



UPSC CSE



PRE & MAINS

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International Relations



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Previous Year Questions

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India and its Neighbourhood (relations)

Qn No.	YEAR	QUESTION	TOPIC	MARKS
1	2013	What is meant by Gujral doctrine? Does it have any relevance today? Discuss.	Pakistan	10
2	2013	In respect of India - Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy.	Sri Lanka	10
3	2013	Discuss the political developments in Maldives in the last two years. Should they be of any cause of concern to India?	Maldives	10
4	2013	The protests in Shahbag Square in Dhaka in Bangladesh reveal a fundamental split in society between the nationalists and Islamic forces. What is its significance for India?	Bangladesh	10
5	2013	What do you understand by "The String of Pearls"? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this.	South East Asia	10
6	2013	The proposed withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan in 2014 is fraught with major security implications for the countries of the region. Examine in light of the fact that India is faced with a plethora of challenges and needs to safeguard its own strategic interests.	Afghanistan	10
7	2014	With respect to the South China sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tension affirm the need for safeguarding maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region. In this context, discuss the bilateral issues between India and China.	China	12.5
8	2015	Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples.	Pakistan	12.5
9	2015	Project Mausam is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of the Indian Government to improve relationship with its neighbors. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss.	Policy	12.5
10	2016	"Increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of several member-states by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)." Explain with suitable examples.	Pakistan	12.5

11	2017	'China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia', In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbor.	China	10
12	2022	India is an age-old friend of Sri Lanka.' Discuss India's role in the recent crisis in Sri Lanka in light of the preceding statement.	Sri Lanka	10
13	2024	Discuss the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of Maldives for India with a focus on global trade and energy flows. Further also discuss how this relationship affects India's maritime security and regional stability amidst international competition?	Maldives	15

Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed and Developing countries on India (India's interests, diaspora)

Qn No.	YEAR	QUESTION	TOPIC	MARKS
1	2013	Economic ties between India and Japan while growing in the recent years are still far below their potential. Elucidate the policy constraints which are inhibiting this growth.	Japan	10
2	2015	Increasing interest of India in Africa has its pros and cons. Critically examine.	Africa	12.5
3	2016	Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post-Cold War international scenario.	Core Policy	12.5
4	2017	Indian Diaspora has an important role to play in South-East Asian countries' economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian Diaspora in South- East Asia in this context	Diaspora S-E Asia	15
5	2017	The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries.	Energy	15
6	2018	'India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back.'" Discuss.	Israel	10
7	2018	In what ways would the ongoing US-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to this situation?	Nuclear Pacts	15
8	2019	"What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's National self- esteem and ambitions" Explain with suitable examples.	USA	15
9	2019	"The long-sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalised Nations has disappeared on account of its new found role in the emerging global order". Elaborate.	Image	15

1

CHAPTER

India's Foreign Policy

India's early foreign policy was largely shaped by the Britishers and its founding leaders, especially Jawahar Lal Nehru. Its evolution is given below:

Strategic Autonomy

- It is the ability of a State to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained in any manner by other States.
- It depends on the power capabilities of a state and the structure of the international system (Unipolar / Bipolar / Multi-Polar).

Pre-Independence Era & Role of the INC

- **British Influence:** Foreign policy was dictated by British interests, maintaining ties with colonies and limiting diplomatic engagement.
- **Rise of INC:** The Indian National Congress (INC) raised global awareness about colonial oppression and sought international support for India's independence.
- **Global Outreach:** Indian leaders promoted India's interests abroad, laying the foundation for an independent foreign policy.

Phase	Period	Core Theme	Key Features
Phase 1	1946–1962	Optimistic Non-Alignment	NAM, Panchsheel, economic development, leadership of Third World
Phase 2	1962–1971	Realism & Recovery	China war, Indo-Pak war, pragmatic security choices, defence ties with US
Phase 3	1971–1991	Regional Assertion	US–China–Pakistan axis, 1971 war, tilt towards USSR
Phase 4	1991–1999	Strategic Autonomy	Post-USSR world, wider engagement, Act East, nuclear status
Phase 5	1999–2013	Balancing Power	India–US nuclear deal, China engagement, BRICS, Look West policy

Nehruvian Era (1947–1964)

- **Core Principles:**
 - ✓ Non-alignment and independence in foreign affairs.
 - ✓ Advocated decolonization and played an active role in the **United Nations (UN)**.
 - ✓ Introduced **Panchsheel (Five Principles)** of peaceful coexistence.
- **Key Developments:**
 - ✓ **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** Aimed at avoiding Cold War bloc politics.
 - ✓ **Sino-Indian War (1962):** Led to a focus on military modernization.
 - ✓ **Soviet Union Ties:** Strengthened political and economic relations.

Shastri's Era (1964–1966)

- **Indo-Pakistan War (1965):** Due to conflict over Kashmir.
- **Tashkent Declaration:** Peace agreement brokered by the Soviet Union between India and Pakistan in 1966.
- **US Food Aid (PL 480 Program):** Dependency on American food aid during economic distress during the 1960s.

Indira Gandhi's Era (1966–1977, 1980–1984)

- **Strategic Military and Economic Growth:**
 - ✓ **Indo-Pakistan War (1971):** Led to the creation of Bangladesh.
 - ✓ **Indo-Soviet Treaty (1971):** Strengthened diplomatic and military ties.
 - ✓ **Nuclear Test (1974):** "Smiling Buddha" established India as a nuclear power.
- **Regional Cooperation:**
 - ✓ Pioneered the creation of **SAARC (1985)** to enhance South Asian cooperation.

Rajiv Gandhi's Era (1984–1989)

- **Strengthened Soviet Relations:** Continued military and economic partnerships.
- **Intervention in Sri Lanka:** Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord (1987) to resolve civil war.
- **Economic Liberalization:** Initiated early reforms to open India's economy.
- **Terrorism Challenges:** Air India bombing (1985) heightened internal security concerns.

1990s – Economic Liberalization and Strategic Shifts

- **LPG Reforms (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization):** Opened markets to foreign investments.
- **Gujral Doctrine (1996):** Strengthened South Asian diplomatic ties through non-reciprocity.
- **Look East Policy (1991):** Strengthened trade and diplomatic relations with Southeast Asia.
- **Nuclear Tests (1998):** India declared itself a nuclear power despite sanctions.
- **Kargil War (1999):** Tensions with Pakistan escalated into a brief war.

NDA-I (1998–2004)

- **Pokhran-II Nuclear Tests (1998):** Led to global sanctions but reinforced India's nuclear status.
- **Improved India-US Relations:** Bill Clinton's 2000 visit marked a shift in bilateral ties.

UPA-I & II (2004–2014)

- **Indo-US Nuclear Deal (2008):** Ended India's nuclear isolation.
- **China Engagement:** Established a **strategic partnership (2005)** and border defense agreement (2013).
- **Land Border Agreement with Bangladesh (2014):** Resolved enclave disputes.
- **ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (2010):** Strengthened economic ties with Southeast Asia.
- **Push for UN Security Council Reform:** Advocated for a permanent seat.

NDA-II (2014–Present)

- **Neighborhood First Policy:** Prioritized South Asia and Indian Ocean nations.
- **Act East Policy:** Expanding Indo-Pacific trade and security cooperation.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Membership:** Strengthening Eurasian ties.
- **US Strategic Partnership:** Enhanced defense, counterterrorism, and trade relations.
- **Sustainable Development Commitments:** Active participation in global climate policies (Paris Agreement).
- **Integration of Domestic & Foreign Policy:** Using diplomatic capital to support national development initiatives such as Make in India, Digital India, startups, infrastructure, and agri-tech.
- **SMART Power Approach:** A calibrated blend of soft power (culture, diplomacy, values) and hard power (defence, security, economic strength).

Foreign Policy - Pre 2014	Foreign Policy - Post 2014
Major Focus on Political Diplomacy	Economic Diplomacy - Focus on Trade, Investment, Technology, etc.
Non-Alignment (Cold War Era)	Multi-Alignment (Strategic Autonomy)
Idealism (Nehruvian Era)	Pragmatism
Third-Worldliness (Natural leader of Global South)	Aspiration to become global leader Interlocutor between Global South and Global North
International Role : Passive or protest-oriented voice.	Assertive and collaborative India (security assertiveness, global partnerships, and issue-based leadership).

Pillars of Indian Diplomacy

- **Indian in Thought:** Guided by civilizational values and indigenous strategic thinking.
 - ✓ **Middle Path Tradition:** Follows moderation and balance, avoiding extreme positions, as seen in the Ukraine-Russia conflict.
 - ✓ **Strategic Autonomy (Atmanirbharata):** Promotes self-reliance while remaining actively engaged with the world.
 - ✓ **Human-Centric Globalisation:** Prioritises human welfare, equity, and shared global interests.
- **Multipolar Orientation:** Supports a multipolar world through Neighbourhood First, Act East, and Think West policies.
 - ✓ **Diplomacy as a Force Multiplier:** Aligns foreign policy with domestic goals, such as manufacturing growth through COVID diplomacy.
- **Force for Global Good:** Practices *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* by focusing on human security and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.
 - ✓ **Developmental Diplomacy:** Emphasises capacity-building and infrastructure support in neighbouring countries (such as Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka etc).
- **Futuristic Outlook:** Contributes to global solutions on supply chains, climate action, and connectivity (such as Mission life, ISA and Panch-Amrit).

New Policy Initiatives -

- Cooperation with the Global South: Strengthening leadership among developing countries through initiatives such as the India United Nations Global Capacity Building Initiative and the Voice of the Global South Initiative.
- Neighbourhood First Policy: Prioritising relations with the immediate and extended neighbourhood as part of the broader India First approach.
- Sub Regional Cooperation: Deepening engagement through platforms such as BIMSTEC Mekong Ganga Cooperation India ASEAN BBIN the Indian Ocean Region QUAD and FIPIC.
- From Look East to Act East and Look and Link West: Moving from passive engagement to proactive economic strategic and connectivity based partnerships in East and West Asia.
- Para Diplomacy: Promoting sister city partnerships such as Ahmedabad and Kobe Delhi and Chicago Chennai and Chongqing and Delhi and Beijing to strengthen cooperative federalism, promote local products for global markets and share best practices.
- Engagement with the Indian Diaspora: Expanding systematic and energetic outreach to leverage the diaspora for economic cultural and strategic cooperation.

Challenges to India's Foreign Policy

- **Geopolitical Shifts:** Managing the rise and assertiveness of China while balancing relations with the United States and Russia as seen in India's position on the Ukraine conflict at the United Nations.

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- **Regional Power Dynamics:** The China Pakistan nexus border tensions with Nepal growing Chinese influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region including CPEC outreach to Afghanistan and instability under the Taliban regime.
 - **Global Economic Uncertainty:** Trade wars protectionist policies and global economic slowdowns that affect India's growth and foreign trade.
 - **Terrorism Threats:** Security challenges from non-state actors supported by hostile neighbours such as the Uri attack in 2016 , the Poonch Rajouri attack in 2023 and the Pahalgam attack in 2025.
 - **Non Traditional Security Threats:** Cyber attacks hybrid warfare and lone wolf terrorism such as alleged foreign links to the Mumbai power outages.
 - **Energy Security:** Heavy dependence on crude oil imports nearly eighty percent makes India vulnerable to global price shocks and regional instability.
 - **Safety of Indian Diaspora:** Ensuring protection of Indians in conflict affected regions such as Gulf countries Sudan and the Russia Ukraine war zone.

Way Forward

- **Greater Policy Realism:** Adopting a grounded approach using smart power with a balanced mix of hard and soft power following the principle of trust but verify.
- **Economy Driven Diplomacy:** Using the global environment for growth while ensuring that economic interests guide foreign policy decisions as seen in India's decision not to join the RCEP.
- **Engagement with Multiple Players:** Balancing relations across rival groupings such as cooperation with the United States China and Russia participation in QUAD and SCO and maintaining ties with Iran Saudi Arabia Israel and Palestine.
- **Safeguarding Strategic Autonomy:** Strengthening partnerships with the United States Japan and Europe while preserving independent foreign policy decision making.
- **Calculated Risk Taking:** Taking confident but measured decisions to enhance global standing such as the abrogation of Article 370 the Doklam standoff and actions after the Uri attack.
- **Correct Reading of Global Trends:** Identifying opportunities like China plus one strategy leadership of the Global South and advocacy of the Indo Pacific framework.
- India's foreign policy has evolved from post-colonial non-alignment to a strategic and globalized approach. From emphasizing regional cooperation to strengthening global ties, India continues to position itself as a key player in international diplomacy.

2

CHAPTER

India and its Neighbourhood

- India's strategic location in South Asia, bordered by a diverse group of nations, shapes a dynamic and intricate web of relationships with its neighbors.
- These ties are crucial for ensuring regional stability, security, and advancing India's global ambitions.
- Each neighboring country - Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and the Maldives - has a distinct historical connection with India, marked by cultural bonds, shared heritage, and occasional geopolitical challenges.



India as a Swing State

- A swing state is a country with a large and growing economy, democratic political system and a strategic position across regions that enables it to influence regional and global outcomes.
- **Role in the Global Order:** Such states seek reforms in the existing international system but do not aim to dismantle global institutions rules and norms that have supported peace stability and prosperity over the past decades.
Post 2014 Phase: Marked by energetic and proactive diplomacy.
- **Context of a Multipolar World:** India's role has expanded due to major shifts in global power structures.
- **Key Factors Behind Multipolarity:**
 - ✓ The 2008 global economic crisis weakened the United States and European economies.
 - ✓ The rapid economic and strategic rise of China altered global power equations.
 - ✓ War fatigue in the United States and its withdrawal from Afghanistan reduced unilateral dominance.
 - ✓ The growing importance of platforms like the G20 and BRICS increased space for emerging powers.
 - ✓ Japan's efforts to secure a greater role in global governance reshaped regional and global alignments.
- **India's Growing Profile:** India is increasingly active at regional and global levels while maintaining strategic autonomy and constructive engagement with multiple power centres.
- **Factors Supporting India's Swing State Role:** India is the fifth largest economy with the potential to become the third largest economy by 2027 it leads the voice of the Global South and actively demands reforms in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Security Council.

Non Aligned Movement (NAM)

- NAM was founded in 1961 at Belgrade Serbia as a collective response to the Cold War and bipolar world order.
- **Foundational Principles:** Based on the Ten Principles of Bandung adopted at the Asia Africa Conference in 1955 in Indonesia.
- **Objective:** To protect national independence sovereignty territorial integrity and security of member states against imperialism colonialism neo colonialism racism and foreign domination.
- **Membership:** 120 countries with India as a founding member.

Importance of NAM for India

- Supports India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council.
- Helps safeguard India's strategic autonomy.
- Enables India to mobilise developing countries on issues like COVID protectionism and UN reforms.
- Strengthens India's role as the voice of the Global South through South South cooperation.
- Supports the emergence of a multipolar world with India as an independent power centre.
- Provides India an opportunity to shape the post COVID global order with NAM support.

Is NAM Losing Relevance Today?

Arguments in Favour -

- **Changed World Order:** End of the Cold War and emergence of a multipolar world reduced NAM's original relevance.
- **Political Neglect:** Declining political commitment despite regular meetings.
- **Tilt Towards Major Powers:** Many members including India have increased engagement with developed countries for trade capital and technology.
- **Internal Divisions:** Differences among members make consensus difficult on global issues.
- **Rise of Alternative Forums:** Greater relevance of G20 BIMSTEC SCO India Africa Forum India ASEAN Forum and RCEP.
- **Limited Enforcement Power:** Often viewed as a talk shop due to limited ability to influence powerful nations.

Arguments Against -

- **Moral Collective Strength:** Represents nearly two thirds of UN membership and acts as a counter to international hegemony.
- **Common Positions:** Joint stand on issues such as unequal global economic order, multilateral reforms and opposition to unilateral sanctions such as against Iran.
- **South South Cooperation:** Enhances bargaining power on climate change poverty trade issues at the WTO and globalisation.
- **New Cold War Context:** Renewed rivalry between the United States and China and the United States and Russia sustains NAM's relevance.

Way Forward: NAM 2.0

- **Reorient Core Goals:** Renew focus on peace development economic cooperation and democratisation of international relations.
 - **Address New Global Challenges:** Climate change pandemics refugee crises food security and energy security aligned with Sustainable Development Goals.
 - **Strengthen Security Cooperation:** Collective response to terrorism cyber security weapons of mass destruction nuclear disarmament drug trafficking and organised crime.
 - **Reform Global Institutions:** Push for reforms in the United Nations IMF and World Bank to address twenty first century challenges.
 - **Promote Multipolar Multilateralism:** Advocate a fair inclusive and humane model of globalisation based on equality and shared responsibility.
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Gujral Doctrine

- The Gujral Doctrine promotes an accommodative approach towards India's neighbours based on sovereign equality, non interference and non reciprocal generosity especially towards smaller neighbours such as Bangladesh Bhutan Nepal Sri Lanka and Maldives.
- **Need:** With hostile neighbours on both eastern and western fronts India needed peaceful relations with other neighbours to contain the influence of Pakistan and China in South Asia.
- **Core Objective:** To reduce persistent disputes and build long term trust by taking the extra step in resolving bilateral issues.

Five Main Principles of the Gujral Doctrine

- India should not demand reciprocity and should extend goodwill to its neighbours in good faith.
- No South Asian country should allow its territory to be used against another country.
- Mutual non interference in internal affairs.
- Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.
- Peaceful bilateral settlement of disputes.

Contemporary Significance and Link with Neighbourhood First Policy

- India's Neighbourhood First Policy closely reflects the spirit of the Gujral Doctrine.
- A peaceful and cooperative neighbourhood supports development without distraction and strengthens India's rise as a regional and global power.
- Unilateral concessions help activate regional cooperation on climate change, economic development terrorism and health crises such as COVID.
- Enhances internal security through coordinated action against non state actors and faster resolution of border and water disputes.
- Improves perception management by projecting India as an elder partner rather than a big brother as seen in relations with Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Helps limit the growing Chinese influence in South Asia by strengthening India's ties with neighbouring countries.
- Improves regional integration and connectivity through economic and infrastructure linkages.

Challenges in Implementing the Gujral Doctrine

- Growing Chinese influence through the Belt and Road Initiative and cheque book diplomacy.
- Asymmetry in size leading to India phobia and domestic political instability in neighbouring countries such as Nepal.
- Delays in major projects such as the Kaladan project and hydropower projects in Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Unresolved boundary disputes with Pakistan Nepal in the Kalapani region and Sri Lanka over Kachchatheevu.
- Trade imbalances due to competition in similar goods and surplus in India's favour.
- Fragmented connectivity with Afghanistan and South East Asian neighbours.
- Recent use of hard power measures such as surgical strikes, hot pursuits and the Doklam standoff.

Steps Taken by India

- Strengthening economic cooperation by hosting the South Asia Sub Regional Economic Cooperation headquarters of the Asian Development Bank in India.
- Improving connectivity through BBIN IMT Highway Kaladan project and the Zaranj Delaram road in Afghanistan.

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- Adopting two speed regional diplomacy through BIMSTEC and SAARC.
 - Using soft power initiatives such as the South Asian Satellite South Asian Energy Grid and milk grid.
 - Expanding aid diplomacy in Sri Lanka Maldives Bhutan and Nepal.
 - Launching vaccine diplomacy and creating a COVID emergency fund for SAARC members.

Way Forward

- Adopt proactive and fast track diplomacy supported by a comprehensive neighbourhood policy.
- Use diplomatic good offices to defuse tensions without visible interference.
- Increase engagement through multiple platforms such as SAARC BBIN BIMSTEC and BCIM.
- Avoid a big brother approach while being sensitive to political dynamics in neighbouring countries.
- Accelerate implementation of key projects especially in hydropower and physical digital and people to people connectivity.
- Strengthen engagement in the Indian Ocean Region QUAD and Indo Pacific framework with India as a net security provider.
- Deepen development diplomacy through lines of credit grants disaster relief humanitarian assistance scholarships and capacity building programmes.

India's Soft Power Diplomacy

Hard Power and Soft Power

- **Hard Power:** Refers to a country's ability to influence others through economic incentives, sanctions, trade embargoes or military force. It relies on coercion and is usually tactical and short term.
- **Soft Power:** Coined by Joseph Nye it is the ability to shape the preferences and behaviour of others through attraction, persuasion and credibility rather than force. It is non violent partnership oriented and strategic in the long term.

Sources of Soft Power

- **Culture:** Religion traditions values literature art music cinema education tourism and sports.
- **Political Values:** Democracy constitutionalism human rights political goodwill and leadership credibility.
- **Foreign Policy Behaviour:** Peace diplomacy rule based multilateralism good neighbourliness aid diplomacy debt relief and post conflict reconstruction.

Significance of Soft Power for India

- **Countering External Influence:** Cultural affinity and people to people ties have helped India counter growing Chinese influence in Indian Ocean littoral states.
 - **Complementing Hard Power:** Soft power enhances acceptability of Indian projects abroad such as infrastructure initiatives in Africa supported by aid diplomacy and capacity building.
 - **Positive Global Image:** Improves India's international reputation and attracts allies as seen in vaccine diplomacy and leadership in climate initiatives like the International Solar Alliance.
 - **Diaspora Engagement:** Strong soft power attracts diaspora support in skills capital and ideas for initiatives like Swachh Bharat Make in India Digital India and Start up India.
 - **Role of Non State Actors:** Businesses educational institutions and cultural groups support foreign policy goals such as Track Two diplomacy easing tensions with neighbours.
 - **Avoidance of Conflict:** Soft power reduces hostility and resistance unlike excessive reliance on hard power as seen in cases of sanctions by major powers.
-

Limitations of Soft Power

- Soft power is difficult to measure and manage due to its intangible nature.
- Military and economic power often dominate global politics, reducing the immediate impact of soft power.
- Soft power without credible hard power may be perceived as weakness especially in adversarial relations.
- It is a long term process and does not yield quick foreign policy outcomes.
- India's global soft power ranking remains modest reflecting lack of focused strategy.

India Specific Challenges

- Limited financial resources and delayed budget allocations for soft power initiatives.
- Shortage of trained and motivated personnel in missions abroad.
- Poor coordination among ministries leading to duplication of efforts.
- Limited clarity and capacity of ICCR in projecting Indian culture effectively.
- Absence of a coherent national soft power strategy.
- Restricted global reach beyond Asia and Africa.
- Negative perceptions due to issues like corruption, poverty pollution, gender inequality and social intolerance.

Strategic Tools Used by India to Amplify Soft Power

- **Climate Diplomacy:** Leadership in CDRI International Solar Alliance One Sun One World One Grid and Mission LiFE.
- **Medical and Vaccine Diplomacy:** Vaccine Maitri supply of medicines deployment of rapid response teams Quad vaccine initiative and Vande Bharat Mission.
- **Digital Diplomacy:** Use of virtual platforms for G20 NAM UN ECOSOC and global summits.
- **Cultural Outreach:** Promotion of yoga classical dances Indian literature cuisine and festivals like Diwali and Holi.
- **Technology Diplomacy:** Creation of the New and Emerging Strategic Technologies division in the Ministry of External Affairs.
- **Transit and Connectivity Diplomacy:** BBIN coastal shipping India Myanmar Thailand Highway Kaladan corridor Chabahar port INSTC Chennai Vladivostok route and Asia Africa Growth Corridor.
- **Nuclear Diplomacy:** Engagement with export control regimes such as MTCR Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement.

Way Forward

- Adopt smart power by combining soft power with credible economic and military strength.
- Complement goodwill with visible and timely completion of infrastructure projects.
- Formulate a comprehensive national soft power policy.
- Restructure ICCR with clearer mandate, increased funding and wider global presence.
- Improve inter ministerial coordination under the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Develop measurable indicators to assess soft power outcomes.
- Strengthen public diplomacy through global media and digital platforms.
- Expand tourism promotion, deepen diaspora engagement and institutionalise initiatives like yoga certification.

Look East Policy and Act East Policy

Look East Policy

- The Look East Policy was launched in 1992 by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao after the collapse of the Soviet Union and India's economic crisis. It was further strengthened under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh.
- **Rationale:** India shifted focus towards Southeast Asia to support economic recovery and integration with dynamic regional economies.
- **Core Objectives:** Regional economic integration economic reforms and liberalisation sustained economic growth and development of North East India.
- **Regional Focus:** Emphasis on sub regional cooperation through BIMSTEC Mekong Ganga Cooperation BCIM and the India ASEAN Free Trade Area.

Act East Policy

- **Evolution:** The Look East Policy was upgraded to the Act East Policy after 2014 to reflect a more proactive and action oriented approach.
- **Expanded Scope:** Covers the extended neighbourhood in the Asia Pacific region and includes political strategic and cultural dimensions along with economic cooperation.
- **Institutional Engagement:** Focus on structured dialogue and cooperation mechanisms at bilateral regional and multilateral levels.

Transit Diplomacy

- It means use of physical and digital connectivity such as roads, railways, ports, airways and digital networks to advance strategic interests.
- **Objectives:** Promote trade investment technology access people to people contacts soft power dependency bonds long term strategic interests and security cooperation in areas like energy maritime safety defence and counter terrorism.

Key Objectives of Act East Policy

- Promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and strategic partnerships with Asia Pacific countries.
- Enhance connectivity of North Eastern states with neighbouring countries.
- Strengthen engagement through bilateral regional and multilateral platforms.

Challenges

- Terrorism piracy and drug trafficking from the Golden Triangle region.
- Political instability and state failure in Myanmar.
- Migration challenges such as the Rohingya issue.
- Lack of investment and slow implementation of connectivity projects.

Difference Between Look East Policy and Act East Policy

- Look East Policy was launched when India's economy was weak and transitioning towards liberalisation while Act East Policy was launched when India had stronger economic capacity.
- Look East Policy focused mainly on Southeast Asia whereas Act East Policy has a wider outreach including East Asia Asia Pacific Japan South Korea Australia and Pacific Island nations.
- Look East Policy emphasised trade and investment while Act East Policy focuses on culture commerce connectivity capacity building and security.
- Act East Policy also aims to balance China's growing influence in the Indo Pacific region.

Effectiveness of Act East Policy

- ASEAN has become India's fourth largest trading partner and bilateral trade crossed one hundred twenty five billion dollars in 2023 to 24.
- Major infrastructure initiatives include BBIN corridor India Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan multimodal project.
- Defence cooperation has expanded through ASEAN India Maritime Exercises ADMM Plus and defence exports such as BrahMos to the Philippines.
- North East India has emerged as a gateway to Southeast Asia through initiatives like the India Japan Act East Forum with significant Japanese investment.
- Enhanced socio cultural ties through student exchanges training programmes parliamentary exchanges and think tank networks.
- Greater engagement in the Russian Far East providing India access to energy resources and strategic balancing against China.

Look West Policy

- It was initiated in 2005 to strengthen engagement with West Asia.
- **Importance of the Region:** West Asia is critical for India's energy security trade diaspora interests and regional stability.
- **Key Features:** Secular and non aligned engagement balanced relations across sectarian divides stronger government to government business to business and people to people ties and a shift from ideology driven diplomacy to economic pragmatism.
- **Maritime Focus:** Emphasis on maritime diplomacy due to the strategic importance of surrounding seas for energy and economic security.

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3

CHAPTER

India - Sri Lanka Relations

Sri Lanka lies on vital sea lanes in the **Indian Ocean**, through which **90% of India's trade** by volume and **70% by value** flows. India seeks to counter **China's influence** in the Indian Ocean by ensuring free and open sea lanes for navigation.

Year	Major Developments
1830s	British transported indentured labourers from India mainly Tamil Nadu to Ceylon where they settled in northern and north eastern regions.
1948	Sri Lanka gained independence but the Tamil population faced persecution and denial of citizenship causing strain in India Sri Lanka relations.
1964	Shastri Sirimavo Pact was signed under which Sri Lanka granted citizenship to three lakh Indian Tamils and many were repatriated to India.
1971	After the Indo Pakistan war India aligned more closely with the USSR while Sri Lanka moved closer to the United States.
1974	India transferred Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka leading to long term fishermen issues and Tamil Nadu Assembly later demanded its retrieval.
1976	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was formed under V Prabhakaran and sought support from India.
Post 1980	India followed a cautious approach while Sri Lanka accused India of training Tamil rebels.
1987	The India-Sri Lanka Accord was signed granting autonomy to Tamil areas and led to the Thirteenth Amendment which proposed provincial councils and Tamil as an official language.
1998	India Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement was signed and became operational in 2001.
2003	The Joint Working Group was set up to work towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.
2006–09	During Eelam War IV India stayed out while Sri Lanka moved closer to China and Pakistan LTTE leadership was eliminated by 2009.
2014	India abstained from voting on a UNHRC resolution on Sri Lanka citing concerns over sovereignty.
2020	India's Neighbourhood First policy aligned with Sri Lanka's India First foreign and security policy.
2022–23	Sri Lanka faced a severe economic and political crisis. India extended about four billion dollars in financial and humanitarian assistance and signed multiple cooperation agreements.
2024	India and Sri Lanka jointly commissioned a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and India undertook housing projects in Sri Lanka.

Areas of Cooperation:

1. Economic Cooperation

- ✓ **Largest Trading Partner:** India was Sri Lanka's largest trading partner in 2021, with bilateral trade reaching **\$5.45 billion** (48% growth from 2020).
- ✓ **Currency Swap Agreement:** RBI provided a **\$400 million currency swap** to stabilize Sri Lanka's economy post-COVID-19.
- ✓ **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):**
 - India has invested **\$2.2 billion in Sri Lanka** (Central Bank of Sri Lanka).
 - In 2021, India was Sri Lanka's largest FDI source (**\$142 million**).

2. Political & Diplomatic Ties

- ✓ **High-Level Exchanges:** Regular visits by top leaders enhance diplomatic relations.
- ✓ **Neighbourhood First Policy:** India prioritizes Sri Lanka in its regional strategy.
- ✓ **"India First" Policy (Sri Lanka):** While Sri Lanka maintains close ties with China, its leadership has reaffirmed that **India remains a priority partner**.

3. Defense & Security Cooperation

- ✓ **Joint Military Exercises:** **Mitra Shakti** (Army), **SLINEX** (Navy)
- ✓ **Maritime Security:** India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives have a **trilateral maritime security agreement** for surveillance, anti-piracy, and pollution control.
- ✓ **Counterterrorism & Drug Trafficking:** India and Sri Lanka signed a **2019 security agreement** to curb human and drug trafficking.
- ✓ **Trilateral Security Meeting:** Focus areas include **terrorism, marine security, cyber threats, and organized crime**.

4. Cultural & Educational Cooperation

- ✓ **Cultural Agreement (1977):** Strengthens historical and religious ties.
- ✓ **Buddhist Connections:** Sri Lanka is a key partner in India's **Nalanda University project**.
- ✓ **Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC):** Promotes cultural exchanges in Colombo.
- ✓ **People-to-People Ties:** Shared heritage through **Buddhism and Tamil culture**.

5. Developmental Assistance

- ✓ **Support for Internally Displaced Tamils:** India built **30,000 houses and medical infrastructure** in war-affected Tamil areas.
- ✓ **Financial Assistance:**
 - **\$400 million** currency swap under SAARC framework.
 - **\$1.68 billion in credit lines** from Exim Bank of India.

Key Issues in Bilateral Relations

1. Tamil Issue

- ✓ **Denied Citizenship:** Many Tamils, especially in Sri Lanka's tea estates, remain stateless and impoverished.
- ✓ **Civil War & Human Rights:** The post-war treatment of Tamils, alleged human rights violations, and delays in reconciliation continue to be major concerns for India.

2. China's Growing Influence

- ✓ **99-year Lease of Hambantota Port:** Sri Lanka leased the **strategic Hambantota Port** to China in 2017 due to its inability to repay Chinese loans.
- ✓ **Mattala Rajapaksa Airport:** India proposed a joint venture to manage Sri Lanka's **"world's emptiest airport,"** but progress has stalled.
- ✓ **Chinese Investments:**
 - **Colombo Port City** project raises concerns over China's long-term strategic hold.
 - **China's arms sales and economic projects** in Sri Lanka could impact India's security interests.

3. Fishermen Issue & Katchatheevu Island Dispute

- ✓ **Frequent Arrests:** Indian fishermen are often detained by the **Sri Lankan Navy** for crossing maritime borders.
- ✓ **Katchatheevu Island:** A historically disputed island, ceded to Sri Lanka in **1974**, remains a flashpoint for tensions.

4. India's Financial Assistance & Trade Imbalance

- ✓ **India's Economic Support:**
 - India was the **first bilateral creditor** to support Sri Lanka's **debt restructuring program** amid its economic crisis.
 - Extended **\$4 billion** in credit lines, fuel, and essential supplies.
- ✓ **Trade Imbalance:**
 - India exported **\$4.16 billion** to Sri Lanka in **2018**, while Sri Lanka's exports to India were only **\$767 million**.

Way Forward:

1. Economic & Trade Cooperation:

- ✓ **Economic Integration Roadmap (EIRM):** Connects **five southern Indian states** with Sri Lanka, covering **300 million people** and a **\$500 billion GDP**.
- ✓ **Palk Strait Bridge:** Proposed **land bridge** to improve connectivity and trade.
- ✓ **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** Finalize trade and investment agreements to boost economic growth.
- ✓ **Private Sector Investment:** Encourage Indian investments in **infrastructure, energy, and connectivity** projects.

2. Security & Strategic Engagement

- ✓ **Countering China's Influence:**
 - Strengthen **maritime security cooperation** and defense ties.
 - Encourage Sri Lanka's participation in **Indo-Pacific initiatives**.
- ✓ **Leveraging the Blue Economy:** Enhance cooperation in **fisheries, marine resources, and ocean research**.

3. Resolving the Fishermen Dispute

- ✓ **Joint Working Group (JWG):** Work towards a **long-term resolution** through **sustainable fishing practices** and **maritime cooperation**.
- ✓ **Technology-Driven Solutions:** Promote **deep-sea fishing and aquaculture** to reduce dependence on disputed waters.

4. Cultural & People-to-People Ties

- ✓ **Tamil Reconciliation Efforts:** Push for **political devolution** and **equal rights for Tamils** in Sri Lanka.
 - ✓ **Educational & Religious Ties:** Strengthen **scholarship programs** and **Buddhist tourism**
- India and Sri Lanka share **deep historical, cultural, and economic ties**. While **China's growing influence, trade imbalances, and unresolved disputes** pose challenges, **economic integration, defense cooperation, and people-to-people engagement** can ensure a stronger, more balanced relationship.

4

CHAPTER

India-Maldives Relations

India recognized Maldives' **independence in 1965** and established diplomatic ties. Its **swift intervention in the 1988 coup attempt (Operation Cactus)** reinforced trust and laid the foundation for a strong partnership.

Year	Major Developments
1972	India established its mission in the Maldives and was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965.
1976	India and Maldives signed a Maritime Boundary Treaty.
1981	A Comprehensive Trade Agreement was signed for supply of essential commodities.
1985	Both countries became founding members of SAARC.
1988	Operation Cactus was conducted by India to foil a coup attempt in the Maldives.
2004	Maldives opened a full fledged High Commission in India and cooperation expanded under SAFTA.
2012	Relations became strained after the removal of President Mohamed Nasheed and Maldives moved closer to China under President Abdulla Yameen.
2014	Operation Neer was launched by India to supply drinking water during a water crisis in Maldives.
2018	The election of President Ibrahim Solih marked a reset with adoption of an India First policy.
2020	Operation Sanjeevani was launched to supply medicines, vaccines and food assistance.
2021	India extended a line of credit for defence projects including Uthuru Thila Falhu naval base and signed the Greater Malé Connectivity Project.
2022	Progress on Greater Malé Connectivity Project MoU on hydrographic surveying and inauguration of Maldives Police Academy with Indian support.
2024	Relations faced challenges after President Muizzu's election but later showed reconciliation with his attendance at PM Modi's oath ceremony and appreciation for India's debt support.

Significance of Maldives for India

- **Geostrategic Importance** – Key member of **India's Neighbourhood First Policy** and **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**.
- **Geo-Economic Relevance** – **50% of India's external trade** and **80% of energy imports** pass through **Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)** near Maldives.
- **Counterbalancing China** – Strengthens India's position in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** and maintains **regional balance of power**.
- **Net Security Provider** – Maldives acts as a **strategic 'toll gate'** between the **western and eastern Indian Ocean**, enhancing India's maritime security role.
- **Regional & Multilateral Engagement** – Active collaboration in **SAARC, SASEC, IORA, and IONS**, fostering regional integration.