

Reviewing India's Policy of Neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract: *In the present world, India is emerging as a new global and powerful nation. Its global engagement has been very successful in balancing the power of international order too. In the current events of the world, the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has become a frontline issue. Directly and indirectly, most of the countries are influenced by the war between the two countries. Among all countries, India is been expected to look over to provide policy to neutralize the Russia - Ukraine war. India being a democratic country, today in the world platform it has come up with strong diplomatic relations and stands in a strong position to bring the globe under one platform. India's stance of neutrality in the Russia - Ukrain conflict reflects its diplomatic pragmatism and strategic interests. As a major global player, India maintains strong ties with both Russia and the West, making it imperative to navigate with caution. While expressing concern over the conflict's humanitarian toll, India has refrained from taking sides, opting instead for a diplomatic approach focused on dialogue and de-escalation. This position allows India to safeguard its economic interests, including energy imports from Russia, while upholding its commitment to international peace and stability. However, maintaining neutrality presents its own challenges, as India seeks to balance its relations with key stakeholders and mitigate any potential repercussions on its own security and regional stability. Thus, India's neutrality in the Russia- Ukraine war underscores its role as a responsible global actor striving to uphold its National Interests within the complex dynamics of international relations.*

Key Words: *Neutrality, diplomacy, Geopolitical, Global Player, National Interests, De-escalation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

India is the largest functioning democracy with the world's fastest - growing economy. Presently, it is the fifth largest economy in the world. Simultaneously, it is the world's second most populous country with over 1,438,608,086 billion approx. people as of April 2024. India's population comprises of 17.76% of the total world population.¹ Its growing political and economic extent has influenced the world as a whole. Today, it has nuclear as well as a large military force. Globally it has the fourth strongest military.² India is renowned globally for its culture. It is a peace - loving country and believes in the concept of peaceful co - existence. This is because of its nature that India has developed good diplomatic relations with other countries around the globe. India along with other developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries does not support war in any situation, but when war breaks out due to any reason, India does believe in getting involved in war directly or indirectly because there are so many basic reasons like, it doesn't want to make its relationship bad or worse with any of the party and secondly the interest or protection of its own nation, so, it believes in not to align with any one side. In the current events of the world, the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has become a frontline issue. Directly or indirectly whole world is influenced by the war between these two countries. In India's instance it has good economic relation and strategic partnership with both nations but it is acting indifferently as per India's foreign policy to resolve the Russia - Ukraine war.

2. RELATIONSHIP OF INDIA WITH RUSSIA AND UKRAINE :

India, being a sovereign, independent and biggest democratic country, believes in making and maintaining good relationships with all nations around the globe. It does not believe in any invasion, war, or coercion, rather it believes in

peace and friendship. It follows its policy which falls on universal peace, security unity, and equality even though it is the founder of the United Nations Organization.³

In the present time, the war between Russia and Ukraine has created a disturbing environment for the whole world, it has again divided the whole world into bipolar U.S.A. and Russia. Here India is an Asian country and an ally of both countries. It has historically maintained strong and multifaceted relationships with both Russia, India has longstanding strategic partnerships, rooted in historical ties dating back to the Soviet era. The relationship encompasses cooperation in defense, energy, trade, space exploration, and cultural exchange. It has defense cooperation like supplying defense equipment to India. Including aircraft, tanks, missiles and new vessels. Russia is an important energy partner of India supplying crude oil, natural gas, and nuclear fuel. India and Russia collaborate extensively in space exploration and satellite launchers. Lastly, the bilateral trade between India and Russia has been steadily growing, in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, information technology, and agriculture. On the other hand, India and Ukraine's relationships lie in many areas i.e. India and Ukraine have a growing relationship, with bilateral trade focusing on sectors such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, machinery and information technology. India is one of the Ukraine's major trading partners in Asia. While not as extensive as India's ties with Russia India has limited defense cooperation with Ukraine, like the purchase of military spares and components, apart from this India - Ukraine collaboration is not limited but both countries have expanded their relationship also in science and technology and space research by expressing their interest in expanding cooperation in these fields. Overall, India maintains cordial and cooperative relationships with both Russia and Ukraine, each characterized by unique historical. Strategic, economic, cultural, and geopolitical factors.

3. THE REASON BEHIND RUSSIA - UKRAINE WAR :

The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of 15 independent states in 1991. This dissolution also gave rise to territorial disputes between Russia and Ukraine. The most significant of these disputes was over Crimea, a region with a predominantly ethnic Russian population. In 1954, Crimea was transferred from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Crimea remained part of Ukraine, leading to tensions between Russia and Ukraine over its status.

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea following a controversial referendum that was not recognized by most of the international community. Firstly, the annexation sparked condemnation from Ukraine and Western countries, leading to sanctions against Russia. The annexation of Crimea further strained the relationship between Ukraine and exacerbated tensions in the region. Secondly, Ukraine's aspirations for closer ties with the European Union and NATO have been viewed with suspicion by Russia, which sees NATO expansion as a threat to its security interests. Overall, the Russia - Ukraine conflict is a complex factor, making it difficult to resolve.

4. IMPACT OF RUSSIA - UKRAINE WAR ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY :

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has reverberated across global markets, with far - reaching implications for economies worldwide. India being the major player in the international arena has not been immune to the economic fallout from the geopolitical impact of the Russia - Ukraine war on the Indian economy. It is well known that, Russia is the world's third - largest crude oil producer and India is a major importer of energy, including oil and gas. Any disruption in the global energy supply, due to sanctions or conflict - related issues, can lead to higher energy prices in India, affecting various sectors of the economy and household budgets, this increase in energy prices can increase inflation.

In trade areas, India imports a significant amount of arms, fertilizers and chemicals from Russia and Ukraine. The sanctions imposed against Russia affect the availability and cost of these goods in the Indian market. With increase in demand and shortage of goods can unstable the global market even, the geopolitical tensions can lead to fluctuations in currency exchange rates.⁴ This impacts India's imports, exports and overall economic stability. In commodity prices, this conflict may disrupt the global supply chains of commodities like wheat and metals, leading to price fluctuations. India, as a major importer of commodities, may face challenges in managing inflation and ensuring food security. India is a developing country and it needs investment and capital flows for its growth, but these geopolitical uncertainties can lead to volatility in financial markets, affecting foreign investment flows into India. This conflict may disturb the government's budget allocation for other sectors and influence fiscal policies for India may need to increase its defense spending to enhance its security preparedness in response to geopolitical tensions – Lastly, the Impact of this conflict can be seen easily in diplomatic relations of India with both Russia and Ukraine. This can influence future trade agreements, strategic partnerships, and the Indian economy. Overall, the direct impact of the Russia – Ukraine war on

the Indian economy may vary depending on several factors, it is likely to contribute to increased uncertainty and volatility in various sectors, requiring careful monitoring and management by policymakers.

5. BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND UKRAINE. :

India has economic affairs and good relations with Ukraine and Russia. In January 1992, India had established diplomatic relations with Ukraine. In May 1992 Indian embassy was opened in Kyiv. Ukraine extended its business hands with India in New Delhi in February 1993. India is the third largest exporter of medical products to Ukraine. India imports 25 lakh tonnes of sunflower oil annually from Ukraine. India had been in relations with Russia for a long time. Russia had opened its embassy in New Delhi on April 12, 1947. Since then it has been extending its hand with India in enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relations including politics, security, defense, trade and economy, science and technology and culture. India is a peace – loving country. Its diplomatic relations with both countries are very strong. In the global political platform. India is standing strong to help both countries to resolve the Russia – Ukraine war.

India and Russia are in a view to create a multi – polar world order where each one should be one pole instead of being bipolar. As in the present scenario, with the decline of American, it had led to the uni-polar world order where each one is trying to be in summit, has been the main cause of war. India is in vital position which is capable of ending the Russia – Ukraine war. India had hosted the G20 foreign minister meetings that were attended by the WEST and Russians. India at the United Nations Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council in January 2022, abstained from votes and draft resolutions deplaining Russian aggression in Ukraine because it did not want to exaggerate the scenario by being in or out of any country's support in personal neither under the pressure of United Nations. It was for the reason that in the past when the Soviet Union, on several occasions have exercised its veto power to protect. India, as in the case of Human Rights isolations in Jammu and Kashmir and during the 1971 war with Pakistan, etc. India knows that its future interests would be not be benefitted from the dollar rather it will be by non – dollar economic system. This was India's foreign policy that showed how to sustain its neutral position. India has been profited from economic ties from both the countries. They are benefitted India while they are still in war. At the beginning of the Russia – Ukraine war. It was criticized that kyiv is selling arms to Pakistan. This fact was sufficient for India for not voting for Russia aggression in Ukraine at G – 20 Foreign minister meeting. By doing so India is acting as a strategic partner with both the countries but on the other end, it is acting indifferent as per India's foreign policy.⁵ Overall, apart from these there are some more reasons behind India to maintain a stance of neutrality in the Russia- Ukraine conflict. It is well known that India has a longstanding tradition of non-alignmnet in global conflicts. This tradition stems from India's desire to maintain its sovereignty, pursue an independent foreign policy. And avoid entanglement in the disputes of other nations. India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution to the Russia – Ukraine conflict through diplomacy and dialogue. It emphasized the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations involved. Since, its independence, India has reiterated its commitment to upholding international law and the principles of the United Nations charter in resolving conflicts. Even though it respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations and refraining from the use of force or coercion, as a peace lover and soft power country it believes in universal peace and brotherhood, for that same, India has refrained from imposing sanctions on Russia or Ukraine and has emphasized the importance of dialogue and negotiation in resolving disputes. India's focus has been on maintaining stable and friendly relations with both countries while advocating for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.⁶ The reason behind the peaceful settlement is because India has maintained diplomatic engagement with both Russia and Ukraine, seeking to balance its relations with both countries while promoting peace and stability in the region.⁷ It believes in dialogue rather than war. Overall, India's policy of neutrality in the Russia – Ukraine conflict reflects its commitment to principles of peace, diplomacy, and respect for sovereignty. India aims to contribute to efforts for a peaceful resolution to the conflict while safeguarding its own interests and maintaining bilateral relations with both Russia and Ukraine.

6. CONCLUSION :

India's diplomatic and foreign policy has changed to a great deal since past. Today West is not in position to directly look India as it was in past but have to think twice before taking any action. India has grown its foreign affairs very strongly with many countries taking benefit and giving support in all types.⁸ This stand has given India an unanimous position in the globe to accept it as a global leader. The United States is now with India to cope up for checking Chinese influence that was a threat for U.S. Russia being a good partner of India is capable of sharing its resources with India for its development thereby increasing its power and position in the world again brings india in summit in global platform. Ukraine expects supports from India so it cannot directly criticize India so it remains silence and Russia fighting for its

recovery of its own area that was at once a part of Russia. So Russia expects India to only stand with it, but not to help in the war.^{9,10,11} United States trying to play double stand by criticizing the war and expect vote for and against the war that could reveal the interest of one country that in near future can result in polarity in war. China also did not come up with direct support with any country known that if intervened can result in its financial loss and market prospect creditability.^{12,13,14} So, India has acted very smartly in United Nations platform as well as in G20 meetings where India Discussed on the subject of development and future prospects in global scenario rather bringing this matter on that platform. India wants to implement new world order and new polarity system, where the power to exist on hand of each country being single pole.^{15,16}

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