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**SHIFTS IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY POST THE ONSET
OF THE RUSSIA - UKRAINE CRISIS**

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine crisis caused geopolitical turmoil globally and affected the policy choices of many countries. This article aimed at clarifying the shifts in India's foreign policy post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. To achieve this objective, the policy analysis methodology was used to describe India's policies, decisions and actions in the field of diplomacy under the impact of the crisis. The comparative analysis methodology was used to clarify the evolution and changes in India's foreign policy prior as well as post the crisis. The article began by giving an overview of India's foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership before the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Secondly, it analyzed the Russia-Ukraine crisis as agent of changes in India's foreign policy. Thirdly, the article analyzed impacts of India's foreign policy shifts on its important partners including the US, Russia and China post the onset of the crisis. And finally, it gives an assessment of India's foreign policy shifts and its impact on India's national interests and international stance. The article argued that, post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India's strategic autonomy and flexibility could help it maintain an effective and balanced ties with major powers despite conflicts among them. At some point of time, India tended to lean towards the US and gradually distance it self from Russia and China but at another point of time, India tilted toward Russia to secure its national and global interests. These policy shifts created both opportunities and challenges for India. It also brought about changes in regional and global landscape.

Keywords: Foreign policy, shifts, India, the U.S., Russia-Ukraine crisis.

INTRODUCTION

The Russia-Ukraine crisis (February 2022 onwards) was a landmark event in the transition and reshaping of the international order. Major countries in the world had to make strategic adjustments in many fields at various levels revolving around shaping the strategic situation to their advantage. Among them, India also made certain changes in its foreign policy. While India continued to follow the path of strategic autonomy and multi-alignment by remaining neutral on hot global issues, in the period following the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, it tended to tilt toward the US and gradually separate itself from the spheres of influence of Russia and China. India was also becoming more active in diversifying its partners in energy, trade and military partnerships.

As the most prominent issue in international politics recently, the Russia-Ukraine crisis attracted the attention of many scholars. India's attitude in this issue was something that international public opinion was especially concerned about. Most scholars tended to explain India's choice from a historical perspective. Warren & Ganguly (2022) pointed out that, the trend of gradually reducing dependence on Russia had been present in India's foreign policy earlier, but the Ukraine crisis made India realize that this process must be accelerated. Indian scholars including Jacob (2022) and Kumar (2022) both recognized the impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis on India's international stance, in which the US's opposition could influence its choice in relations with Russia. Haidar (2022) clarified the impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis on India – US relations and emphasizes the US's strategic concerns over India's neutrality. In general, there were many scholars interested in explaining the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine crisis on India's international stance and policies, but there have been no studies that deeply delved into analyzing new trends of India's foreign policy during the period post the onset of the crisis.

OVERVIEW OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIOR TO THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS

Prior to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India was in the process of building distinct strategies to strengthen its position, ensure national interests while effectively dealing with regional and global challenges. Under Narendra Modi's premiership, with the rapid growth of the Indian economy and the significant strengthening of its comprehensive national power, Indian leaders became more outspoken in the matter of pursuing a great power status for India. Prime Minister Modi announced that India would be built into 'a leading power', i.e., it would become a world power on par with other powers. It should be pointed out that 'leading power' implied a certain degree of diplomatic paradigm shift (Deo, 2016). To concretize this goal, India offered a specific approach which was elaborated by the Foreign Minister Dr. Jaishankar as follows: On the broader international political arena, India welcomed a growing multipolar world that was gradually becoming a reality, and also welcomed an equally multipolar Asia (Tellis, 2016). Therefore, the authors of this paper are of the opinion that, under the Prime Minister Modi's Government, the major shift in India's foreign policy was from the old Non-aligned policy to the new Multi-aligned policy. This was an important aspect of a new India – 'an India that is able to define its own interests, articulate its own positions, find its own solutions and advance its own model. In short, this is an India that is more Bharat' (Jaishankar, 2024). India sought to strengthen strategic partnerships, expand regional engagement and advance domestic development goals through its foreign policy.

In essence, the principle of 'multi-alignment' in India's foreign policy was the inheritance of India's traditional foreign policy of 'non-alignment' and 'active neutrality' from the Cold War period, based

on the principle of 'strategic autonomy', looking forward to building a multipolar Asia as well as a multipolar world where India becomes a 'great power'. This doctrine was proposed by Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar in his book titled *The Indian Way: Strategies for an uncertain world*. With a 'multi-alignment' orientation, India was advocating: actively participating in old and new multilateral organizations; proactively building partnerships with many countries in many fields; and steadfastly following its own values to ensure its national interests. Of course, whether pursuing multi-alignment or non-alignment, India's motto of 'strategic autonomy' was always maintained. In his keynote speech at the Shangri La Dialogue in 2018, Prime Minister Modi affirmed that India's policy of strategic autonomy was to promote stronger partnerships with all three great powers, i.e. the US, China and Russia, and to build a multipolar world. In September 2020, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar urged India to have a broader vision of strategic autonomy, 'to go abroad, shaping the world in a more active way, attracting parties to participate more confidently...' (Smith, 2020).

These above evidences showed that, Prime Minister Modi pursued a multi-directional foreign policy, aiming to maintain and develop relations with many countries and regions at the same time. Under Narendra Modi's premiership, India strengthened its ties with the US, demonstrated through various defense and energy cooperation agreements. India's relations with Russia continued to be maintained, especially in the fields of defense and nuclear energy. Prime Minister Modi attached importance to improving relations with neighboring countries in South Asia, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives. India's Neighborhood First policy focused on economic cooperation, infrastructure connectivity and civil diplomacy to bring about regional stability and development. India's Look East policy was shifted to Act East policy with a view to strengthen India's relations with Southeast and East Asian countries. India actively participated in regional organizations such as ASEAN, and enhanced strategic ties with countries like Japan, South Korea and Australia. India also strengthened relations with countries in the Persian Gulf, Africa and Latin America. Dynamic diplomatic activities helped India become an important partner on global issues such as climate change and energy security. In addition, India's foreign policy under Modi's premiership included important aspects such as dealing with China's growing influence. India also became more proactive in groups like the Quad along with the US, Japan and Australia to balance China's power in the Indo-Pacific region.

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS - AGENT OF CHANGES IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The crisis between Russia and Ukraine has shaken things up globally, forcing many countries to rethink their plans for the future. India, a powerful player in its region with strong ties to Russia and a key role in the world's complicated political landscape, could not escape the impact of this crisis. According to the authors of this paper, the crisis could be seen as agent of changes in India's foreign policy in the following key aspects:

Affecting the Supply of Weapons, Forcing India to Intensify the Diversification of its Military Partners

Russia was currently the main source of Indian arms imports. Around 85 percent of India's military equipment was of Russian or Soviet origin, and India continued to rely upon Russia for maintenance, spare parts, and other support for its existing arsenal (O'Donnell & Vasudeva, 2022). SIPRI estimated that Russia was India's most valuable arms supplier for every year between 2000 and 2020 (SIPRI,

2022). With the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India began to worry about the huge impact that the crisis could have on its military buildup. If Russia could not continue to supply weapons and equipment, or if India was sanctioned (by the West for purchasing Russian weapons) and stopped purchasing Russia-made weapons, then India's modernization, maintenance and supply of military equipments, weapons and ammunition would be adversely affected. The same financial and technical constraints imposed by Western sanctions could result in the delayed delivery of new Russian weapons or the cancellation of projects to repair or upgrade systems already imported from or developed with Russia (Warren & Ganguly, 2022). The difficulties caused by Western sanctions forced the Indian Navy to cancel the order for 10 Kamov Ka-31 early warning helicopters signed in 2019 (Raghuvanshi, 2022). Therefore, India was concerned about the supply of spare parts and components of Russia weapons. In addition, it was concerned about the huge costs that it had to face when these Russian equipments were replaced. The ongoing crisis in Ukraine made it clear that India had to diversify its weapon suppliers.

Changing the Landscape of Global Relations and the Balance of Power, Forcing India to Adjust its Policy towards Major Powers

Russia's special military campaign in Ukraine created new trends in the mobilization and gathering of forces, and further complicating the axis of relations on the world geopolitical chessboard. It was also the agent causing a shift in the India – China – Russia triangle relationship. China – Russia relations had already become deeper and deeper due to the Ukraine crisis, while the China – India relations had inherently had certain conflicts. Russia's growing economic and political isolation from Europe and the US was likely to force Russia to turn more towards China. This pivot in Russia's international relations manifested itself in both economic and military aspects. Economically, the US and its European partners were increasingly cutting their financial ties with Russia. The Europe was reducing its dependence on Russia agricultural products and raw materials, of which the most important product was natural gas. This forced Russia to find alternative financial and export markets. China could provide a larger market for Russian goods and a stronger alternative to the Western financial system. Militarily, Russia's weapons systems relied heavily on imports of advanced technology from the US and Western Europe. Russia was currently modernizing its conventional capabilities, a process that appeared more urgent given the Russia's military ineffective performance in Ukraine. Russia was in need of importing advanced components to replace the lost equipments and to modernize its conventional arsenal by alternative sources. China was the most likely source of these equipments, including heavy metals (Mai & Onstad, 2023). Additionally, the conflict could also prompt Russia to deepen security cooperation with China, at least for the time being, as closer link with China was the most realistic short-term way to compensate for the gap in Russia's military capabilities compared to the US and NATO.

From the above analysis, it could be seen that, it was very much likely that Russia was getting closer to China due to the impact of the Ukraine crisis. In fact, China was Russia's largest trading partner, according to Chinese customs data for 2022, the total trade between the countries reached a record high of about US\$190 billion, which is an increase of 29.3 percent compared to 2021; however, Russian exports (about US\$114 billion) accounted for a large majority of the increase (43.4 percent), while Chinese exports (about US\$76 billion) increased by 12.8 percent. Trade with Russia accounted for three percent of China's total international trade in 2022. The strong upward trend continued in 2023: in the first five months, bilateral trade turnover was about US\$94 billion, 40.7 percent higher than the same period in 2022. In March 2023, trade reached its highest level ever; for the first time, it was over US\$20 billion in a month (Essen, 2023). Russia's increasing dependence on China could weaken India's national security because of the following two reasons: Firstly, India once considered Russia a partner to help balance its relationship with China. When the Russia – China relations were good, Russia could

influence China to limit its aggression against India, and when the Russia – China relations deteriorated, Russia could become India's partner in dealing with China (Jacob, 2022). A Russia that was closer to China may be less trustworthy to India. Russia remained neutral in the Ladakh confrontation between China and India, but there was no guarantee that its position would not change in the future. Secondly, if the relationship between Russia and China became closer, China may increase its influence on Russia's policy choices and pressure Russia to stop selling new weapons systems or transferring its spare parts for India. This would significantly reduce India's military capabilities before India could pivot to other suppliers such as the US or Israel. China could also pressure Russia to recognize Chinese claims to disputed territory in India's north and northeast region or change its traditional pro-India stance on the Kashmir issue. China could also influence Russia to strengthen its partnership with Pakistan. China was eager to see Russia join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Russia could broker a peace accord between India and Pakistan, and save CPEC (Mourdoukoutas, 2017). Therefore, the strengthening of relations between China, Russia and Pakistan could create significant challenges for India's regional and global position. To cope with these challenges, India had to pursue a wise and flexible foreign policy, avoid being isolated in multilateral forums having the simultaneous participation of Russia, China and Pakistan.

To strengthen its national security, India must look to other partners, possibly relying more on the US to balance Russia's closer alignment with China. According to Warren & Ganguly (2022), India's distrust of the US partly stemmed from the US's alignment with India's adversaries, just as Russia would do if it increasingly aligned itself with China. Closer alignment between China and Russia would increase the importance of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) for India's security, with the US, Japan and Australia being partners to balance with the China – Russia – Pakistan axis, which was most imminent.

Thus, as a result of the Russia – Ukraine crisis, India's relations with other members of Quad, including the US, Japan and Australia, improved as India relied on these partners to balance its relations with China. In May 2022, India participated in the Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized that India shared common goals with other members (Australia, Japan, and the United States) in the Indo-Pacific region. On the sidelines of the Quad Summit, India also became a member of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) led by the US (The White House, 2023).

Directly Affecting the Indian Economy that Forced India to Diversify its Partners

The Russia-Ukraine crisis was one of the main reasons causing India's economic slowdown by two percent and Indian economy was plunged into an inflation crisis which lasted from February to October 2022. The invasion caused prices of fuel, fertilizer, wheat and other critical commodities, of which Russia or Ukraine were major suppliers, to spike. This, in turn, caused the value of imports to skyrocket in countries like India, which were dependent on supplies of foreign fuel to power their economies. Inflation rose as a result, and in ways that were often unprecedented in years.

Both fuel prices, and prices of other commodities that had spiked in the immediate aftermath of the war, eased after some time. But the effects of the crisis on the Indian economy were far from over. In January 2023, for instance, the consumer price index grew at its fastest rate (six point five percent on a year-on-year basis) for three months, dashing initial hopes that the easing of global fuel prices would lead to a sustained decline in domestic inflation. This, in turn, affected how the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decide on the future trajectory of interest rate increases. Bandyopadhyay (2022) showed that:

India's consumer inflation rate increased sharply, peaking at 7,8 percent in April 2022, nearly double the previous year, with fuel and food prices being the main causes. India's crude oil prices increased from US\$84,7 in January to US\$116 in June 2022. Foreign investors also shifted capital out of emerging economies like India, weakening the rupee's exchange rate against the dollar and eroding India's foreign exchange reserves. India's foreign exchange reserves fell by US\$110 billion in September 2022.

The rupee's decline exacerbated inflation because most of India's energy imports were denominated in dollars. Protecting the Indian economy on multiple fronts was the Modi Government's most important policy priority in the 2022 spring (Bandyopadhyay, 2022). India's foreign policy was therefore to be adjusted to ensure its economic benefits.

The Russia-Ukraine crisis was an opportunity for India to buy cheap oil from Russia. After the Russia-Ukraine conflict erupted in early 2022, India began heavily importing Russian oil to take advantage of the steep price reductions due to Russia's oil industry facing a series of Western sanctions. From nearly zero in January 2022, a month before the conflict erupted, India's imports of Russian oil skyrocketed to 1.27 million barrels per day in January 2023 - according to data from research firm Vortexa. In 2023, Russia became India's largest oil supplier, accounting for about 30 percent of the country's total imports of this commodity in South Asia. Imports peaked at 1.99 million barrels per day in July 2023. However, in 2024, the volume of oil imports from Russia to India declined, down to about 1.29 million barrels per day in January. India began to import more oil from other suppliers such as Iraq. India's reduced imports of Russian oil was also a sign that the US and allied sanctions against Russia proved effective. In December 2022, the Group of Seven (G7) and the European Union (EU) agreed to impose a ceiling price of US\$60 dollars per barrel on Russian oil. All contracts to buy Russian oil above this threshold would not be insured for maritime transport - an area currently dominated by Europe. Against the backdrop of Russia's financial sector also being sanctioned, in 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) established a system to enable transactions in Indian rupees. However, the use of this system was limited due to exchange rate risks and transaction fees (Hanada, 2024). Because of those risks, India had to diversify its partners to avoid dependence on Russia.

The above analysis showed that, the Russia-Ukraine crisis had a profound impact on India's foreign policy. First, at the global level, the US, Russia, Europe and China paid more attention to India and 'invited' it to join their force gathering. This could help India increase its ability to shape the balance of power among major powers in its favor and become an important pole in the international order. Second, at the regional level, a shift in the global balance of power could help India promote its geographical advantages both on land and at sea, emphasizing its role in the US's Indo-Pacific strategy. Third, at the national level, emerging traditional and non-traditional security risks pushed the Indian Government to accelerate the process of diversifying its partners.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SHIFTS AND ITS IMPORTANT PARTNERS

Post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India continued to maintain the principle of non-alignment, an important aspect of its traditional foreign policy. However, India made certain changes in its foreign policy to adapt to the new international context and to protect its national interests. First of all, the changes in India's foreign policy were reflected in the relations with its traditional and important partners such as the US, Russia and China.

The US

Under the Prime Minister N. Modi's Government, especially during the first tenure, India tended to lean towards the US and Western countries (Mohan, 2022). Post the onset of the crisis in Ukraine, this trend became even more obvious. In 2022, India and the US conducted joint military exercises not far from the disputed India – China border. In May 2022, India joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) led by the US.

The US emerged as India's largest trading partner in the 2022-2023 fiscal years thanks to the increasingly close economic cooperation between the two countries. This conclusion was based on data from the Indian Ministry of Industry and Trade, which showed that trade turnover between the two countries skyrocketed in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

In June 2023, Indian Prime Minister N. Modi made an official state visit to the US. During the visit, the two sides signed cooperation agreements in many strategic fields. Regarding defense, General Electric (GE) and Hindustan Aeronautics Co. Ltd. agreed to cooperate in the production of F414 jet engines for the Tejas light fighter aircraft. India and the US also signed an agreement for the US to provide 30 MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones worth about \$3 billion to India for use in patrolling territories close to its border with China and about half of it would be transferred to the Indian Navy. Another agreement allowed the US Naval warships in the region to service and repair at Indian shipyards on the ports of Chennai, Mumbai and Goa to maintain the ability to conduct combat operations in some waters of the Indo-Pacific region. The deal was expected to help strengthen India's border security and reduce dependence on Russian military supplies, which made up a significant portion of India's arsenal, as Russia was focusing on the military campaign in Ukraine. Although the US's weapons often came with conditions, the growing level of diplomatic trust between the two countries was likely to lead to closer defense ties and more defense sales agreements (Nisar, 2023).

Regarding technology, the US and India agreed to cooperate in the production of semiconductors, the supply of important materials, telecommunications and artificial intelligence (AI) in the state of Gujarat. Total investment in this sector amounted to \$2.75 billion and was estimated to help create up to 5000 direct jobs and 15,000 related jobs over the next five years. An American electronic chip manufacturing company, Micron Technology, would invest \$825 million to build a new semiconductor assembly and testing centre in India, Lam Research Company would train 60,000 Indian engineers through the Semiverse Solution virtual platform in semiconductor manufacturing and workforce development. In the field of space: the US Space Agency (NASA) and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) agreed to cooperate in developing human spaceflight and training Indian astronauts in Johnson Space Center in Houston. India has agreed to join the US-led Artemis Accords on space exploration. The 58-point Joint Statement and major cooperation agreements reached during the PM Modi's trip included trade and investment, defense and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and clean energy applications, environment, agriculture and health... With these developments, it was hoped that India – US relations would step to a new stage of development.

India also showed indirect support for the US by not participating in the de-dollarization' plan of BRICS countries. BRICS was planning to launch a new currency for payments in international trade to challenge the US dollar's global reserve status. The five-nation bloc was expected to issue a new currency during the August 2023 Summit held in Johannesburg in South Africa. All other members of BRICS, including Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa, appeared to be in favor of issuing a common

currency within the group, but India remained the only country that had not shown any interest in this plan. Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar said in a press conference on July 3, 2023 that India had no plans regarding the BRICS common currency. A month before the BRICS Summit, he announced that India might withdraw from creating the new currency. India's unsupporting of the de-dollarization showed that India did not want to harm its trade with the Western powers (Deshpande, 2023) and it is not to damage its relations with the US by supporting the plan to issue a common currency of BRICS. The fact followed that, during the BRICS 2023 Summit, discussions concerning a common BRICS currency were not on the agenda. However, a name for the currency has been 'coined' – the R5 which is a reference to the five currencies used by the current BRICS members – the Renminbi, Ruble, Rupee, Real and Rand (Anderson & Yulianti, 2024). This partly showed that India tends to support the US even though it may upset its major partners in BRICS.

India's relations with the US's allies also improved significantly. The almost astonishingly rapid development of Australia – India relations in recent years has been rare in a divided, risky and tense international system. The six summits between the Indian PM N. Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese in just one year and the two leaders' two bilateral state visits in April and May 2023 reflected 'the depth and maturity of relations' between the two countries. PM Modi also showed the world the importance of Australia in New Delhi's foreign policy when he continued his journey to Canberra even though the Quad canceled plans to hold a summit here. In addition, he spent half of his six-day tour of the Asia – Pacific region (from May 19-24, 2023) on activities in Australia. Before that, in March 2022, Mr. Modi welcomed British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in New Delhi. He also attended the G7 meeting in Germany with the US and European leaders in June 2022, attended the Quad meetings with Australia, Japan and the US in May 2022.

Russia

India and Russia had a long-standing strategic partnership, dating back to the Soviet Union era. India-Russia defense cooperation was particularly strong, with Russia being India's main arms supplier. Cooperation agreements in the nuclear, space and economic fields was also maintained and strengthened. Russia was India's largest arms supplier. Major contracts such as the S-400, Sukhoi fighter jets and submarines strengthened close defense ties between the two countries. Economic cooperation between India and Russia covered sectors such as energy, infrastructure and technology. Russia supplied oil and gas to India and supported the development of nuclear energy projects.

Post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India maintained a neutral stance and did not condemn Russia at international forums such as the United Nations. While India considered the US its most important global partner, at some point of time post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India showed its tilt toward Russia. India's tilt toward Russia during the Russia – Ukraine crisis was more pronounced than many in the West, particularly Europe and the U.S. expected (Chang, 2022). Early in the crisis, India thrice abstained from United Nations resolutions that condemned Russian actions in Ukraine (Chang, 2022). India took the advantage of the situation to buy oil and gas from Russia at cheaper prices when Russia was hit by economic sanctions from the West. This helped India meet its domestic energy needs and reduce energy import costs. According to India's Department of Commerce, bilateral trade between India and Russia reached a record height of US\$65.70 billion in FY 2023-24, comprising India's exports worth US\$4.26 billion and imports from Russia amounting to US\$61.44 billion (India Briefing, November 26, 2024). Bilateral investments have been robust, surpassing the earlier target of US\$30 billion in 2018, prompting a revised goal of US\$50 billion by 2025. The Chennai-Vladivostok

Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) has officially become operational, facilitating the transport of oil, food, and machinery (India Briefing, November 26, 2024). The India – Russia partnership, anchored in frameworks like the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership, the DTAA reflects robust economic collaboration (India Briefing, November 26, 2024).

However, all these do not mean that India – Russia relations have not changed significantly post the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Despite its tilt towards Russia to protect its national interests and maintain good relations with the traditional strategic partner, India has revealed signs that it is not entirely pro-Russia.

In the diplomatic field, India sent some important signals showing its ‘separation’ from Russia. New Delhi’s contrasting messages when Russia launched a military campaign in Ukraine show the shift in India’s stance. In 2014, Shivshankar Menon, the then India’s national security advisor, said that Russia had ‘legitimate interests’ in annexing Crimea. However, in the Ukraine conflict, the phrase ‘legitimate interests’ of Russia does not appear in the statements issued by India. Although Indian officials did not criticize Russia by name, their statements since March 2022 have indirectly targeted Moscow. The constant mention of respect for international law, the UN Charter, the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations shows that New Delhi does not actually accept Russia’s military campaign. In June 2022, India ‘strongly condemned the alleged killing of civilians in Bucha and supported the independent investigation’ (Nisar, 2023). New Delhi also asked Russian President Vladimir Putin to participate in direct talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, asserting that, in this war no party would win because all would have to suffer the consequences. In official statements, India criticized Russia for putting the food and economic security of developing countries in danger (Nisar, 2023). In October 2022, the Indian Government explained that it was ‘extremely worried by the recent developments in Ukraine’, called for ‘an immediate cessation of hostilities’ and emphasized that ‘dialogue is the only answer’ (Roy, 2022). The Indian Government’s constant reference to respecting international law, the United Nations Charter, and the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty shows that India in fact does not consider the Russia invasion to be legal (Jacob, 2022). These statements, while not naming Russia, are clearly aimed at expressing dissatisfaction with what Russia has done. In September 2022, during a face-to-face meeting with President Putin, Prime Minister Modi said to his counterpart that now was ‘not an era of war’ which was perhaps New Delhi’s sharpest public response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Lau & Saeed, 2022). Months later, PM Modi’s phrase ‘not an era of war’ was adopted by the G20 group in the communique issued at the Bali Summit (Sen, 2022). Thus, even though India has not taken an official stance on the war, its statements appear to indicate its growing opposition (Nisar, 2023).

In the economic realm, in May 2023, Russia and India ‘suspended efforts to settle bilateral trade in rupees, after months of failed negotiations to persuade Moscow to keep the rupee in its treasury (Ahmed & Bhat, 2023). Although India continued to buy arms from Russia, it has begun to diversify its arms supply. India strengthened defense cooperation with other partners such as the US, France and Israel. This was intended to reduce dependence on a single source of supply and enhance national security. The prolonged Russia – Ukraine crisis has raised serious concerns in New Delhi about Russia’s military production capacity. India believed that it would be difficult for Russia to ensure delivery time, especially in emergency situations. Therefore, India postponed plans to buy more weapons from Russia, including an agreement to buy 21 new MiG-29 fighters. India’s defense dependence on Russia is weakening over time as it looks to alternative military suppliers.

China

Post the onset of the Ukraine crisis, India's foreign policy towards China underwent drastic changes. India maintained trade relations but at the same time strengthened defense ties and strategic cooperation with other countries to cope with China's growing influence. This reflected India's strategic adaptation in a volatile international scenario.

For China, India is emerging as a worthy rival of China in the 'Global South' – a general term for a collection of developing countries. In January 2023, the Indian Government organized the 'Voice of the Global South' conference with the participation of more than 120 countries excluding China.

On the level of multilateral cooperation, India took part in important meetings with the participation of Russia and China, but tactfully shows its independence from the other two powers. This can be seen through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in 2023. According to the original plan, all preparations were made to organize the 23rd SCO Summit in person, but at the end of May 2023, India suddenly announced that the conference would be held online. No specific reason was given for the change, other than the announcement that there were a number of factors that led to the decision. This move once again showed India's distancing itself from China to avoid offending Western countries. Because SCO, true to its name, has shown China's leading role in all its activities, if all leaders opposing the West such as the President of China, the President of Russia, and the President of Belarus were present at the event and met Prime Minister Modi, that would send an unfavorable message to India's strategic partners such as the US, Europe and elsewhere, especially after Prime Minister Modi's visit to the US. India is aware of the fact that China and Russia are (to some extent) using the organization to promote their visions of the world. Therefore, the fact that no India – China bilateral meeting was planned on the sidelines of the meeting was because India did not want such a meeting to be interpreted as a complete support for Beijing's ideas at the time of fragmented international situation.

Other Important Partners

India's series of bustling diplomatic activities in 2022 were considered a strong implementation of the 'multi-alignment' oriented diplomatic strategy. For example, on June 23, Prime Minister Modi attended the BRICS online Summit with the leaders of Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa. After that, on June 26, Mr. Modi went to Munich (Germany) to attend several sessions of the Summit of the world's leading developed industries (G7) taking place from June 26-28. The BRICS Summit on 23 June was the 14th meeting of a group of countries that currently account for 42 percent of the world's population and 31 percent of global GDP. The G7 Summit also brought together seven out of ten largest industrialized countries (the UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, the US, Japan and France) accounting for 45 percent of world GDP. Leaders of Argentina, India, Indonesia, South Africa and Senegal attended as guests of the host country. The fact that the BRICS and G7 Summits took place almost at the same time clearly shows the dichotomous trend in the gathering of world forces, between one side being influenced by China and Russia, and the other side following the lead of the US and the West, and India participated in both these meetings. Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar often reiterated that, India set itself the mission of becoming 'one of the leading countries' in the world. India has now acquired a global diplomatic and strategic stature, making it an essential partner, primarily in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond' (Philip, 2023).

With smaller countries, India seemed to show more speed and urgency in promoting international cooperation. India's series of bustling diplomatic activities in the year following the Ukraine crisis could be seen as India's response to potential traditional and non-traditional security risks caused by the crisis. India's acceleration in promoting relations with Latin America and Southeast Asia was the clearest proof of this.

At the end of the 20th century, India remained a distant market for Latin America and vice versa, the Latin American region remains outside India's priorities. Overall trade between India and this region was rather modest, \$50 billion in 2022, driven largely by energy and mineral exports from Brazil, edible oil exports from Argentina and increased mineral exports from the region, including copper (Seshasayee, 2023). The discovery of large amounts of crude oil in Guyana piqued the interest of India as it sought to diversify its crude oil imports beyond its traditional suppliers in the Middle East. For its part, India exported a number of products to Latin America such as pharmaceuticals, motorbike, agricultural products, IT services and refined oil products... In addition to mining and oil reserves, Latin America brought India potential agricultural lands. With an area nearly five times that of India and a population half that of the South Asian nations, the region could offer India an opportunity to address its dependence on imports of essential goods. The official visit of Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar to four Latin American and Caribbean countries (including Guyana, Panama, Colombia and Dominican Republic) at the end of April 2023 showed India's focus on this region. This was the second visit to Latin America by a top Indian diplomat in less than a year. The fact that India previously appointed a Secretary of State to the Ministry of External Affairs to be in charge of Latin America also showed that India really attached importance to Latin American region. At a conference on India – Latin America relations in February 2023 in New Delhi, Foreign Minister Jaishankar said that, the relationship between the two sides was 'full of hope and optimism'. He emphasized that, Latin America was part of India's larger goal of 'becoming the world's leading power', adding that India must increase its presence in the region by having truly important relationships, substantive investments and remarkable cooperation. India began to open new representative offices in Latin American countries where it had previously not had a diplomatic presence (Seshasayee, 2023).

In the African region, India chose Egypt as its destination in 2023. PM Modi officially visited Egypt on June 24, 2023. This was the first state visit to Egypt by an Indian prime minister since 1997. During this visit, the two countries signed a series of memoranda of understanding to strengthen cooperative relations in the fields of trade, investment, culture and people-to-people exchanges (*Rédaction Africanews*, 2023).

For Southeast Asia, within the framework of the 19th ASEAN – India Summit taking place in Cambodia, India and ASEAN announced the establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership on November 12, 2022 (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2022). In addition to active trade, cultural and infrastructure cooperation activities, India seemed to be increasing its military presence in this region. The ASEAN – India Multilateral Maritime Exercise (AIME), co-organized by Singapore Navy and the Indian Navy from May 2 to 8, 2023, showed that maritime cooperation was increasingly becoming important among the parties. As an important partner of India in ASEAN, Vietnam was gifted an INS Kirpan corvette by India. The INS Kirpan corvette was handed over at Cam Ranh port on July 22, 2023, along with training activities (PTI, 2023). This event was significant because this was the first time India had given the INS Kirpan corvette to a partner country which reflected India's commitment to like-minded partners in enhancing defense capacities and potentials.

ASSESSMENT OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SHIFTS AND ITS IMPACTS

Post the onset of the Ukraine crisis, India showed independence in its foreign affairs decisions. This was evident in the fact that India did not join in sanctioning against Russia, nor did it entirely lean towards any bloc in this conflict. However, it can be seen that Indian foreign policy during this period underwent two major trends, both of which had impacts on India's national interests and international position.

India Strengthened its Relations with the US and its Allies

India's strategic partnership with the US was strengthened more than ever before. India also increased its presence and role in the Asia-Pacific region, through strategic partnerships with Japan, Australia and ASEAN. This helped India balance China's power and promote stability in the region. Close relations with the US could help India strengthen national security by sharing intelligence information and military capabilities improvement, buying and selling weapons. The US could help India gain access to military technology, management and training. This could enhance India's defense capabilities and confrontational power in the region. In addition, a good relationship with the US could attract investment and aid from the US which helped India develop its economy and infrastructure, promote its position in international organization such as the UN and WTO. India could strengthen its defence capabilities and strategic autonomy. However, reality showed that India and the US were not always consistent in its views. The two countries' behavior during the Russia-Ukraine crisis did show their difference. Therefore, there was potential risks of disagreement in the relationship between the two countries. Being well-known for its principle of strategic autonomy, it was believed that India's strengthening of its relations with the US would not lead to the risk of political dependence.

India Gradually Separated itself from the China-Russia Relationship to Avoid a Seemingly Triangle Axis

If the China – Russia – India strategic triangle axis was formed, it was likely to create a shift in the global balance of power, because this was a collection of power of three big countries with large sizes, populations and were all eager to expand their international influence. The idea of linking the three big countries of the two continents of Asia and Europe was gradually formed through organizations in which the three countries participated such as BRICS, SCO Among them, China wanted to play its role of leadership when it proposed ideas for new institutions with the participation of all three parties, such as a common bank, a common currency to compete with the US leadership in regional and global institutions (Khalid & Mat, 2024). In this so-called triangle relationship, China attached great importance to India's role due to its strategic location in Asia.

India tried to maintain cohesion with both Russia and China at the same time. While India – Russia relation was traditionally close and friendly, India – China relation was more complicated. India – China relation was both competitive and cooperative. There had been constant conflicts between India and China over border issues, and China's presence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean also affected India's security interests. However, despite these conflicts, India maintained relations with China on both bilateral and multilateral levels because it was one of India's two largest trading partners.

The Ukraine crisis caused India to gradually separate itself from the so-called 'Russia – China axis'. The traditional friendship between Russia and India was somewhat adversely affected by the Russia-Ukraine crisis. On the other hand, Russia – China relation grew stronger just as India and China's

relation was rifting. The border clashes in 2020 caused the Indian Government and strategic community to view China as an existential security challenge, and Russia as a relatively unpredictable factor as Russia – China relation remained an unknown matter. However, the Russia – Ukraine conflict made the shape of the Sino-Russian relationship gradually clearly defined. As Russia was getting closer to China, India was also getting closer to the West and the US. The separation did not happen overnight, Indian and Russia officials was likely to make efforts to maintain cordial relations. But geopolitical pressure pushed the two countries apart.

Overall, the Ukraine crisis was in many ways a turning point in India's foreign policy. India was moving towards a more dynamic role in the international arena, while working to shape a new geopolitical order. The shifts in India's foreign policy showed its flexibility and pragmatism in a complicated international scenario. India was trying to balance national interests among major powers, while ensuring its own security and development. These developments would have significant impact on the regional and global situation in the coming years.

CONCLUSION

The Russia-Ukraine crisis had a strong impact on all areas of India's development, from economy to military, from its domestic development strategy to its foreign policy. The polarization in international relations made India's choice of strategic autonomy seem increasingly difficult, leading to subtle changes in India's foreign policy.

In essence, in the period post the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India adhered to the principle of strategic autonomy in its foreign policy. Adherence to the principle of strategic autonomy allowed the Modi Government to keep itself distant from the conflict zones between the West on the one side and Russia and China on the other, while at the same time building the image of a 'peace-maker' and 'a strong emerging power'. However, according the authors of this paper, the Russia-Ukraine crisis accelerated two major trends in India's foreign policy. On the one hand, relations between India and the US and Western countries was increasingly strengthened. After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India did not respond to calls from the US and the West to join the sanctions camp against Russia. But at the same time, India saw the development of India – US relations as the key to enhancing national power, expanding its links with the West, effectively containing China and enhancing its international stature. Due to these strategic calculations, India – US relations was largely positively affected and became closer. India could seize favorable opportunities in the escalating conflict between the US and Russia and China to strengthen its cooperation with the US in key areas such as security and defense, science, technology and supply chain. On the other hand, India gradually distanced itself from the sphere of influence of Russia and China. Post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India repeatedly abstained from voting on Russia-related issues at the United Nations General Assembly. In terms of historical and practical factors, India – Russia relations were not only maintained by the tradition of past friendship but also by current practical needs. India tried to maintain cordial relations with Russia and cooperative relations with China, but geopolitical pressure was likely to push India away from both Russia and China post the onset of the Ukraine crisis.

On the whole, at a time of rapid changes in international situation, the Russia – Ukraine crisis could be seen as a catalyst for the reshaping of the international order. In this context, the strategies of the US, China, and Russia towards India seemed to have created favorable environment for India's rise. India's multi-aligned foreign policy gained momentum and could maximize its effectiveness. The trend of

moving closer to the us and western countries, distancing from the sphere of influence of Russia and China showed that India's strategic position was changing from a regional leader to a global leader. Thus, recent shifts in India's foreign policy post the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis have been conducive to remarkably strengthening India's influence in the emerging global order.

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