

Mind Map-1

INDIAN FOREIGN

POLICY IN 2021

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Introduction

- After a year when it battled Covid-19 and Chinese aggression, India enters 2021 with the challenge of strengthening ties and building new ones with the US, EU, Middle East countries, and its neighbours.
- India's foreign policy has to widen its sphere of influence, enhance its role across nations, and make its presence felt like an emerging power.
- The year 2021 presents a bunch of challenges and opportunities in pursuit of fulfilling foreign policy objectives.

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Recent Shifting in balance of power

- Rise of China and its influence in India's neighbourhood is a cause of worry for India.
- EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment burst the myth of Chinese isolation after **Covid-19 pandemic**, further strengthened China's position.
- India's growing convergence with the US has led to weakening its links with traditional friends like Russia and Iran.

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Bigger Challenges for India's Foreign Outlook:

1. China Stronger than before:
 - China is the only major country that had a positive growth rate at the end of 2020, and its economy is poised to grow even faster in 2021.
2. Russia-China bonding
 - India has always felt that it was the West that has pushed Moscow towards a tighter embrace of Beijing.
 - Also, India's closeness to the U.S. has weakened its links with traditional friends such as Russia and Iran.
3. **Changing Middle East Equations and Iran Factor!**
 - The US recently brokered rapprochement between Israel and four Arab countries(UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan). With Saudi Arabia and Iran competing for leadership, along with Turkey, in the Islamic world, there have been growing calls for ties with Israel.
 - However, despite **Abraham Accords**, the situation is still tense and remains fluid.
4. **Weakening Ties with Neighbors:**
 - This can be seen from instances like **China's Cheque Book Diplomacy** vis-a-vis Sri Lanka; Bangladesh on NRC issue and border controversy with Nepal.

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Opportunities & Way Forward

1. **Countering China**
 - The standoff has reinforced Nehru's belief in 1963 that India needs “external aid in adequate measure”.
 - India will need continuing support from the US, Japan, Australia etc.
2. **Engaging with neighbours**
 - India should make valiant efforts to improve relations with Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.
 - New Delhi has a lot to gain from what could be “vaccine diplomacy” with neighbours in 2021.
3. **India at UNSC High Table:**
 - As India enters the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for the eighth time, stakes are high in the wake of this leadership contest between China and the rest of the world.
 - India will have to take positions on issues it had carefully avoided — from Tibet to Taiwan, from Iran-Saudi etc.
4. **Engaging With the US:**
 - Much is expected from the Biden Administration for building on Indo-US ties.
 - Move towards a possible US-China trade deal will be watched by South Block closely.
5. **Wooing Europe**
 - As the UK and the EU agree on a deal, India will look ahead to negotiating a deal with the UK and a long-pending one with the EU.
6. **Global, not just aspirational**
 - In 2021, New Delhi will host the BRICS summit, and start its preparations for the G-20 summit in 2023.
 - And the India-Africa Forum summit, which could not be held in 2020, could be held in 2021 or later.

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Conclusion

In the light of the changing actualities of the international situation, India must cautiously play foreign policy, if it wants to emerge as a global rather than an aspirational player.