



SHIFT IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY - GS II MAINS

Q. India has experimented with new foreign policy ventures in its quest to attain the status of global power since independence. Discuss the trends of recent foreign policy shifts by India. (15 marks, 250 words)

SHIFT IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY - GS II MAINS

News: *Chinese state media praises India's strides in economic, foreign policy spheres under PM Modi*

What's in the news?

- India has become more strategically confident and proactive in creating and developing a “Bharat narrative”, an article in China’s Global Times has said, praising India’s significant strides in the spheres of economic, social governance and foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India's Foreign Policy:

- The foreign policy of a country shapes its relations with other countries. India has experimented with new foreign policy ventures in its quest to attain the status of global power since independence.

Key takeaways of India's Foreign Policy:

- India has a significant stake in a favourable external environment in both our region and globally, given the Govt's high priority for socio-economic development. As a result, India strives to maintain a peaceful periphery and works to improve relations with its extended neighbours.
- India's foreign policy also recognises that critical issues for India's transformation, such as climate change, energy security and food security, are global in scope and require global cooperation.
- India's global role has shifted dramatically over the last six decades, from leading the anti-colonial movement to emerging as a global player with de facto nuclear status.
- India's transformation into one of the world's most powerful economies, a responsible nuclear weapon state with demonstrated scientific and technological competence, and stable democracy is truly remarkable in our time.

Tenets of India's Foreign Policy:

The following are the fundamental tenets of Indian foreign policy:

- Promotion of international peace and security



- Non-alignment
- Anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideologies are diametrically opposed
- Anti-racialism
- United Nations Support for Peaceful Coexistence and Panchsheel
- Multilateralism.
- Disarmament and Nuclear Policy.

Key Aspects of India's Recent Foreign Policy:

1. Neighbourhood First Policy:

- The Modi government emphasized strengthening ties with India's immediate neighbours through the "Neighbourhood First" policy.
- This policy aimed to enhance regional cooperation, connectivity and economic integration within South Asia.
- Efforts were made to address issues with countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan to foster people-to-people exchanges.

2. Act East Policy:

- Building on the Look East Policy, the Modi government reinvigorated India's engagement with Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region through the Act East Policy.
- This policy focused on deepening economic ties, expanding security cooperation, and enhancing cultural exchanges with countries in this region.

3. International Alliances:

- India worked to strengthen its relationships with major powers and regional alliances. It deepened ties with countries like the United States, Japan, Australia, and Israel through increased diplomatic engagements, defence cooperation, and trade relations.
- India also sought to play an active role in multilateral forums such as the G20, BRICS, and the International Solar Alliance.

4. Economic Diplomacy:

- The Modi government emphasized economic diplomacy as a key pillar of Indian foreign policy. Initiatives such as "Make in India," "Digital India," and "Skill India" were launched to attract foreign investment, promote technology transfer, and foster economic growth.
- Special emphasis was placed on engaging with countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia to enhance trade and investment.

5. Counterterrorism:

- India continued to prioritize counterterrorism cooperation with various countries and sought to isolate and diplomatically pressure nations that sponsor terrorism.
- It called for stronger international action against terrorism and stressed the need for comprehensive approaches to combat the global menace.

6. Climate Change and Renewable Energy:

- India played an active role in global climate change negotiations and took steps to address environmental challenges.



- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) was launched by India and France to promote solar energy cooperation among member countries. India also committed to reducing its carbon emissions and increasing its renewable energy capacity.

7. Digital Diplomacy:

- The Modi government leveraged digital diplomacy and social media platforms to engage with the global audience, particularly the Indian diaspora.
- Prime Minister Modi's visits to various countries were accompanied by public interactions, rallies and engagements with the Indian community abroad.

8. Vaccine Diplomacy:

- In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, India emerged as a major player in vaccine production and distribution.
- It launched the "Vaccine Maitri" initiative, providing vaccines to other countries and playing a significant role in global vaccination efforts.

9. 'Connect Central Asia' Policy:

- It is aimed at strengthening and expanding India's relations with Central Asia countries. These countries include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

10. Russia-Ukraine war:

- It was a difficult year on the geopolitical and diplomatic stage for India as the choices grew more difficult given its strategic ties with the U.S. and Europe and traditional ties with Russia.
- Oil: India also lashed out on western powers for their "hypocrisy" on Russian oil flows to India.
- Food and fuel shortages: A slew of sanctions by the West meant to target the Russian economy led to food and fuel shortages and price increases, which worried India.
- India was against the war: But India chose to abstain in more than a dozen resolutions at the UNSC, UNGA, IAEA, Human Rights Commission, and other multilateral platforms seeking to censure Russia for the invasion and humanitarian crisis.

11. Revival of FTA's:

- In recent times, the Indian government has been actively pursuing free trade agreements (FTAs) with a wide range of countries.
- India signed trade agreements with the UAE and Australia and hopes to progress on talks with the EU, Gulf Cooperation Council and Canada for others.

WAY FORWARD:

1. West Asia:

- India needs to ensure, through deft diplomatic handling, that the latest UAE-Israel linkage does not adversely impact India's interests in the region.
- India also needs to devote greater attention to try and restore India-Iran ties which have definitely frayed in recent years.

2. Afghanistan:



- India must decide how a shift in policy at this time would serve India's objectives in Afghanistan, considering the tremendous investment it has made in recent decades to shore up democracy in that country.

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

- India, again, will need to try and square the circle when it comes to its membership of the SCO, considering its new relationship with the U.S.

4. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):

- Likewise, even though India currently has a detached outlook, vis-à-vis the NAM, and has increasingly distanced itself from the African and Latin American group in terms of policy prescriptions, matters could get aggravated, following India's new alliance patterns

5. Russia:

- India can hardly hope to count on Russia as a strategic ally at a time, when Russia-China relations have vastly expanded and a strategic congruence exists between the two countries.
- India will need to handle with skill and dexterity its relationship with Russia.

6. Soft power diplomacy:

- The foreign policies of India have always been based on the objectives of dialogue, peace, and building national and global agreement.
- It opts to predict better synergies with nations that have mutual goals such as safeguarding civil treaties, regulations, promoting global peace, combating terrorism and political violence, and developing the fundamental foundations of a peaceful and prosperous world.

It's important to note that foreign policy is a continuous process influenced by various factors, and these highlights provide a general overview of Indian foreign policy under the current government.