.

D. Alternative Development Perspective

Offers a broader approach to national performance than measures focused solely on material power.

E. Policy Diagnostic Tool

Can help identify possible gaps in social, environmental and international responsibility.

8. RNI and Indian Civilizational Values

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

The idea that the world is one family emphasises cooperation, shared humanity and global responsibility.

Dharma

Dharma can be understood in this context as moral duty and responsible conduct.

Ram Rajya

The concept is associated with ideals of justice, public welfare and responsible governance.

Ethics Connection: National power should be exercised with moral responsibility and concern for collective welfare.

9. Great Power vs Good Power

Great Power	Good Power
Economic strength	Ethical governance
Military capability	Peace and cooperation
Geopolitical influence	Global responsibility
Strategic resources	Responsible resource use
Material prosperity	Social and environmental welfare

The distinction is conceptual. A country can be both a great power and a responsible power.

10. Critical Evaluation of RNI

Potential Strengths

- Broadens the definition of national progress.
- Encourages ethical policy discussions.
- Includes environmental responsibility.
- Highlights obligations beyond national borders.
- Provides an additional comparative framework.

Potential Limitations

- Indicator selection may influence rankings.
- Weights may reflect normative judgments.
- Cross-country data may not be fully comparable.
- National averages may conceal internal inequality.
- Rankings do not establish causation.

Way Forward

1. Maintain transparent methodology.
2. Publish indicator-level data.
3. Use independent academic review.
4. Explain uncertainties and data gaps.
5. Encourage policy improvement rather than ranking competition.

11. UPSC Prelims Quick Revision

Topic	Important Fact
Index	Responsible Nations Index
Abbreviation	RNI
Launch	19 January 2026
Location	New Delhi
Launching Organisation	World Intellectual Foundation
Collaborating Institutions	JNU and IIM Mumbai

Topic	Important Fact
Countries	154
Indicators	58
Sub-Themes	13
Themes	7
Main Dimensions	3
Singapore Rank	1
India Rank	16
USA Rank	66
China Rank	68
Core Philosophy	From Power to Responsibility

12. UPSC Mains Answer-Writing Strategy

GS Paper II

Discuss international cooperation, global governance, India's foreign policy and responsible state conduct.

GS Paper III

Connect RNI with environmental sustainability, inclusive growth and development indicators.

GS Paper IV

Explain moral duty, environmental ethics, public accountability and ethical international relations.

Essay Paper

Use the distinction between a Great Power and a Good Power to discuss the responsible use of power.

Suggested Answer Structure: Introduction ? RNI framework ? Key findings ? India's performance ? Significance ? Limitations ? Way forward ? Conclusion.

13. Conclusion

The Responsible Nations Index introduces a responsibility-based approach to comparing national performance.

It highlights the importance of social welfare, environmental protection and international cooperation alongside traditional measures of power.

India's 16th position offers an opportunity to discuss responsible governance and its role in the evolving international order.

Final UPSC Takeaway: The strength of a nation should be evaluated not only by the power it possesses but also by how responsibly that power is exercised.

14. Relevant UPSC Mains Previous Year Questions

PYQ Note: RNI was launched in 2026, so it did not appear in earlier UPSC papers. These questions are related to recurring themes of international responsibility, ethics, power and governance. Question wording is paraphrased for study. Answer given suggested model points, not official UPSC answer keys.

UPSC MAINS 2023 | GS IV

PYQ 1: Ethics in International Aid

Examine the ethical issues involved in international aid to resource-constrained nations. Use suitable examples.

Suggested Answer and Explanation

International aid can support humanitarian development but raises questions about power and accountability.

- Respect recipient-country sovereignty.
- Avoid political conditionality that undermines welfare.
- Ensure transparency in allocation.
- Prioritise vulnerable populations.
- Promote long-term institutional capacity.

RNI Connection: International assistance is one way to examine responsibility towards the global community.

UPSC MAINS 2022 | GS IV

PYQ 2: Ethics of War

Discuss the ethical issues arising from the Russia-Ukraine war and the decisions taken by different countries in pursuit of national interests.

Suggested Answer and Explanation

- Protection of civilian lives.
- Proportionality in the use of force.
- Respect for international humanitarian law.
- Humanitarian access and refugee protection.
- Peaceful dispute resolution.

RNI Connection: A powerful nation must also consider the humanitarian consequences of its actions.

UPSC MAINS 2020 | GS IV

PYQ 2: Refugees and Human Rights

Examine the ethical implications of returning refugees to countries where they may face persecution or human-rights violations.

Suggested Answer and Explanation

- Human dignity is a fundamental ethical concern.
- Refugee protection involves humanitarian obligations.
- Non-refoulement is an important protection principle.
- National security and human rights require careful balancing.
- International cooperation can support refugee protection.

RNI Connection: Responsibility extends beyond national borders.

UPSC MAINS 2020 | GS IV

PYQ 4: Power and Moral Duty

Examine how the desire for power can be guided by rationality and moral duty in international relations.

Suggested Answer and Explanation

- Power should operate within ethical limits.
- National interest should consider humanitarian consequences.
- Diplomacy can reduce conflict.
- International law provides standards of conduct.
- Responsible leadership promotes long-term stability.

RNI Connection: The question closely matches the philosophy of moving from power to responsibility.

UPSC MAINS 2020 | GS IV

PYQ 5: Ethics and Comprehensive National Power

Discuss how ethics and values strengthen human capital, soft power and social harmony as components of comprehensive national power.

Suggested Answer and Explanation

- Human capital improves through equitable opportunities.
- Ethical policies strengthen international credibility.
- Social harmony supports stability.
- Trust improves institutional effectiveness.
- Soft power grows through responsible conduct.

RNI Connection: Responsible governance can reinforce national strength rather than compete with it.

UPSC MAINS 2017 | GS IV

PYQ 6: Strength, Peace and Security

Explain why strength, peace and security are regarded as important pillars of international relations.

Suggested Answer and Explanation

- Strength supports national security.
- Peace creates conditions for development.
- Security protects institutions and citizens.
- Diplomacy helps prevent conflict.
- Ethical conduct supports international trust.

RNI Connection: Responsible power should promote peace and shared security.

15. Original UPSC-Style Practice Questions

These four questions are newly prepared practice questions. They are not official UPSC PYQs.

PRACTICE MCQ 1 | 2026**RNI Launching Organisation**

Which organisation launched the Responsible Nations Index?

- A. World Bank
- B. World Intellectual Foundation
- C. World Economic Forum
- D. United Nations Development Programme

Correct Answer and Explanation

Answer: B

The World Intellectual Foundation launched the Responsible Nations Index.

PRACTICE MCQ 2 | 2026

RNI Framework

How many countries are evaluated by the RNI?

- A. 120
- B. 140
- C. 154
- D. 193

Correct Answer and Explanation

Answer: C

The index evaluates 154 countries.

PRACTICE MCQ 3 | 2026**India's Global Rank**

What is India's rank in RNI, 2026?

- A. 3rd
- B. 16th
- C. 60th
- D. 63rd

Correct Answer and Explanation

Answer: B

India secured 16th position.

PRACTICE MCQ 4 | 2026**Central Philosophy**

Which statement best describes the central philosophy of RNI?

- A. From cooperation to competition
- B. From power to responsibility
- C. From welfare to military power

D. From ethics to economic output

Correct Answer and Explanation

Answer: B

RNI emphasises responsible national conduct over power alone.

16. UPSC PYQ Trend Analysis

Theme	UPSC Relevance
Ethics in International Relations	GS Paper IV
Power and Moral Duty	GS Paper IV and Essay
Humanitarian Responsibility	GS Papers II and IV
Environmental Responsibility	GS Papers III and IV
India's Global Role	GS Paper II
Development Beyond GDP	GS Paper III and Essay

Final Preparation Strategy

Prelims: Focus on RNI's launching institution, methodology, 154 countries, 58 indicators, three dimensions and major rankings.

Mains: Connect RNI with ethical governance, environmental sustainability, global cooperation, soft power and responsible leadership.

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