

**UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 2- International relation-India and its neighbourhood-relations.**

**Shifting Alliances: Maldives' Evolving Foreign Policy and Implications for India**

**New Shift in Maldives' Foreign Policy:**

**1. Historical Context:**

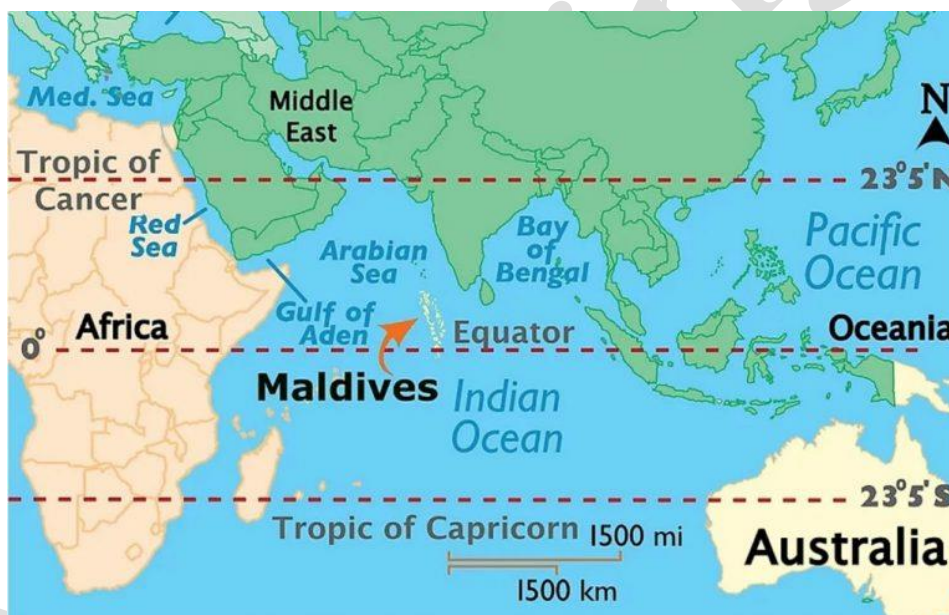
- Former President Abdulla Yameen favored China, while his successor Ibrahim Solih adopted an "India First" policy. The current decision by President Muizzu signals a new direction in Maldives' foreign policy.

**2. Strategic Position of Maldives:**

- Leveraging its critical location in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives is forming new alliances, exemplified by its pivot towards Turkey.

**3. Geopolitical Implications:**

- The shift underscores changing dynamics in South Asian geopolitics, where smaller states like the Maldives play major powers against each other for strategic advantages.



**Why Turkey's Role is Important:**

**1. Turkey's Multi-dimensional Role:**

- Turkey's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, coupled with its NATO membership, contributes to its growing influence. Turkey's expanding relations with Pakistan and its stance on regional issues, including Kashmir, are noteworthy.

**Implications for India:**

**1. Strategic Challenge:**

- The Maldives' position in the Indian Ocean is vital for major powers, impacting India's strategic interests in controlling sea lines of communication.

**2. Potential for Regional Instability:**

- India needs to be cautious of potential destabilization in the region due to Turkey's rising influence, especially given its proximity to other regional players like Pakistan.

**What Should Be Done:**

**1. Acknowledging Small States' Agency:**

- India should recognize the growing influence and strategic leverage of smaller nations like the Maldives. Patient and engaged diplomacy, leveraging geographical proximity and historical ties, is essential.

**2. Engagement in Domestic Politics:**

- Understanding and involving itself in the internal political dynamics of the Maldives is crucial for India to navigate shifting alliances effectively.

**3. Collaborating with Gulf Nations:**

- To counter Turkey's influence in the Maldives, India could explore collaboration with Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, leveraging shared interests.

**4. Expanding Strategic Outreach:**

- India should broaden its foreign policy outreach beyond South Asia. Active engagement in regions like the Middle East and Central Asia could serve as a counterbalance to Turkey's growing influence, ensuring a more nuanced and strategic approach.