

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 International Relations – India and its neighborhood – relations.

China's Influence in India's Neighbourhood and Changing Dynamics in India-Maldives Relations

China's Influence in India's Neighbourhood:

China has been expanding its influence in India's neighbourhood through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and debt-trap diplomacy:

1. **Afghanistan:** Chinese-Afghan ties have strengthened, potentially altering the geopolitical landscape in the region.
2. **Bhutan:** Border-settlement talks between China and Bhutan are ongoing, suggesting an increased Chinese presence in the region.
3. **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka had to lease control of the Hambantota Port to a Chinese firm for 99 years due to non-payment of BRI dues, showcasing China's economic leverage.
4. **Pakistan:** The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) aims to connect China with Pakistan's Gwadar Port, enhancing economic ties and connectivity.
5. **Maldives:** Maldives, under a previous regime, joined the BRI and signed a free-trade pact with China. However, the agreement on a Chinese post to monitor sea-lanes was not reached after a change in government.

Changing Dynamics of India-Maldives Relations:

1. **Military Personnel Withdrawal Request:** Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, upon assuming office, requested the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the country, indicating a potential shift in alliances.
2. **Tour to Turkey:** The breaking of tradition, where the new leader's first visit is to India, occurred when the Maldives President officially toured Turkey. This signals a desire to move away from India's sphere of influence.

Issues Arising due to Changing Dynamics:

1. **Increasing Chinese Influence:** The concern is that Maldives could become part of China's 'string of pearls' strategy, encircling India with strategically located bases.
2. **Access to the Arabian Sea:** If Maldives aligns more closely with China, it could provide China with access to the Arabian Sea, potentially allowing for the projection of hard power in the region.

These changing dynamics raise geopolitical concerns for India and highlight the evolving landscape of alliances and influence in the Indian subcontinent



Turkey's Alignment with China: Turkey's recent actions suggest a distancing from India and a growing alignment with China, raising concerns about the evolving geopolitical dynamics.

India's Response:

1. **Establishment of a "Core Group":** India has reportedly agreed to set up a "core group" to assess and address concerns, including the matter of troop withdrawal. This proactive step reflects India's commitment to managing diplomatic challenges through dialogue.
2. **Focus on Mutual Interests:** India should strategically focus on presenting significant benefits to countries like Maldives, ensuring alignment with India's interests. This could involve developing practical packages tailored to the specific needs and priorities of South Asian nations.
3. **Diplomatic Engagement:** Strengthening diplomatic ties through proactive engagement is crucial. India should work towards understanding the concerns and aspirations of its neighbours, fostering a cooperative approach.
4. **Economic and Developmental Initiatives:** Offering economic and developmental initiatives can enhance India's standing in the region. Practical packages that address infrastructural, economic, and social needs can contribute to building stronger ties.
5. **Regional Cooperation:** India should emphasise regional cooperation and multilateral forums to address common challenges. Collaborative efforts can help create a shared vision for the region and foster a sense of unity.
6. **Cultural and People-to-People Ties:** Strengthening cultural and people-to-people ties can contribute to building long-lasting relationships. Promoting educational exchanges, cultural events, and tourism can create a positive impact.
7. **Strategic Communication:** Clear and effective communication is essential. India should articulate its foreign policy objectives, emphasizing cooperation, mutual respect, and shared benefits.

In summary, India's response to Turkey's evolving alignment with China should involve a combination of diplomatic dialogue, strategic benefits, economic initiatives, regional cooperation, and efforts to strengthen cultural ties. By addressing the concerns of its neighbours and presenting tangible benefits, India can work towards maintaining positive and collaborative relationships in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

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Dilemmas Faced by India in the Neighbourhood and Reasons Behind Them:

Dilemmas:

1. **Rise of Anti-India Regimes:** India grapples with the emergence of anti-India regimes, exemplified by the situation in the Maldives urging Indians to leave, posing challenges to diplomatic relations.
2. **Structural Challenges from China's Influence:** Increasing engagement of South Asian countries with China's Belt and Road Initiative and other projects creates structural challenges, overshadowing India's influence.
3. **China's Border Settlement Strategy:** China's efforts to resolve border disputes with neighboring countries, excluding India, as seen in Bhutan, raise strategic concerns for India in the region.

Reasons Behind India's Neighbourhood Dilemmas:

1. **Regional Geopolitical Architecture:**
 - a) **Diminishing US Presence:** The decreasing involvement of the United States in South Asia leaves a vacuum filled by China, to India's disadvantage.
 - b) **Rise of China:** China's significant growth acts as a 'geopolitical buffer,' challenging India's influence.
 - c) **Use of the 'China Card':** Neighbouring countries increasingly use their relationship with China as a strategic tool in foreign policy.
 - d) **Lack of Interconnectedness and Poverty:** The region's underdevelopment and poverty make economically capable China an attractive partner.
 - e) **India's Normative Approach:** India's traditional, normative policy contrasts with China's non-normative, pragmatic approach, impacting effectiveness.
2. **India's Policy Stance:** India's foreign policy exhibits a status quo bias, engaging primarily with those in power, potentially alienating other significant groups or emerging power centres in neighbouring countries.
3. **Misconceptions in Indian Diplomacy:**
 - a) **Overestimation of Regional Influence:** India believed South Asia, excluding Pakistan, would align with its geopolitical views, which hasn't been the case.
 - b) **Overestimation of Cultural Connections:** The assumption that cultural and historical ties would ensure better relations has been less effective against China's resource-driven approach.

Recommendations for Action:

1. **Recognize Shift in Balance of Power:** Acknowledge the fundamental shift in South Asia's balance of power, with China emerging as a key player.
2. **Seek External Support:** Proactively involve friendly external countries to counter the region becoming Sino-centric.
3. **Broad Engagement:** Engage with a variety of political and social actors in each neighbouring country, not limiting engagement to those in power.
4. **Strengthen Diplomatic Presence:** Significantly boost the number of diplomats to handle India's foreign policy effectively, given its large population and expanding role in global affairs.

Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced and adaptive approach to secure India's strategic interests in the evolving regional dynamics.

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Current Status and Challenges in Tuberculosis (TB) Treatment in India:

Current Status (According to WHO Global TB Report 2023):

- In 2022, India had the highest number of TB cases globally, accounting for 27% of the world's total, with 2.8 million cases.
- The death rate from TB in India was 12%.
- India reported 1.1 lakh cases of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) in 2022.

Challenges in Current TB Treatments:

1. **Diagnostic Gaps:** Over-reliance on direct sputum smear microscopy, with only about 50% sensitivity, leads to undetected TB cases.
2. **Ineffective Regimens:** Conventional treatments have a success rate of only about 59%.
3. **Extended Treatment Duration:** TB treatments, especially for drug-resistant forms, can last up to 24 months, affecting compliance.
4. **Severe Side Effects:** Long-term medication often causes significant adverse effects.
5. **Drug Resistance Issues:** Non-compliance and intolerance contribute to the development of drug-resistant TB strains.
6. **Limited Funding for R&D:** Funding for TB research and development falls significantly short of the estimated US\$5 billion needed annually.

New Developments in TB Treatment:

1. **Introduction of New Regimens:** Four innovative drug regimens presented at the Union World Conference on Lung Health 2023.
2. **Effective Treatment Outcomes:** These regimens showed similar efficacy to conventional treatments, with favourable outcomes for 85-90% of patients.
3. **Shorter Treatment Times:** The new treatments reduce the duration by two-thirds compared to traditional methods.
4. **Access and Affordability:** New findings could address issues around access to and affordability of quality TB care.

Impact of Research and Development:

1. **Funding Impact:** Global efforts reached \$1 billion for TB R&D in 2021, marking significant progress.
2. **Global Collaboration:** The progress results from a decade of collaboration involving WHO, Stop TB Partnership, and other organizations.
3. **Long-term Commitment:** Sustained efforts and commitment have been crucial, highlighting the role of continuous research and development in TB care.

Way Forward in TB Treatment:

Innovative Testing and Diagnostics: Adoption of rapid, portable tests and AI-assisted diagnostics for early detection and improved treatment effectiveness.

Global Scale-up of Short Regimens: Scaling up shorter regimens for drug-resistant TB, especially in countries like India.

Comprehensive Strategy: A multi-pronged approach focusing on better case detection, improved treatment, and continued global collaboration and funding efforts to achieve the goal of 'Ending TB by 2030.'