

Changes in India's Foreign Policy

What is the issue?

This article talks about the changes in India's foreign policy in the year 2022, which was a difficult year for India on the geopolitical and diplomatic stage.

How did India handle the Ukraine crisis?

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022.
- For India, the choices grew more difficult, given its strategic ties with the U.S. and Europe and traditional ties with Russia.
- The war in Ukraine saw India spell out its [version of "non-alignment"](#) as India sought to keep a balance in the growing polarisation between the U.S. and the European Union on one side, and Russia on the other.
- A sanctions by the West meant to target the Russian economy led to food and fuel shortages and price increases, which worried India.
- But, India refused to accept a slew of western sanctions, growing military and oil trade with Russia, and seeking rupee-based payment mechanisms to facilitate them.
- The most significant defence of India's foreign policy was made by India's External Affairs Minister, who called out western "hypocrisy" on Russian oil flows to India.
- In more than a dozen resolutions at the UNSC, UNGA, IAEA, Human Rights Commission, and other multilateral platforms seeking to censure Russia for the invasion and humanitarian crisis, India chose to abstain.

What were the other highlights in foreign policy in 2022?

- The year was marked in many ways for Indian diplomacy, which will be at the forefront in 2023, during
 1. India's presidency of the G-20 and
 2. India's chairship of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#) (SCO).
- In 2022, India returned to Free Trade Agreements, after a hiatus of several years when the government had called for
 1. Review of all FTAs,
 2. Scrapped all Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and
 3. Walked out of the 15-nation Asian Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
- In 2022, India signed trade agreements with the UAE and Australia, and hopes to progress on talks with the EU, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Canada for others.
- India joined the U.S.-led [Indo-Pacific Economic Forum](#) (IPEF), although it later decided to stay out of trade talks.
- At the G-20, India may highlight climate change transitions, women-led development and multilateral reform, among other key issues.

What about ties with neighbours?

- In the neighbourhood, India's foreign policy was marked by
 1. economic assistance to Sri Lanka in the midst of its collapse, and
 2. regional trade and energy agreements with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal that could see a South Asian energy grid emerge.
- India has strengthened ties with Central Asian countries on connectivity.
- The government kept channels open with repressive regimes like Afghanistan's Taliban and the Myanmar Junta
 - India opened a "technical mission" in Kabul (Afghanistan) and
 - India sent its foreign secretary to Nay Pyi Taw (Myanmar) to discuss border cooperation.
- India abstained on a UNSC vote calling for Myanmar to end violence and release political prisoners.
- With Iran, India has steered clear of any criticism about the protests against the killing of activist Mahsa Amini.
- However, with Pakistan, ties remain flat-lined.

Has there been any progress on the LAC stand-off with China?

- The stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has been ongoing since April 2020.
- Despite disengagement at some stand-off points, India-China tensions at the Line of Actual Control remained high.
- The year 2022 ended with an unsuccessful Chinese PLA attempt to take Indian posts at Yangtse in Arunachal Pradesh, signalling more such violent clashes could follow in 2023.
- Regardless of the fraught state of ties, India is due to host Mr. Xi twice in 2023, at the G-20 and SCO summits, which could create opportunities for talks to end the stand-off.

Reference

[The Hindu Explained | Have there been changes in India's foreign policy?](#)