



Perspective: Indian Diplomacy in 2024

For Prelims: [BRICS](#), [SCO](#), [G20](#), [Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies \(iCET\)](#), [Currency Swap Agreement](#), [Chabahar Port](#), [China's Belt and Road Initiative](#), [Global Biofuel Alliance](#), [India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor \(IMEC\)](#), [India's Neighborhood-First Policy](#), [Free Trade Agreements \(FTAs\)](#), [critical minerals](#), [AI technologies](#), [Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam](#), [Quad](#), [South-South cooperation](#), [India-Africa Forum Summit](#), [supply chain resilience](#), [Indo-Pacific](#).

For Mains: Significance of Indian Foreign Policy for Securing India's Strategic Interests.

Why in News?

In 2024, India's External Affairs Minister described the country's [foreign policy](#) as **embodying the concept of "Vishwabandhu,"** meaning a friend to the world.

How Did India Engage with Major Powers and Neighbours in 2024?

- **Context of Geopolitical Instability:** 2024 saw India navigating a challenging global environment marked by the [Russia-Ukraine war](#), heightened [Middle Eastern tensions](#), and the **US-China rivalry**.
 - India's foreign policy balanced global partnerships with neutrality, addressing China's assertiveness, engaging in [BRICS](#), [SCO](#), and [G20](#), while maintaining robust **energy trade** with Russia, including record oil imports.
- **Ukraine Visit:** India's visit to Ukraine demonstrated a **neutral yet principled stance**, reaffirming support for sovereignty while advocating dialogue.
 - Humanitarian aid strengthened its role as a **global mediator** amidst great power rivalries.
- **India-China Relations:** A major achievement was the **disengagement of troops** along the [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\) in Ladakh](#), restoring pre-2020 arrangements.
 - This marked a turning point after years of tensions and was accompanied by renewed **cross-border cooperation**, including the resumption of the [Kailash Mansarovar Yatra](#).
 - Focus remains on counterbalancing China's assertiveness through [Quad cooperation](#) and [Indo-Pacific strategies](#).
- **India-Bangladesh Relations:** Despite political transitions, **India's proactive engagement with Bangladesh's new government** safeguarded bilateral ties.
 - Initiatives like the [Maitree Power Plant](#) and **investment in trade** underline **economic interdependence** and strategic collaboration in connectivity projects.
- **Engagement in the Gulf Region:** In 2024, India strengthened its Gulf engagement by enacting the [India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty \(BIT\)](#), ensuring robust investor protection and arbitration-based dispute resolution while preserving policy space.
 - India advanced Gulf ties with **Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain**, focusing

on **energy, trade, investments, and strategic cooperation.**

- **US-India Relations:** While the partnership expanded in areas like **critical technology** through the [Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies \(iCET\)](#).
 - Controversies, including allegations of involvement in a **high-profile case**, tested **diplomatic ties**, yet bilateral trade reached a historic high of **USD 128 billion**.
- **India-Canada Relations:** Accusations linking Indian officials to Khalistani leader Nijjar's killing led to a **diplomatic freeze**, disrupting discussions on a **USD 5 billion** trade dialogue and complicating ties with the [Indian diaspora](#).
- **Sri Lanka and Maldives:** India's proactive diplomacy with **Sri Lanka** included agreements in infrastructure and trade, while a **USD 400 million** [currency swap agreement](#) supported Maldives' economic recovery.
- **Multilateral Initiatives:** As **G20 president** in 2023, India prioritized debt relief for developing nations and launched the [Global Biofuel Alliance](#), showcasing its leadership in [sustainable development](#).
 - Initiatives like the [India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor \(IMEC\)](#) reflected India's commitment to enhancing **global connectivity and trade**.
- **Diplomatic Tightrope:** India's neutral stance on conflicts like Gaza highlighted its strategy of balancing moral positions with pragmatic interests.
 - Engagements with both [Israel and Palestine](#) underlined its commitment to peace.

What are Global Challenges Associated with India's Foreign Policy?

- **Relations with Neighbours:** Managing [China's LAC aggression](#) and **Indo-Pacific assertiveness**, while balancing economic and political sensitivities in the region, demands strategic clarity.
 - Despite the resolution at the LAC, China's outreach in South Asia, particularly through investments in **Nepal and Pakistan**, required India to strengthen its regional presence.
- **The Role of Deep State:** External influences destabilizing **South Asian neighbours** pose significant challenges.
 - Political transitions in Bangladesh and rising attacks on minorities, exacerbates political unrest and anti-India sentiment, challenging [India's neighborhood-first policy](#).
- **Russia-Ukraine War:** While India imported significant Russian oil, maintaining neutrality amid growing global polarization tested its diplomacy.
- **US-China Rivalry:** The US administration's trade tariffs and immigration policies posed challenges for Indian sectors like IT, while managing ties with both powers required careful balancing.
- **Middle East Conflicts:** Instability in the Gulf, where India has a **USD 200 billion** trade relationship, highlighted the need for robust diplomatic interventions.
- **Canada Row:** Accusations linked to recent [Khalistan issue](#) led to retaliatory diplomatic actions, disrupting economic and cultural exchanges.
 - This strained ties with the Indian diaspora in Canada, numbering over 700,000.
- **Internal Criticism:** Abstentions at UN votes on Gaza resolutions drew criticism for inconsistency in India's approach to human rights.
- **Economic Pressures:** Delayed [Free Trade Agreements \(FTAs\)](#) with the **UK and European Union (EU)** limited India's trade expansion potential.
 - South Asia's economic fragility, in countries like **Pakistan and India**, added strain on India's efforts to promote regional economic stability.
- **Technological and Security Concerns:** [Cybersecurity](#) emerged as a critical area, with India facing increased threats in the digital space.
 - Partnerships for [critical minerals](#) and [AI technologies](#) highlighted the growing importance of securing technological frontiers.

What are India's Foreign Policy Priorities for 2025 and Beyond?

- **Strengthening Bilateral Relations**
 - **Fostering International Cooperation:** India's foreign policy for 2025 and beyond aims to embody the principle of [Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam](#) (the world is one family), as envisioned by its leadership.
 - This reflects a steadfast commitment to **fostering international**

cooperation, inclusivity, counterterrorism diplomacy and sustainable global development through **multilateral engagements and partnerships**.

- **US and Quad:** Deepening technological and defense partnerships with the US and consolidating the **Quad** to counter **China's Indo-Pacific ambitions**.
 - Leveraging **Indian-origin policymakers** in the US could amplify strategic alignment in **defense, technology, and immigration**, solidifying India's position in **Indo-Pacific partnerships** and enhancing bilateral cooperation.
 - **Russia-India Cooperation:** Expanding ties beyond defense to include energy, manufacturing, and technology, especially in light of the **India-Russia bilateral summit**.
 - **Europe Engagements:** Reviving stalled **FTAs** with the EU and UK to boost trade relations.
 - **Engagement with Gulf Sovereign Funds:** Dialogue of civilizations initiatives could unlock **investments from Gulf's sovereign wealth funds** into India's **critical infrastructure, renewable energy**, and **technology sectors**, further deepening bilateral ties.
- **Focusing on Regional Stability**
 - **Bangladesh:** Engaging with the new leadership to address **border security** and minority concerns while fostering development partnerships.
 - Strengthened regional diplomacy and strategic preparedness are essential to safeguard India's security and economic interests.
 - Strengthening ties with **Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives** through economic aid and security collaboration.
 - **Global Leadership in Multilateral Forums**
 - Leading initiatives in **G20, BRICS, and SCO** to shape discussions on global challenges, including climate change, food security, and economic recovery.
 - Advancing **South-South cooperation**, particularly with Africa and Latin America, through initiatives like the **India-Africa Forum Summit**.
 - **Economic and Technological Focus**
 - Enhancing **supply chain resilience** and integrating into global trade frameworks.
 - Promoting **digital and technological partnerships, focusing on AI, critical minerals, and emerging technologies**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. The term 'Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership' often appears in the news in the context of the affairs of a group of countries known as (2016)

- (a) G20
- (b) ASEAN
- (c) SCO
- (d) SAARC

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q. In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. (2013)

Q. Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of the Indian government to improve relationships with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss.(2015)

