

Indo-Russia Strategic Partnership



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ABSTRACT

India and Russia are the world's outstanding examples of pluralistic, multi-denominational societies with a deeply rooted tradition of tolerance and constructive co-existence between different faith and beliefs of great internal diversity, combined with a strong sense of national and cultural unity, operating in a federal political framework. This makes for common elements in national ethos and perceptions and some common vulnerabilities as well. This dimension has also enriched the cultural heritage of both countries and helped cultural empathy. Another common element of fundamental importance is that both countries are democracies with a commitment to freedom of speech, assembly, free press and a strong Parliament and judiciary.

Keywords: India, Russia, Military, defence, arms and weapons

Introduction

There are only few examples of a relationship between countries that has been as stable as the one between India and Russia. Despite the momentous changes in the international environment following to the end of cold war, there remains a continued convergence of interests that makes it advantageous for both India and Russia to maintain close ties. Indo-Russian relations are somewhat unique and they have moved from strengths to strength emerging from the womb of Indo-Soviet relations, they have been witness to numerous turning points in the political life of two countries as well the transformation of the global system of international relations. The reason lies in the basic facts that both the countries have needed each other, needing cooperation to their identical national interests which are essentially political and strategic in nature.

Both have large and rapidly growing economies with very substantial human and natural resources augmented by new strengths generated through reform and liberalization, emergence of active entrepreneurship and strong science and technology traditions and capabilities. All this create large and significant possibilities for mutually beneficial political, economic, strategic and science and technology, defence and military technology cooperation. The study of two important aspects is essential in the intimacy of Indo-Russian bilateral relations. First, their cooperation in economic, defence development, security on regional and international level with each other is relevant. Secondly, to know the common regional and international challenges towards them on which they have a

common approach.

In the post-cold war era, Indo-Russian relations started on a low profile, as Russia was busy in developing in balanced approach in South Asia. Besides it, due to the continued pragmatism of Gorbachev era, Indian continent still occupies one of the last places in the priority list of Russian foreign policy. This was very much evident from the concept of "Russian Federation's foreign policy" released in the end of 1992. But a new beginning in the process of change started only after the visit of President Yeltsin to India in January 1993. The signing of 10 agreements, including the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and resolving the long pending issue of debt repayment between the two normalized, their ties and tilted Russia's balance in South-Asia in favour of India.

Moreover the period of 1993-1995 can be regarded as turning point in Russia's national development. The changes in Russian foreign policy towards India become more significant with the coming of Yevgany Primakov as Foreign Minister in January 1996. In the above changed context along with the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 28 January 1993; Declaration of further Development and Enhancement of Cooperation on 30 June 1994; and the Moscow Declaration on the projection of interests of Pluralistic States worked as important factor in building strategic relationship between the two countries. However, Russian Prime Minister Yevgany Primakov's visit to India after the Pokhran II from 20-22 December 1998 strengthens their further cooperation. The formal strategic partnership agreement between India and Russia was signed during the visit of Russian President Putin to India in

2000. This has taken Indo-Russian ties to new heights. In November 2001, Moscow visit of Prime Minister Vajpayee resulted in further deepening of close relations between India and Russia. The two countries signed the Declaration on international Terrorism, which condemns the double standards approach towards act of terrorism.

The improvement or strengthening of their bilateral ties is manifested through their cooperation in political and strategic cooperation on regional and international level, and that is the base of their cooperation in other fields. In recent past important leaders of both countries visited each other and these visits signify the emerging commonalities between India and Russia on issues of vital interest. Both sides confirmed their determination to contribute to the establishment of a just multi polar world, based on the principle of respect of removing threats to international peace and security. Both have a sound will that UN must be more powerful and democratic in its mechanism and it should ensure to establish peace and security in international arena. Both deadily opposed the US administration through UN; intervention in sovereign states on the name of humanitarian doctrine. Both sides signed the necessity of continuing reforms in the UN Security Council with a view of making it more representative and effect in its approach. Besides it, Russia reaffirmed its support to India as a deserving and strong candidate for the permanent membership in expanded UN Security Council.

India and Russia have pledged to work for a multipolar global structure based on sovereign equality of all states and people's democratic values and justice. This was also repeated by the Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee in his addressed to the 'Russian Science Academy' on 12 November 2003, when he observed that Indo-Russian relations have helped the US to "evolve a comprehensive vision" in promoting peace, security and stability both in Asia and the World. Thus both the countries deeply advocated for the establishment of a multipolar world as an unavoidable trend for the welfare of world peace and oppose to any country seeking any kind of unilateralism and hegemonism in the post-cold war era. India and Russia are building their cooperation through improvement of their relations with China and both acknowledge that a 'Strategic Triangle' among India-Russia-China is required to promote peace and stability in Asia.

Thus strategic partnership has enhanced and strengthened the sound political cooperation between the two countries. Despite the disintegration of former USSR, India and Russia are still major partners in defence deals. In 1991, India was dependent in a big way on Soviet arms i.e. 65% for its Army; 80% for its Air Force

and 85 % for its Navy. This is still continuing either in the form of supply of spares for old Soviet arms or purchase of new technologically advanced weapons. The tempo of acquisition has progressively increased as indicated in the large items such as T-90 tanks, frigates, Sukhoi aircraft and the purchase of aircraft carrier admiral Gorshkov. Average annual acquisitions over the last 10 years are estimated at US \$ 1 billion. The prospective purchases will enhance this figure. A vitally important dimension of defence cooperation is that it is no longer a mere buyer/seller relationship. But it involves increasing extent technology transfer as well as joint design, development, production and marketing.

An example of this principle is the Brahmos Missile developed by an Indo-Russian joint venture with the objective of increasing efficiency and intensifying our military technical cooperation, a ministerial level inter-governmental commission for 'Military Technical Cooperation' was set up in 2000, and it has provided guidance and coordination. In April 2003, their joint naval exercise in the Indian Ocean is a clear index of their defence collaboration. It is widely recognized that India and Russia defence cooperation meet not only India's security needs, but has also contributed to stability.

Among the high points for cooperation was the joint space flight in 1984. Since then India has built very substantial launch capability of its own as demonstrated in the polar and Geo Stationary Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and (GSLV), India is ready to develop new areas of cooperation. An Interagency Memorandum of understanding on space cooperation was signed during the visit of the Prime Minister of India in November 2003, and President Putin to India in December 2004, the following two bilateral documents were signed: First, agreement on cooperation in the study and use of space for peaceful purpose and second, agreement on long term cooperation in joint development and use of the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) for peaceful purpose.

Cooperation in the field of energy is yet another area of great potentiality and mutual interest. Russia is among the world's leading producers and suppliers of energy. India is one of the largest and fastest growing markets for energy. Successful cooperation in the Sakhalin -1 and Kudankulam Project underlines the synergy in this sector. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Moscow in December 2005, marks the opening of what promises to be an exciting new chapter in the energy cooperation between India and Russia. On the hydrocarbon front, Moscow has welcomed New Delhi's interest in picking up not just a share of the Sakhalin-3 Oil Project but also enquiry in

a major state-owned energy like Rosneft. There is talk of India and Russia joining hands in oil and gas exploration and extraction in other region, particularly, Central Asia.

Both sides are determined to continue their cooperation in the field of nuclear energy, incorporating, innovating technologies to ensure energy security with due regard to their commitment to non-proliferation norms. The both sides also recognize the considerable scope for cooperation in the hydroelectric and thermal power sectors. Both sides have also agreed to encourage and assist investment in the energy sector by Indian companies in Russia and those by Russian companies in this sector in India.

Conclusion

Besides it, India and Russia confirm that international terrorism, religious extremism, separation and secessionism, trans-border organized crime and illicit trafficking of arms are a growing serious threat to international peace, security and stability. They stressed the importance of strict implementation of UNSC reso-

lutions on the fight against terrorism. Both sides declared their determination to enhance collective bilateral efforts to prevent and suppress terrorism and both have signed a MoU on combating international terrorism. Finally strong factor bringing the two countries closer and work together against it.

Though economic factor has acquired primary in the post-cold war global politics, yet the Indo-Russian partnership could not grow to the level of their cooperation in defence and political area. This is evident from Indo-Russian trade and joint ventures run by both the countries. A look at Indo-Russian trade data given below reveals this factor in the more explicit manner.

The Indo-Russian cooperation seems to be steadily progressing in a positive direction. Both countries shared a long-term national and geo-political interests and their common stand on crucial global and regional problems. The healthy bilateral relations of these two states create a hope that their common footing on burning issues will lead them to promising future.

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