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RESEARCH ARTICLE

MULTIPOLARITY AND GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS: A REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY

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Abstract

The article provides a reflective analysis of India's G20 presidency, emphasizing the country's diplomatic balancing act amidst complex geopolitical dynamics. It discusses the global challenges faced due to the Ukraine war, including its impact on global supply chains and commodity prices. The article highlights India's successful G20 agenda, which aimed at fostering cooperation for a new globalization framework prioritizing collective welfare. It also examines the factors contributing to India's rise as a leader, such as its democratic values, economic growth, and peaceful foreign policy. Challenges like domestic issues and geopolitical rivalries are acknowledged, along with the need for India to maintain its role as a balancer between major powers. The article concludes by recognizing 2023 as a significant year for Indian diplomacy, with India's potential to contribute towards a stable multipolar world order.

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Introduction:-

When India took over as G20 President, it appeared as though the world was entering a hitherto unheard-of stage. It still needed time to properly recover from the terrible COVID-19 pandemic consequences, put long-term climate change solutions into action, and address the confusing and never-ending war in Ukraine, whose severe repercussions have been felt all over the world. The global supply chains, energy prices, and the prices of other commodities like wheat and edible oils have all been severely influenced by this battle. The prolonged geopolitical conflict in Eastern Europe can be interpreted as a component of the larger power dynamics that is today typified by a complex competition for supremacy between established powers and more recent entrants. In this context, India's diplomatic balancing act as an emerging power in relation to the G20 has been highly successful and has raised India's prominence in international politics. However, difficulties and problems have also emerged, demanding that India take on more responsibility. India attempted to maintain a broad, ambitious, action-oriented, and forceful presidency through its G20 agenda, and to some extent it was successful. Its goal was to encourage cooperation in order to create a new globalisation framework that puts everyone's interests and welfare first.

Contemporary Geopolitics: Dynamism & Complexities

The Ukraine crisis had added complexities to international relations. Russia had been going through international condemnation due to its ceaseless year-old war with Ukraine, and has even been portrayed as a 'pariah state'. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Western nations have responded to Russia's attack by implementing policies aimed at isolating and containing Russia in order to diminish its capabilities. Moreover, despite Russia's goal to keep

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Ukraine isolated from Western influence, Ukraine's economic connections with the EU and the West at large had strengthened.

But Russia did not seem to be backing down just yet, and it is determined to put tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, which would only intensify the conflict. For the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, nuclear weapons were to be stationed beyond the borders of Russia.¹ Thus, it appeared that the threat of a full-scale nuclear war was greater than it was when the conflict first broke out. India's ability to strike a balance between the West and Russia is impacted by the recent "no limits partnership" between China and Russia, which signalled a shift in geopolitical dynamics. The world then became more divided as a result, much like during the Cold War. Nonetheless, India has steadfastly remained non-aligned and, as in the past, appears uninterested in the possibility of another bipolarity. It became rational to side with the West when China, an ambitious power and possible threat, appears to be strategically coupled with Russia, an established and dependable ally. However, India is still dedicated to establishing a global order of dialogue and multilateralism where nations uphold mutual respect. India, then, bore this nagging burden since it oversaw the G20 proceedings.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), worldwide food prices may have at a certain point increased by as much as 20 percent due to the war,² and as a consequence, the malnourished population in Africa and elsewhere would rise from 7.6 to 13.1 million children who will lack sufficient food. Although they will be the ones suffering, in theory, the fight has little to do with them since it is taking place on another continent. This indicated the global ramifications of the Ukraine War. The crisis is also clearly having an effect on Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the Indian subcontinent, as seen by the spike in fuel and commodities prices amid political unrest.³ Therefore, it is not a feasible option to act as though India has the right to ignore this situation. The effects of the Eurasian War on the rest of the world are readily apparent and measurable.

The G20: Evolution and Significance

After the 1997–1998 Asian Financial Crisis, major economies realised they needed to talk about the global financial system. As a result, in 1999 the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting was initiated by the G-8 finance ministers. The purpose of the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors' meeting was to promote collaboration amongst the main participants in the global financial system on crucial issues pertaining to monetary and economic policy as well as to advance steady and robust global economic growth that benefits all nations.

The G20 has developed into a far more inclusive forum, despite its initial establishment which was formally as an economic forum for the discussion of financial matters. Its focus has expanded to include geopolitical and climatic issues. Its effective size and makeup, as well as the UN's persistent failure to resolve disputes like the one in Ukraine, may be contributing causes to its growing geopolitical importance.⁴ The G20 forum has the dual advantage of representing a significant proportion of the world's economic output and population, while also being sufficiently condensed to facilitate face-to-face, comprehensive dialogues that can effectively respond to the evolving concerns of the global agenda. Therefore, the current iteration of the G20 is remarkable as it is being held at a time when the stability of the world economy has become precarious due to geopolitical issues. Many have even started to perceive the G20 as an alternative to the UN in promoting international peace and cooperation, or at least as a meaningful facilitator in this regard.

¹ "Putin's nuclear doom for Ukraine? First Deployment outside Russia since fall of the USSR," WION, <https://www.msn.com/en-in/video/watch/putin-s-nuclear-doom-for-ukraine-first-deployment-outside-russia-since-fall-of-the-ussr-details/vi-AA1bI6wU?ocid=msedgdp&pc=U531&cvid=d7d303617278440a9a2b7f82f050f942&ei=64>, accessed on 26.05.2023.

² Gus Trompiz, "Food prices hit record high in March, U.N. agency says," REUTERS, April 8, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/food-prices-surge-new-record-high-march-un-agency-says-2022-04-08/>, accessed on 31.05.2023.

³ Peter Apps, "View: Ukraine's war brings crisis to Sri Lanka and Pakistan, opportunity for India," The Economic Times, May 13, 2022, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/view-ukraine-war-brings-crisis-to-sri-lanka-pakistan-opportunity-for-india/articleshow/91520833.cms>, accessed on 31.05.2023.

⁴ David L. Smith, "Letter: United Nations a toothless tiger," Amarillo Globe-News, April 11, 2022, <https://www.amarillo.com/story/opinion/2022/04/11/letter-editor-united-nations-toothless-tiger/7275991001/>, accessed on 30.05.2023.

Svetlana Lukash, the Russian G20 Sherpa, and EmineDzhaparova, the Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister, have both at various times praised India's leadership and expressed their hopes for India to use its Presidency to address the current issue.⁵ Both countries were trying to get support from the G20, which has put India in a challenging situation. In this sense, the present G20 meetings in India continue to centre around Russia's aggression against Ukraine. India's potential to become a key player in resolving the aforementioned problems largely depends on the conditions that enhance its capacity for leadership.

Factors Conducive to India's Rise as a Leader

Certain factors have helped India solidify its rise and secure an elevated stature in recent times.

1. Not only is India the biggest democracy in the world, but it has surpassed China in population as well. India now has a twofold advantage as a result. Other democratic nations embrace it ideologically. Its newfound status as the most populous nation also has significant demographic implications. Its actions should have greater clout than before and bolster India's argument for a permanent spot on the United Nations Security Council.
2. The Indian economy is amongst the five largest in the world. As of 2022, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had exceeded USD 3.5 trillion and is positioned to maintain its status as the G20 country with the fastest rate of growth in the coming years.⁶
3. In addition, the Indian financial system has undergone a substantial change as a result of RBI efforts like the UPI (Unified Payment Interface). It has attracted attention from other countries as well, which has resulted in its acceptance in other areas. To encourage the use of UPI abroad, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Ministry of Finance, and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) have recently signed agreements with a number of countries. Numerous nations have embraced various Indian payment methods, including the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, France, Oman, Indonesia, and Bhutan. The European region has recently adopted the payment procedures of India.⁷
4. India's foreign policy has largely been one of diplomatic and peaceful collaboration. India has rarely launched an invasion or been the initial aggressor in any of its armed wars with other nations, at least not in its recent past. This is advantageous for India's standing as a benevolent nation.
5. India has persisted in speaking out for and representing the interests of the Global South. Prime Minister Modi mentioned that there is currently a major interruption in the global supply chain for petroleum, food, fertiliser, and pharmaceuticals during his speech at the 3rd India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) Summit held in Papua New Guinea. He said that the Global South should come together since their reliance on rich countries left them vulnerable, as it did during the COVID outbreak.⁸ James Marape, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea reciprocated by calling India the Global South's leader and assured its support of India's leadership at the international level.
6. Prime Minister Modi's popularity and his commitment to connect with the Indian diaspora have the potential to contribute towards India's economic progress, and the advancement of India's wider global objectives.⁹ Moreover, the increasing relevance of Eurasian and Indo-Pacific politics puts India at a strategic and crucial position. This is likely to increase the heft of India's foreign policy in the conduct of its G20 Presidency and beyond.

⁵Shubhjit Roy, "India's G20 Presidency is extraordinary, we support all priorities put forward by it", *The Indian Express*, April 1, 2023, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/indias-g20-presidency-is-extraordinary-we-support-all-priorities-put-forward-by-it-8531443/>, accessed on 30.05.2023.

"Ukraine minister leaves Delhi in a spot, says Zelenskyy will be happy to address G20 meet," *The Indian Express*, April 12, 2023.

⁶"India's GDP Crossed USD 3.5 Trillion In 2022, But Bureaucracy...: Moody's," *NDTV Profit*, May 23, 2023, <https://www.ndtv.com/business/india-gdp-crossed-usd-3-5-trillion-in-2022-but-bureaucracy-moodys-4059466>, accessed on 29.05.2023.

⁷"India's UPI for Payments: List of Countries Adopting UPI," *DIPLMACY & BEYOND*, November 24, 2022, <https://diplomacybeyond.com/indias-upi-for-payments-list-of-countries-adopting-upi/>, accessed on 30.05.2023.

⁸"Those we trusted, didn't stand with us when needed...: PM Modi in Papua New Guinea", *INDIA TODAY*, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pm-modi-in-papua-new-guinea-global-south-vulnerable-pacific-island-countries-support-2382403-2023-05-22>, accessed on 30.05.2023.

⁹C. Raja Mohan, "Narendra Modi and the Diaspora: From the Indian to South Asian," *The Indian Express*, January 8, 2017, <https://indianexpress.com/article/blogs/narendra-modi-and-the-diaspora-from-the-indian-to-south-asian-4464913/>, accessed on 30.05.2023.

Challenges and Issues

With all of the positive attributes that India possesses, it nevertheless is posed with a set of obstacles it must overcome to further its ambitious global agenda. India must champion democracy and prove itself by exemplifying its own ideals by resolving key domestic issues before it starts preaching to the world.¹⁰ The Modi Government's questionable use of UAPA, the recent controversies surrounding CAA, increased levels of religious prosecution, the Pegasus Spyware issue, and the sudden resort to expulsion of opponents from Parliament have attracted international scrutiny and criticism especially from other democracies.

India's youthful population is encouraging, but there is still an issue with unemployment, and there needs to be remedies to support economic growth. Given that more than 65 percent of India's population is working age, the nation has the potential to become an economic superpower.¹¹ India may provide a significant share of Asia's labour force in the ensuing decades. It will need significant expenditures in education and skill development, as well as the creation of employment prospects for the workforce, to fully realise the promise of this demographic dividend.

India is constantly faced with challenges and attempts to be undermined by geopolitical rivals such as China and Pakistan. They had chosen not to attend the Kashmir G20 Tourism Meeting. Turkey and Saudi Arabia also refrained, which could have had an impact on India's efforts to hold a coherent G20 summit.¹² So India had to maintain a mindful approach to ongoing bilateral contentions to the degree that they could have disrupted the proper conduct of other upcoming meetings.¹³

The G20 must continue to be inclusive, impartial, and devoid of bias or exclusivity lest it degenerate into a dysfunctional, unproductive forum. If it loses its prominence, there would be less chance of a peaceful multipolar global order. The G20 summit in New Delhi earlier in March failed to result in an agreement among participants over the Ukraine issue. Since India is one of the few large powers that has managed to maintain cordial diplomatic relations with both Russia and the West, this has made India's role as a balancer even more crucial. A peaceful international community will be unlikely if centrifugal pressures cause the G20 to become an indecisive body. As its President, India has a responsibility to uphold multilateralism.

India's diplomatic efforts must be strengthened, and as a result, the External Affairs Ministry must be expanded too. The Ministry lacks personnel, as do Indian embassies overseas, and the function of diplomats has evolved throughout time. The opportunity to compete with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has a far larger workforce, is a significant incentive in this regard. In comparison to India's EAM, it also receives a far larger quantity of funding. The EAM has been allotted Rs. 18,050 crore in the Union Budget for the financial year 2023–2024.¹⁴ This amount is roughly one fifth of what China allocated to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2022.¹⁵ In addition, India has experienced a significant turning point in its history during the G20 Presidency, and this would probably spur the nation to advance in world politics by forcing it to reorganise its EAM and discover new avenues for assiduously pursuing its foreign policy interests long after the meetings are ended. India's foreign policy involvement has grown significantly, sometimes very quickly. To leverage the existing multilateral prospects, India

¹⁰D Raja, "The G20 hypocrisy: Government's rhetoric about democracy and diversity is in contrast to its policies," *Indian Express*, May 20, 2023.

¹¹"India Population Distribution in 2021, by Age," *GlobalData*, <https://www.globaldata.com/data-insights/macroeconomic/india-population-distribution-in-by-age/>, accessed on 31.05.2023.

¹²"India hosts G20 tourism meet in Kashmir under heavy security," *ALJAZEERA*, 22 May, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/22/india-hosts-g20-tourism-meet-in-kashmir-under-heavy-security>, accessed on 30.05.2023.

¹³"RAISING THE BAR: SCO, G20 presidencies offer Delhi opportunity to demonstrate its stature. It must not let bilateral tensions cast a shadow," *The Indian Express*, May 8, 2023, p. 10.

¹⁴"MEA gets Rs. 18,050 crore in Union Budget for 2023-24," *The Economic Times*, February 1, 2023, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/mea-gets-rs-18050-crore-in-union-budget-for-2023-24/articleshow/97531042.cms>, accessed on 31.05.2023.

¹⁵"Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022 Budget," *CSET*, July 14, 2022, <https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-2022-budget/>, accessed on 31.05.2023.

might also contemplate devoting funds to the formation of a proficient team of negotiators, thus augmenting its presence and clout in global fora.¹⁶

Conclusion:-

One can look back at the year 2023 and assuredly state that it was the year of Indian diplomacy. Apart from the G20, India chaired over other important platforms such as the SCO, and is a crucial part of groupings such as BRICS and the Quad. In the majority of international disputes involving major nations, it plays a crucial role. The challenges and complications are genuine; in order to promote and popularise the notion of India as a figurehead, or "Vishwa Guru," it is also necessary for it to address domestic problems and maintain perspective on its own affairs. If this is not done, India's diplomatic momentum could be hampered and weaknesses exposed. These duties, however, provide India plenty of cause for optimism as they offer an opportunity to avoid a pointless zero-sum game and contribute to the defusing of apparent tensions in international relations. India will surely aid in the creation and upkeep of a geopolitically stable multipolar world if it is successful in this quest.

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