

# **India – Russia Bilateral Relations (2000-2016): An Analytical Study**

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By  
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## **Certified that the thesis entitled**

**India-Russia Bilateral Relations (2000 – 2016): An Analytical Study submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Dr. Herkan Neadan Toppo, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University. And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.**

Counter signed by the

Supervisor:

Dated:

Candidate:

Dated:

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## **List of Abbreviations**

|         |                                                                                |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AI      | Artificial Intelligence                                                        |
| AWACS   | Airborne Warning and Control System                                            |
| BHEL    | Bharat Electronics Limited                                                     |
| BHEL    | Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited                                               |
| BIMSTEC | Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation |
| BRI     | Belt Road Initiative                                                           |
| BRICS   | Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa                                  |
| CAATSA  | Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act                          |
| CAR     | Central Asian Region                                                           |
| CAT     | Climate Action Tracker                                                         |
| CCAP    | Connect Central Asia Policy                                                    |
| CECA    | Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement                                   |
| CENTO   | Central Treaty Organization                                                    |
| CIS     | Commonwealth of Independent States                                             |
| CPEC    | China Pakistan Economic Corridor                                               |
| DPIIT   | Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade                        |
| DPP     | Defence Procurement Procedure                                                  |
| EAEU    | Eurasian Economic Union                                                        |
| ECGC    | Export Credit Guarantee Corporation                                            |
| EU      | European Union                                                                 |
| FAO     | Food and Agriculture Organization                                              |
| FATF    | Financial Action Task Force                                                    |
| FDI     | Foreign Direct Investment                                                      |
| FNSR    | Foundation for National Security Research                                      |
| FTA     | Free Trade Agreement                                                           |
| G20     | Group of Twenty                                                                |
| GDP     | Gross Domestic Product                                                         |
| GHG     | Greenhouse Gas                                                                 |
| GHI     | Global Hunger Index                                                            |
| HAL     | Hindustan Aeronautics Limited                                                  |
| IAF     | Indian Air Force                                                               |
| IMF     | International Monetary Fund                                                    |

|           |                                                                                                                   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IMU       | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan                                                                                    |
| INCB      | International Narcotics Control Board                                                                             |
| INSTC     | International North South Transport Corridor                                                                      |
| IRIGC-MTC | India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation                                      |
| IRIGC-TEC | India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation |
| IRNSS     | Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System                                                                       |
| ISI       | Inter-Services Intelligence                                                                                       |
| ISIS/IS   | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria                                                                                   |
| IS-K      | Islamic State Khorasan                                                                                            |
| IT        | Information Technology                                                                                            |
| JeM       | Jaish-e-Muhammad                                                                                                  |
| JSG       | Joint Study Group                                                                                                 |
| JuD       | Jamaat-ud-Dawa                                                                                                    |
| KNPP      | Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant                                                                                    |
| LAC       | Line of Actual Control                                                                                            |
| LeT       | Lashkar-e-Taiba                                                                                                   |
| LRSAM     | Long Range Surface to Air Missile                                                                                 |
| MIC       | Military Industrial Complex                                                                                       |
| MMRCA     | Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft                                                                                 |
| MoU       | Memorandum of Understanding                                                                                       |
| MRSAM     | Medium Range Surface to Air Missile                                                                               |
| MTCR      | Missile Control Technology Regime                                                                                 |
| NAM       | Non-Aligned Movement                                                                                              |
| NATO      | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                                                                                |
| NavIC     | Navigation with Indian Constellation                                                                              |
| NCB       | Narcotics Control Bureau                                                                                          |
| NCRB      | National Crime Records Bureau                                                                                     |
| NDB       | New Development Bank                                                                                              |
| NIIF      | National Investment and Infrastructure Fund                                                                       |
| NPCIL     | Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited                                                                        |
| NPT       | Non-Proliferation Treaty                                                                                          |
| NSG       | Nuclear Suppliers Group                                                                                           |
| OECD      | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development                                                            |

|        |                                                                       |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OEM    | Original Equipment Manufacturer                                       |
| ONGC   | Oil and Natural Gas Corporation                                       |
| OSCE   | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe                  |
| PLA    | People's Liberation Army                                              |
| PPI    | Paris Pact Initiative                                                 |
| R&D    | Research and Development                                              |
| RATS   | Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure                                     |
| RCEP   | Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership                           |
| RDIF   | Russia Direct Investment Fund                                         |
| RFE    | Russian Far East                                                      |
| RIC    | Russia-India-China                                                    |
| SCO    | Shanghai Cooperation Organization                                     |
| SEATO  | Southeast Asia Treaty Organization                                    |
| SEZ    | Special Economic Zone                                                 |
| SIPRI  | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute                      |
| SP     | Strategic Partnership                                                 |
| SPIEF  | St. Petersburg International Economic Forum                           |
| TAPI   | Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline project              |
| TIP    | Turkestan Islamic Party                                               |
| TIV    | Trend-Indicator Value                                                 |
| UN     | United Nations                                                        |
| UNCCIT | United Nations Comprehensive Convention on International<br>Terrorism |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development                    |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change                 |
| UNGA   | United Nations General Assembly                                       |
| UNODC  | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                              |
| UNSC   | United Nations Security Council                                       |
| US     | United States                                                         |
| USSR   | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics                                   |
| WHO    | World Health Organization                                             |
| WMD    | Weapons of Mass Destruction                                           |
| WTO    | World Trade Organization                                              |

# CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The year 2000 can be regarded as an important landmark in the history of India-Russia relations since the end of Cold War. This was the year when the Declaration of Strategic Partnership was signed which gave a stimulus to the relations that suffered various vicissitudes of geopolitical changes in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Soviet Union in 1991. The events of 1991 proved to be a litmus test for both India and Russia as there were discernible changes in the foreign policy orientations of both the countries. On one hand, the newly independent state of Russia was beset by various internal problems trying to shed off its communist past and transforming itself into a market-economy. Embarking on a phase of unprecedented economic reforms President Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev emphasized the need for developing relations with the West. Kozyrev was convinced of the fact that Russia and the West are ‘natural friends’ and that a partnership between them is necessary for the formation of a ‘democratic, open Russian state and the transformation of an unstable, post-confrontational world into a stable and democratic one.’<sup>1</sup> In the hierarchy of Russian foreign policy priority, Asia was ranked the lowest with India being assigned a position lower than that of South Korea and China.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in the face of the changing geopolitical and economic realities, India under the stewardship of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao undertook a journey of economic reforms for which it decided to build partnership with the West, particularly the US. Further, India also reached out to Iran and Israel in the Middle East, adopted the ‘Look East Policy’ and strived to strengthen relations with the countries of South East Asia. For Ollapally this was necessitated as India’s erstwhile trusted ally was suffering from uncertainty with regard

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<sup>1</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, “The Lagging Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs* 3, No.3 (May-June 1994): 59.

<sup>2</sup> B. M. Jain, “India and Russia: Reassessing the Time-Tested Ties,” *Pacific Affairs* 76, no. 3 (September, 2003): 379.

to its political and economic position with no coherent foreign policy strategy in place.<sup>3</sup> Such vacillations over foreign policy priorities gave way to scepticism in the hitherto special relations that the two sides enjoyed with each other. This ambiguity, however, was not a long-term affair. Growing disenchantment with the West, Yeltsin's 1993 India visit and the change of guard in Russia with Yevgeny Primakov replacing the pro-West Andrei Kozyrev infused a new spirit in Indo-Russia relations by trying to restore friendly ties between the two countries. Though both the countries realised that it would be difficult to bounce back to the Soviet era relations, they admitted the fact that there were various common factors which would help in holding the two countries together. What needs to be done is to develop new approaches and new perspectives corresponding with the changed realities. The quest for both sides was not to become allies but to become equal partners. And such an ethos ultimately culminated in the signing of the strategic partnership agreement between India and Russia during President Putin's visit to the former in the year 2000. Ties were further elevated to the status of 'special and privileged strategic partners' in 2010 thereby imparting a qualitatively new dimension to the relations.

The nature of relations that the two countries share vis-à-vis each other in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is quite different when compared to the Cold War years. The difference, though, lies not in the essence but in the nature of international environment in which the two countries find each other. Both sides, quite often than not, boast of the sense of trust and faith that they repose in each other and the various official documents have, time and again, reaffirmed the traditional ties based on convergence of interests at the regional as well as the global level. At the politico strategic level such convergence becomes all the more prominent by their preference for an equitable multipolar world

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<sup>3</sup> Deepa Ollapally, "Indo-Russia Strategic Relations: New Choices and Constraints," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 4 (December, 2002).

order based on respect for international law and the principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter. But on a broader level, a proper juxtaposition of relations of the Cold War period and that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is bound to capture some nuances that have eventually given rise to concerns regarding the current state of relations and it is in this context that the thesis has been placed. It aims to analyse, primarily, the nature of India-Russia bilateral interactions in the changing geopolitical context in order to illuminate how the two countries fit in each other's strategic outlook.

## **DYNAMICS OF RELATIONS**

At the political level relations between the two countries have, historically, been quite stable with annual summits being held alternately between India and Russia ever since the signing of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership in the year 2000. Apart from that the leaders of the two countries also meet in various multilateral forums such as the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa), RIC (Russia-India-China), SCO (Shanghai Cooperation organization) and the like and both support the establishment of a multipolar system where there will be different nodes of power competing and cooperating with each other for creating a just and stable world order. It is indeed this 'overarching common goal' that is expected to further consolidate the ties between the two.<sup>4</sup> The romanticism of the Soviet days has been replaced by pragmatism in the face of the changing geopolitical environment, yet the belief is that the 'diplomatic and political relationship between India and Russia remains as strong as ever.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan, "Despite Complex Global Power Equations, India and Russia will Maintain Good Ties in 2022," Observer Research Foundation, December 31, 2021, accessed March 1, 2022, <http://orfonline.org/research/india-and-russia-will-maintain-good-ties-in-2022/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ajay Kamalakaran, "Putting the 'Hindi-Russi Bhai-Bhai' Years into Perspective," Russia Beyond, January 11, 2017, accessed March 4, 2022, [http://rbth.com/blogs/tatar\\_straits/2017/01/11/putting-the-hindi-russi-bhai-bhai-years-into-perspective\\_677623](http://rbth.com/blogs/tatar_straits/2017/01/11/putting-the-hindi-russi-bhai-bhai-years-into-perspective_677623).

Notwithstanding the presence of an all-weather friendship between the two sides, one must not lose sight of the fact that certain issues are definitely piling up that calls for a re-think, adjustment and upgradation of relations to make it suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century circumstances.<sup>6</sup> First and foremost, even a cursory glance would reveal that the glaring weakness in the bilateral interaction lies in the economic component of the relationship. Any strategic partnership, in order to sustain on a long-term basis, requires a strong economic foundation. Yet, in case of India-Russia relations this calls for urgent attention. That the frail economic ties constitute the weakest link in the otherwise sound strategic partnership is a view that has been shared by most of the experts in this field. One study states that the economic component of the relations needs to be strengthened as economic interaction has failed to reach the desired level be it in trade, investment, technical assistance or joint production.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the most important challenge to mutual relations is the sub-optimal economic and trade linkages which fail to reflect the potential that exists and that which both the countries are trying to address on a priority basis.<sup>8</sup> Professor Arun Mohanty has pointed out that though there is tremendous potential for boosting bilateral trade and economic relations; yet both the countries have, quite unfortunately, failed to harness such potentialities.<sup>9</sup> Deshpande has called for urgent attention to the low levels of bilateral trade and he has substantiated his claims with statistics. According to him trade has only marginally increased from \$1.5 bn in the mid-nineties to \$2.75 bn in 2006. This is very nominal in contrast to both the

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<sup>6</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia-India: From Rethink to Adjust to Upgrade," Carnegie Moscow Centre, December 2, 2021, accessed February 27, 2022, <http://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/85903>

<sup>7</sup> Nirmala Joshi, "India and Russia: Enduring Partnership," *India Quarterly* 58, no. 3-4 (July, 2002): 125.

<sup>8</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "India-Russia Ties and India's Strategic Culture: Dominance of a Realist Worldview," *India Review* 12, no.1 (January, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Arun Mohanty, "Indo-Russian Trade and Economic Cooperation: The Way Ahead," In *India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Common Perspectives*, ed. P. Stobdan, (Delhi: Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, 2010).

countries' bilateral trade with China.<sup>10</sup> Though a target of US\$30 bn has been set to be achieved by the year 2025, yet going by the current statistics, which shows that trade has hovered around merely US\$10bn (data derived from ITC Trade Map, Geneva)<sup>11</sup>, prospects do not seem to be too bright. Such dismal trade figures can be attributed to various factors like lack of proper transportation facilities, poor structural mechanisms, too much dependence on government-to-government mechanisms and bureaucratic delays.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, Russia's importance for India in certain areas can in no way be underestimated, the most important being that of defence. Not only does a major portion of India's defence arsenal consists of weapons of Soviet/Russian-origin, Russia has been the only country that has provided India with high-end weapons and sophisticated technologies. Though India has, in the recent past, diversified its import resourcing weapons from the US, Israel and France, yet a study has shown that around 80 percent of India's arms arsenal consists of Russian weapons. Such arms transfers have proved quite beneficial for India in the sense of modernizing the Indian military and also advancing its strategic arsenal.<sup>13</sup> However, one thing that must be noted here is that even during the Soviet times though Soviet Union was the largest supplier of weapons for India, yet it was not the country capturing the Indian defence market.<sup>14</sup> Germany, France and, to some extent, Israel was also there. So, the practice of importing armaments from a number of

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<sup>10</sup> Sanjay Deshpande, "India and Russia: Mismatch of Potentials and Performances in Economic Ties," In *Significance of Indo-Russian Relations in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. V. D. Chopra (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> ITC Trade Map, accessed January 13, 2022, <https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>.

<sup>12</sup> Divyanshu Jindal, "Can India-Russia Trade Triple by 2025?" *Modern Diplomacy*, September 10, 2021, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2021/09/10/can-india-russia-trade-triple-by-2025/>.

<sup>13</sup> Sameer Lalwani et.al, "The Influence of Arms: Explaining the Durability of India-Russia Alignment," *The Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 4, no. 1 (January, 2021): 21.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Weitz, "The Maturing of Russia-India Defence Relations," *Journal of Defence Studies* 6, no. 3 (2012).

sources can be seen as an extension of India's long-term policy of import diversification. Nevertheless, with the growing financial clout, India is always looking for high-ended weapons with cutting edge technologies in order to strengthen its security readiness, notwithstanding the cost factor. Therefore, it indulges in the practice of procuring weapons from other countries, particularly the US, only in those categories where Russia lacks the necessary comparative advantage.<sup>15</sup> The over-dependence of India on Russian equipment, however, has also attracted criticism from scholars like Jerome M. Conley who argued that 'overreliance on Soviet military hardware had allowed India to postpone developing a self-reliant indigenous defence industry.'<sup>16</sup> Some others have claimed that though the Soviet weapons have proved to be of immense benefit to India, yet the problem of maintenance and spare parts continue to bedevil the relationship.<sup>17</sup> And this is also cited as one of the reasons for India's diversification policy.

These contradictions notwithstanding, the most important factor that has inspired worries among scholars is the changing foreign policy perspectives of India and Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, for Vasily Shikin<sup>18</sup> the diverging approaches of the two countries towards US, China and Pakistan and the broader Eurasian geostrategic space constitutes the greatest challenge in the near future. Particularly, after the 2014 Crimean fiasco with Russia inclining more towards China and India strengthening its

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<sup>15</sup> Konstantin Makienko, "Where does India's strategic and defence relationship with Russia stand in a world of two superpowers?" *The Economic Times*, July 13, 2018, accessed October 30, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/where-does-indias-strategic-defence-relationship-with-russia-stand-in-a-world-of-two-superpowers/articleshow/50407554.cms>.

<sup>16</sup> Jerome M. Conley, *Indo-Russian Military and Nuclear Cooperation: Lessons and Options for U.S. Policy in South Asia* (Maryland: Lexington, 2001), 62.

<sup>17</sup> Jyotsna Bakshi, "India-Russia Defence Cooperation," *Strategic Analysis* 30, No. 2 (April-June 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Vasily Shikin, "Russia-India Strategic Partnership: Crisis of Understanding?" *Russian International Affairs Council*, November 18, 2019, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/russia-india-strategic-partnership-crisis-of-understanding/>.

ties with the US, claims of a complex shift in relations have been doing rounds in both Indian and Russian circles. Particularly, experts like Rajeswari Rajagopalan and Dmitry Frolovskiy have expressed serious doubts regarding the future trajectory of India-Russia relations given the tactical gaps that have appeared in their respective foreign policy approaches. For Rajagopalan, notwithstanding the perennial reiteration of the ‘time-tested and resilient’ nature of the partnership at the official levels, an analysis of current geopolitical dynamics clearly displays some glaring cracks in the relationship. Beginning with the cancellation (for the first time) of the 2020 Indo-Russia annual summit to the reservations of Russia regarding the Quad platform and the idea of the Indo-Pacific as well as the Russian sales of high-end weaponry to China- all these point to the hard fact that all might not be well in the bilateral relations.<sup>19</sup> Similar views have been echoed by Frolovskiy for whom the rise of China, the economic stagnation of Russia as well as the various international sanctions to which it has been subject, presents an imminent challenge to the bilateral ties between India and Russia. Besides, in order to assert its strong position in the international system as well as in its pursuit of ‘India first’ goal in its foreign relations, India will continue to diversify its political relations without making any special exception for the Kremlin.<sup>20</sup> For experts like C. Raja Mohan, the divergent viewpoints that both the countries hold on certain regional issues, particularly in case of Afghanistan, was literally unthinkable in the past.<sup>21</sup> And this divergence revolves mostly around Pakistan, a view also shared by Nandan

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<sup>19</sup> Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “Did Lavrov’s India Trip Reset India-Russia Ties?” *The Diplomat*, April 9, 2021, accessed March 15, 2022, <http://thediplomat.com/2021/04/did-lavrovs-india-trip-reset-india-russia-ties/>.

Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “Why Did Russian President Putin Visit India?” *The Diplomat*, December 14, 2021, accessed March 15, 2022, <http://thediplomat.com/2021/12/why-did-russian-president-putin-visit-india/>.

<sup>20</sup> Dmitry Frolovskiy, “The Coming India-Russia Split,” *The Diplomat*, January 9, 2018, accessed March 14, 2022, <http://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-coming-india-russia-split>.

<sup>21</sup> C. Raja Mohan, “Are Indo-Russian Ties the Next Casualty of Great-Power Shifts?” *Foreign Policy*, September 7, 2021, accessed February 20, 2022, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/07/india-russia-modi-putin-geopolitics-china-pakistan-afghanistan-brics/>.

Unnikrishnan.<sup>22</sup> Russia views the Afghan issue in terms of its security and strategic interests in Central Asia and regards Pakistan as an important player in the region having a significant leverage over the Taliban. Such an outreach to Pakistan on part of Moscow has created much discomfort in New Delhi which seeks to check the role of Islamabad in Kabul's internal affairs. In addition, Moscow's flirtation with the Taliban has also been deeply disconcerting for India, though eventually Moscow's exaltation has been replaced by a sense of pragmatism which has brought the two sides closer 'even though some nuances may remain.'<sup>23</sup>

From the above discussion, it becomes quite clear that the issue of a widening strategic gap has been the main focal point in most of prevalent literature on India-Russia relations in the post-Cold War era. Placing in this context, the thesis aims to analyse the nature of bilateral ties at the political, economic and strategic level by exploring the elements that are actually helping in sustaining the relationship, the areas in which the relationship seems to be vulnerable and the ways in which these can be worked on.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Whereas some changes can be witnessed in the nature of bilateral relations, this thesis argues that the time is not ripe so as to sound the death knell of the so-called 'time-tested' relations. In order to bring home this point, the research draws on a range of data sources including India-Russia official documents and statements as well as policy-makers' media briefings. It has also consulted relevant scholarship and commentary by experts close to Indian and Russian policy making. This research is basically a

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<sup>22</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan, "Tactical gaps in Indo-Russia ties despite Putin-Modi's bonhomie," Observer Research Foundation, June 5, 2017, accessed February 27, 2022, <http://orfonline.org/research/tactical-gaps-in-india-russia-ties-despite-putin-modi-bonhomie>.

<sup>23</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan, "What Putin's visit means for India-Russia ties," Observer Research Foundation, June 5, 2017, accessed March 15, 2022, <http://orfonline.org/research/what-putins-visit-means-for-india-russia-ties/>.

qualitative one based on historical, analytical and descriptive methods with statistics being used in some areas requiring quantification. During the entire period of my research I have visited several libraries, most importantly Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIS) where I spent most of the time consulting various books and journal articles that are significant to my study. I have also accessed newspaper reports as well as articles to keep track of the past and present trajectories of development in bilateral relations between India and Russia. These can be regarded as the secondary resources on the basis of which I have framed my arguments. Besides, as my primary source, I have consulted some government documents available at the Indian Parliament as well as those available online. Using a semi-structured method, I have also interviewed several diplomats as well as experts in the field in order to get an insight into their perspectives regarding the dynamics of the bilateral partnership. These interviews, though not comprising a major part of my research, have actually supplemented it by helping me to substantiate my arguments. In short, this study is an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of data gathered from various sources in order to bring out the main argument of the research- the changes in the international system notwithstanding, Russia and India are still quite conspicuous by their presence in each other's current realities as well as in achieving their strategic goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on an in-depth of analysis of various literature, policy documents as well as interviews conducted of several diplomats as well as experts in the field this research mainly tries to address the following questions:

- a) How did the post-Cold War situation affect the foreign policy orientations of India and Russia thereby influencing their mutual interactions?

- b) What connotation does the term ‘strategic partnership’ hold for both sides and how do they see this partnership as special and a privileged one?
- c) What objective realities actually justify the so-called ‘strategic partnership’ that has characterized the relations ever since the year 2000?
- d) What place does each of the countries hold in their respective strategic outlook?

Each of these questions merit particular attention in order to justify the sustainability of India-Russia relations. Addressing these questions also helps in understanding the ways in which both India and Russia have been able to navigate the treacherous currents of international politics and the further prospects of cooperation that exists between the two strategic partners.

## CHAPTERIZATION

The thesis has been divided into **seven** chapters. **Chapter I** basically provides a contextual background of the thesis and also deals, briefly, with the methodology and vital questions that this research seeks to address.

**Chapter II** delves into the historical background of the formation of bilateral relations. It has mostly focussed on the period till the end of Cold War with a brief outline of the hiccups that characterized the ties in the post-Cold War period. This chapter basically sets the tone for analysing the current nature of bilateral ties by providing an insight into the history of evolution of relations between India and Russia. This chapter ends with the visit of President Vladimir Putin to India in the year 2000 when the ties were again put back on track with the signing of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership.

**Chapter III** focuses mainly on the idea of ‘Strategic Partnership’ in general and in the context of India-Russia relations, in particular. The main purpose of dedicating a whole chapter on strategic partnership is due to the fact that an understanding of this concept

has, somewhat, been found lacking in most of the literature dealing with the nature of Indo-Russia bilateral relations. In this chapter I have concentrated on the meaning of the term strategic partnership which has emerged as one of the newest forms of cooperation<sup>24</sup> for the fulfilment of politico-security and economic interests of nations in today's globalized world. Here I have referred to the existing study on the idea of strategic partnership (though not many scholars have dealt with the concept) on the basis of which I have tried to conceptualize the term in general. In addition, on the basis of the opinions of various officials as well as experts from both the Indian as well as the Russian side I have argued that both the countries use the instrument of strategic partnership in order to establish themselves as major centres of power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century international system. Besides, the commonality of aims and the long-term nature of their strategic goals have also proved to be important factors in consolidating their strategic partnership.

**Chapter IV** analyses the defence relations between the two sides which has been the main pillar of Indo-Russia cooperation ever since the Cold War period. It provides a deep insight into the level of defence cooperation and also the ways in which the two sides have moved beyond the buyer-seller model to one involving joint production and development. It also identifies certain factors that have been creating some strains in the relationship for quite some time now and also provides certain recommendations to mitigate their effects. Yet, at the same time, on the basis of available data, I also argue that in spite of all the recurring problems that have appeared in the path of military collaboration, it can be safely concluded that Russia was and will still remain the most important defence partner of India. This is not only because of the fact that a major

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<sup>24</sup> Ieva Gajauskaite, "Strategic Partnerships in Foreign Policy: Comparative Analysis of Polish-Ukrainian and Lithuanian-Ukrainian Strategic Partnerships," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 11, no. 1 (2014): 190, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10243-012-0028-x>.

portion of India's defence inventory consists of weapons of Soviet/Russian origin, but Russia has been the only country that has provided India with advanced sophisticated technologies which no other country has or is likely to share in the future.

**Chapter V** deals with the economic relations between the two countries. Here I argue that in spite of the fact that the two sides have achieved new heights of cooperation in various aspects of their interaction, ever since the signing of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership in the year 2000, the economic ties, particularly the trade linkages remain very weak. Notwithstanding the commitments made by both the countries from time to time, the annual trade still hovers around a meagre sum of \$10bn, though the investment target of \$30bn has been fulfilled. This chapter also identifies the major constraints that have hindered the development of economic ties and makes concrete recommendations to that effect.

**Chapter VI** outlines the various ways in which the two countries engage themselves at the global level. Firstly, given the rapidly changing geopolitical environment, it delineates the security challenges facing both the nations as well as the international system at large and the policy initiatives that have been taken by both the countries to counter these threats. Secondly, the chapter also focuses, though briefly, on the idea of multilateralism in general and the way India and Russia understand the phenomenon as a part of their foreign policy approaches. On the basis of such an understanding the chapter proceeds to analyse how India and Russia practise multilateralism within various institutional frameworks, both at the regional as well as the global level, in order to advance their respective policy agendas. This in turn helps in understanding India-Russia cooperation in the context of such institutional alignments and the way these institutions are viewed by them as an instrument of serving their global power aspirations.

Finally, **chapter VII** is the concluding chapter where the findings of the entire thesis have been summarized. Here, in addition to what have been dealt with in the previous chapters, I have also focussed, briefly, on India-Russia relations in the light of recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region and the Quad. This has been done in order to further substantiate my central argument: in spite of the challenges that have been afflicting the relations between the two countries, both of them still continue to occupy an important place in each other's foreign policy calculus.

## **CHAPTER II – EVOLUTION OF INDO-SOVIET (RUSSIA) RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

India-Russia bilateral relations are often regarded as the most trusted and time-tested one in contemporary international relations. India and Russia, in fact, share an all-weather strategic partnership which has stood the test of changing geopolitical scenario. The element of trust and reliance that characterize their mutual ties hardly finds any parallel in contemporary era. Yet this is not a recent development. If we turn the pages of history we will see that even before India attained her independence, the seeds of such partnership were being gradually sown when the Indian revolutionaries, inspired by the Soviet socialist experiment (Bolshevik Revolution), began to establish personal contacts with the Soviet leaders. Such embracing of Soviet ideology was given a boost by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who was a believer in the ideology of Fabian Socialism. He had a firm conviction that for countries like India, the adoption of a socialist programme would ultimately show the path towards development.

### **BEGINNING OF A RELATIONSHIP:**

The roots of India-Russia relations can be traced back to the time when India was struggling to achieve its independence from the long-drawn servitude of the British rule and in this context the Russian revolution of 1917 deserves special attention. The revolution was not only a landmark event in the history of the world but it also played an important role in shaping the character of Indian freedom struggle. The declaration of equality and sovereignty of the people of Russia and their right to self-determination proved to be an explosive statement for all the struggling nations of Asia for freedom.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the October Revolution proved to be a watershed event in the sense that it was

the strongest and the fiercest anti-imperialist revolution unknown to history, till then. And the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial appeal that it carried with itself served as an inspiration to the Indian nationalists. Lenin, the vanguard of the Russian revolution and the architect of the first socialist state, also was impressed by the revolutionary potentials of the Indian nationalists and encouraged them to carry on their revolutionary fervour in the following words:

I am glad to hear that the principles of self-determination and the liberation of oppressed nations from exploitation by foreign and native capitalists, proclaimed by the 'workers' and peasants 'Republic' have met with such a ready response among progressive Indians, who are waging a heroic fight for freedom. The working masses of Russia are following with unflagging attention the awakening of the Indian workers and peasants. The organization and discipline of the working people and their perseverance and the solidarity with the working people of world are an earnest of ultimate success. We welcome the close alliance of Moslem and non-Moslem elements. We sincerely want to see this alliance extended to all the toilers of the East. Only when the Indian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Persian and Turkish workers and peasants join hands and march together in the common cause of liberation only then will decisive victory over the exploiters be ensured.<sup>25</sup>

Such a message was a clarion call not only to India but to all the oppressed and exploited nations of Asia to form an alliance in order to throw off the yoke of colonialism. And Lenin's support to the cause of the Indian national movement also

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<sup>25</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), 138.

‘demonstrated to the Indian people that they now had a powerful ally in the newly formed Soviet Government in their fight against British colonialists and that they could count on its support.’<sup>26</sup>

## NEHRU’S VISION

It was Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the architects of India’s national movement and the former Prime Minister of independent India, who made a substantial contribution in bringing Indian nationalists close to the Soviet Union. In fact, it was he who urged the Indian nationalists to view India’s national movement in the international context. Nehru believed that India’s struggle for independence should be viewed as a part of the larger struggle of the progressive forces against the forces of imperialism and colonialism. His participation in the Brussels International Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in 1927 further strengthened his view. It was here that he realised that the problems of the exploited masses everywhere were the same, only the means of exploitation may be different and it is only through the coordinated action of these exploited masses that the exploitation will come to an end. The Brussels Conference also helped in shaping Nehru’s socialist orientation. For him the aim of the national movement no longer remained confined to political freedom alone, rather it also meant social and economic emancipation. The developments that took place in Russia, particularly the various socio-economic changes that the Bolshevik Revolution brought in its wake, impressed him to a great extent and he began to link politics more to social and economic transformation. He had a firm conviction that Soviet Russia was a significant anti-imperialist force and that countries facing colonial exploitation should learn from it. Jawaharlal Nehru upon his visit to the Soviet Union in 1927 was quite

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<sup>26</sup> Jagjit Singh Anand, *Indo-Soviet Relations: A More Glorious Future* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1979), 18.

impressed with the socio-economic changes there which followed the October Revolution. He believed that since the conditions in both the countries were more or less similar, hence the Soviet experience would serve as a good example in solving the problems plaguing India. In fact, the Soviet model inspired Nehru to such an extent that upon returning home Nehru stated that the only way to solve the multi-dimensional problems plaguing India would be to adopt a socialist path of action. In his presidential address to the Indian National Congress in 1936 he said:

We see the world divided into two vast groups today-the imperialist and fascist on one side, the socialist and nationalist on the other...Inevitably we take our stand with the progressive forces of the world which are ranged against fascism and imperialism.<sup>27</sup>

He also hailed Russia as a 'new civilisation of the world' with the potential of guiding various other civilizations towards the path of progress. And it was such an admiration that led Nehru to make earnest efforts to cultivate strong ties with the Soviet Union.

## **BACKGROUND OF ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS:**

Nehru always worked for ensuring the fact that India gained a special position for herself in international politics and that all the states should recognize India as an independent nation in its own right. This line of thinking was amplified when in a nationwide broadcast of 1946 he declared that India would participate in various conferences as free nation, with its own unique policies, independent of any external influence<sup>28</sup>. Such a mindset actually motivated Nehru, in the coming years, to promote

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<sup>27</sup> M. Saleem Kidwai, *Indo-Soviet Relations* (Delhi: Rima Publishing House, 1985), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Arun Mohanty, "On the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Establishment of Indo-Russian Diplomatic Ties," *Mainstream* 55, No. 45 (2017), accessed May 28, 2020, <http://mainstreamweekly.net/article7554.html>.

the idea of *non-alignment* in order to adopt an autonomous, self-reliant and a distinct stand in international affairs. This, however, did not preclude the establishment of cordial relations with other nations in the interest of peace and progress. Even before India attained independence, Nehru as the head of the Interim Government established in 1946, sent V. K Krishna Menon to Paris to meet Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov (as Nehru attached much importance to Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in India's foreign policy considerations) on the sidelines of the Paris Peace Conference, to discuss the possibilities of establishing diplomatic links between the two sides. Finally, after much discussions and deliberations India and Soviet Union announced the establishment of diplomatic relations and exchange of diplomatic emissaries between them on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, just two days prior to attainment of India's independence, with Vijayalakshmi Pandit becoming the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian Ambassador of Soviet Union and Novikov being made the 1<sup>st</sup> Soviet envoy to India.

### **STALIN ERA RELATIONS:**

However, the eagerness which was shown from the Indian side, particularly Nehru, for establishing close ties with USSR, was not met with the same degree of reciprocity because of Stalin's reluctance to recognize India as an independent nation free from the clutches of imperialism. For Stalin India still was a 'semi-colony' of the British bereft of any independent status of its own and Nehru, a product of bourgeois mentality. USSR, at that time saw the process of 'transfer of power' to India as a pure sham which was manifested in the reluctance of the Soviet media even to publish news of India's independence. The Soviet policy circles had a firm conviction that India by virtue of acquiring a 'dominion status' would always be bound by obedience to her colonial masters and in the event of a war with the United States (US), 'Britain and her allies in India' would act against the USSR and the Indian airfields and strategic facilities would

be used to bomb the Southern borders of the USSR<sup>29</sup>. Though India adhered to a policy of *non-alignment* as a tool of staying away from the monolithic Cold War camps it was regarded by Stalin as an imperialist device to coalesce with the Western powers against the USSR.

Yet, in spite of such misgivings Nehru's admiration for Soviet Union and his desire to deepen India's engagement with Soviet Union was in no way diluted. This was due to the fact that not only was Nehru an admirer of USSR but the commonality of approaches of both the countries towards imperialism and colonialism (which would, in the subsequent years, get crystallized in the UN platform) convinced Nehru of the need to foster friendly, cooperative relations with the Soviets. The final years of Stalin era, however, saw a shift of USSR's attitude towards India from absolute hostility to signs of cordiality. This was reflected in the fact that Stalin, who hitherto gave a cold shoulder to India's efforts to establish diplomatic ties, finally agreed to grant an interview to the then departing Indian Ambassador Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in 1952 and then to his successor K. P. S Menon in 1953.

## **FIRST PHASE: NEHRU ERA: THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS**

### **NON-ALIGNMENT POLICY: INDIA'S RESISTANCE TO BLOC POLITICS:**

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the world was divided into two ideologically hostile camps: the capitalist bloc led by the US and the communist bloc led by the USSR. There was also a visible tendency between the two superpowers (US & USSR) to incorporate as many countries as possible within their respective folds. Under such circumstances, India preferred to remain outside this game and adopt an

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<sup>29</sup> Valeriy Kashin, "What Stalin Thought of Gandhi and Nehru," Russia Beyond, May 3, 2012, accessed April 23, 2018, [http://rbth.com/articles/2012/05/03/what\\_stalin\\_thought\\_of\\_gandhi\\_and\\_nehru\\_15660](http://rbth.com/articles/2012/05/03/what_stalin_thought_of_gandhi_and_nehru_15660).

independent policy of its own that would enable it to determine its own policies and actions without any external influence. While the US was gearing up to prepare the Afro-Asian nations to fight the so-called evil of international communism, Nehru emphasised the creation of a 'zone of peace' aimed at keeping the Cold War in Asia at bay. For India military alliances were not at all conducive to international peace and security and hence it rejected such alliances in all its forms. As an architect of Non-Alignment, Nehru once observed, "Non-alignment means attempt by a nation to keep itself aloof from military blocs. It means...we must have independent viewpoint and must have friendly relations with all countries"<sup>30</sup>. For Rajen Harshe, non-alignment represented 'an unconventional approach to power politics' and was primarily influenced by a combination of factors. These included India's desire to adopt for itself an autonomous path of action in international affairs, its preference to maintain good relations with neighbouring communist socialist states like China and, particularly, the USSR and its own belief in the idea of peace as a basic principle of foreign policy conduct.<sup>31</sup> In fact, peace could be regarded as the cardinal principle of Indian foreign policy, specially immediately after independence. Nehru believed that only in a peaceful environment could India redirect its efforts to the social, political and economic reconstruction of the society. And if India embraced a non-aligned posture then that would enable it to draw on economic and technical assistance from all nations, necessary for its reconstruction and development. Nehru's claim in the Constituent Assembly could be understood in this light, "We want the help of other countries; we are going to have it...therefore, purely from the point of view of opportunism, if you

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<sup>30</sup> K. R. Gupta and Vatsala Shukla, *Foreign Policy of India Vol 2* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2009): 377.

<sup>31</sup> Rajen Harshe, "India's Non-Alignment: An Attempt at Conceptual Reconstruction," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, No. 7/8 (February, 1990).

like a straight forward, honest policy, an independent policy is the best.”<sup>32</sup> The ideological basis of Nehru’s policy of Non-Alignment was based on the following five principles of peaceful coexistence or *Panchsheel* which were envisaged in the 1954 treaty between India and China with regard to Tibet:

- Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty
- Non-aggression
- Non-interference in each other’s military affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful coexistence

These principles were further crystallized in the first large-scale Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955.

#### **SOVIET RESPONSE TO INDIA’S NON-ALIGNMENT POLICY:**

As stated earlier, under Stalin, Soviet Union did not encourage the idea of non-alignment in a world which was divided into two ideologically and militarily polarised blocs. For ‘Under Stalin Soviet spokesmen had drawn a close link between the ideological and military polarisation dividing East and West; this orthodoxy had precluded any real appreciation of a ‘third way.’<sup>33</sup> But as the non-alignment programme gained currency, the Soviet statesmen could not but recognize the initiative pursued by India along with other countries (India was a founding member of the NAM or the Non-Aligned Movement) as a progressive force in international affairs. In international politics countries always support or oppose a particular initiative or policy in accordance with their respective interests and priorities and the case of Soviet Union

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<sup>32</sup> P. C. Jain, *Economic Determinants of India’s Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years (1947-64)* (New Delhi: Vitasta Publishing Pvt. Limited, 2012), 65.

<sup>33</sup> Roy Allison, *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 21.

was not an exception. Seen in this light, subsequent Soviet support for the Non-Aligned programme could be viewed as a part of the broader strategy to discourage the Third world nations to enter into any kind of military alliances with the West.<sup>34</sup> The post-Stalin leaders decided to encourage the third world nations to carry forward their ambitious agenda as contained in their concept of 'non-alignment' in order to bring about a shift in the balance of power. The change in Soviet policy can be attributed to the US ventures in Asian theatre. After the conclusion of the Second World War the main aim of the US was to contain Soviet power and hence it embarked upon an initiative to forge military alliances across the globe. And since in Asia communism had already made considerable headway so it became the most important target of the US. And among the Asian powers Pakistan seemed to show a positive attitude to the US approach. Pakistan's inclusion into military alliances like Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) brought Cold War to the South Asian theatre and it also widened the regional divide between India and Pakistan and created a sense of insecurity among them. Moreover, the US-Pakistan military adventurism gave rise to deep frictions in Indo-US relations and Soviet Union quickly took advantage of this situation.

It must be noted here that though under Stalin Soviet attitude to India was one of indifference, after his death, there was a marked change in the former's perception of the latter. The new Soviet leadership realised the importance of cultivating friendly relations with India as his evident from the hope expressed by the then Soviet Prime Minister Malenkov in 1953 of building stronger relations with India in a 'spirit of friendly cooperation'. He also noted with appreciation the role played by India in ending the Korean crisis thereby making it a significant player in maintaining peace in the East

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

and also pinned hopes on the growing cooperation between India and the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the conference held in Geneva during April-July 1954 to decide the future of Indo-China, also acted in favour of strengthening relations between the two nations. Though India was, at the initial phases, excluded from the Conference, it was Indian diplomat V.K. Krishna Menon's behind-the-scenes role that earned appreciation among Soviet circles. In spite of strong Western oppositions, it was Soviet Union that insisted upon Indian participation and the then Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, even vouched for Indian Chairmanship in the International Control Commission.<sup>36</sup> Such a gesture on part of the Soviet Union further reinforced India's belief in the genuineness of Soviet actions. Another factor that inadvertently brought the two countries closer was the conclusion of the US-Pak Mutual Aid and Security Agreement in 1954. This military pact between the US and Pakistan created deep resentment in the minds of the Indian public and the Soviets were quick enough to seize this opportunity to build strong ties with India. During this period Soviet Union tried utmost to exploit the anti-American feeling generated by US military ties to Pakistan<sup>37</sup>. It was believed that American actions were primarily targeted to bring India within its fold, which otherwise proved to be quite difficult given Nehru's hardcore non-aligned posture. The then Canadian High Commissioner to India, Escott Reid, viewed American overtures to Pakistan as a way of bringing India into its fold which would then turn India into a source of 'mass army for the West in a third world war.'<sup>38</sup> A Pravda columnist, too, maintained that the US was trying to use its negotiations with

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<sup>35</sup> Robert C. Horn, *Soviet-Indian Relations: Issues and Influence* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 3.

<sup>36</sup> The International Control Commission was established in 1954 for implementation of the Geneva Accords that brought an end to the long-drawn Indo-China conflict. The commission consisted of inspectors from three countries: Canada as a representative of the non-communist West, Poland as a representative of the communist East and India as a representative of the newly independent non-aligned nations.

<sup>37</sup> Hemen Ray, *Indo-Soviet Relations 1955-71* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 1973).

<sup>38</sup> Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer, *Soviet Relations with India and Vietnam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 32.

Pakistan to exert political pressure on India, which ‘refused to submit to American dictation’<sup>39</sup>. So, the Soviet Union, by thoroughly opposing US moves in Asia and by showing solidarity with India, not only tried to strengthen its friendship with India but also sought to advance its goals of checking Western aggression by cultivating ties with a power that genuinely professed the policy of ‘non-alignment’.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung in 1955 further consolidated the ties between the two nations. As noted earlier, the Panchsheel principles, which formed the foundation of the Bandung Conference also sought to create a bridge between communist and non-communist nations. Leaders of twenty-nine Afro-Asian nations attended this conference that subsequently paved the way for the NAM. The Joint Communique issued at the end of the Bandung Conference, inter alia, deplored all forms of racialism and discrimination and also called for bringing about an end to the evil of colonialism and the consequences thereof. It laid down certain principles of cooperation among nations on the basis of which overall peace and prosperity was sought to be attained.<sup>40</sup> Though the Soviet Union was not formally invited to the Conference, yet the latter cast a positive impact on the former by making it realize the importance of Afro-Asian unity in diminishing the Western influences in Asia and Africa. The Soviet official response was captured by the Pravda in the following way: “The people of the Soviet Union have complete understanding of the struggle of the Asian and African countries against all forms of colonial rule, for political and

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<sup>39</sup> J. A. Naik, *Soviet Policy Towards India: From Stalin to Brezhnev* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1970).

<sup>40</sup> “Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April, 1955),” CVCE, accessed May 4, 2020, [https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/final\\_communique\\_of\\_the\\_asian\\_african\\_conference\\_of\\_bandung\\_24\\_april\\_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html#:~:text=Register-,Final%20Communiqu%C3%A9%20of%20the%20Asian%2DAfrican,of%20Bandung%20\(24%20April%201955\)&text=On%2024%20April%201955%2C%20the,principles%20adopted%20at%20the%20Conference.](https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/final_communique_of_the_asian_african_conference_of_bandung_24_april_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html#:~:text=Register-,Final%20Communiqu%C3%A9%20of%20the%20Asian%2DAfrican,of%20Bandung%20(24%20April%201955)&text=On%2024%20April%201955%2C%20the,principles%20adopted%20at%20the%20Conference.)

economic interdependence.”<sup>41</sup> Since Indo-Soviet relations began to improve from 1954 onwards and since Western strategy of forming military alliances in the name of collective security increased India’s anxieties about security in general, the Soviets quickly capitalized on this situation to gain entry into the Afro-Asian region via India.

#### **OFFICIAL VISITS: NEHRU’S VISIT TO SOVIET UNION**

The year 1955 saw extensive government level visits between India and the Soviet Union beginning with the visit of Nehru to Moscow which can be considered as a watershed event in India-Soviet Union relations. The pomp and grandeur with which he was welcomed hardly found any parallel in history at that time. This was evident from the fact that the ‘entire Presidium, headed by Bulganin, went to the airfield to receive him’ which was the first of its kind in history.<sup>42</sup> Recognizing Soviet Union’s change in worldview then Indian Foreign Secretary, K.P.S Menon noted that, contrary to the earlier compartmentalization of the world by the Soviets into Communists and non-Communists, the unprecedented welcome given to a non-Communist leader (Nehru) was a clear reflection of the Soviets’ shifting perception of the nature of the world and an affirmation of their belief in the idea of co-existence.<sup>43</sup> In fact, this shift in Soviet attitude was visible ever since the death of Stalin which marked the beginnings of a substantial Indo-Soviet relations and which also indicated Soviet approach towards peaceful coexistence with all nations, irrespective of ideological differences. The Soviet Union took every opportunity to convince Nehru of its readiness to come to India’s aid under all circumstances. Discussions mostly centred around issues of common concern

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<sup>41</sup> Swapna Kona Nayadu, “The Soviet Peace Offensive and Nehru’s India, 1953-1956,” In *India and the Cold War*, ed. Manu Bhagavan (New Delhi: Penguin Random House, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> K.P.S Menon, “Report on the Visit of the Indian Prime Minister (Jawaharlal Nehru) to the Soviet Union,” *Subimal Dutt Collection, Subject File No 16, June-July, 1955* (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1955), 59.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 69.

such as the implementation of the Geneva Agreements, the situation in the Formosa Straits (Taiwan) and the feasibility of the upcoming Four Power Conference. The Joint Communiqué issued by both the leaders reaffirmed their belief in the Panchsheel as a means of attaining peace, prosperity and international cooperation and of enhancing cultural, economic and technical cooperation. But the most noteworthy manifestation of USSR's unflinching support to India's independent stand was, as Amb. K.P.S. Menon noted, that India was provided with utmost freedom to draft the Joint statement without any tendency by the USSR to influence the former.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, this visit also paved the way for Soviet assistance to India's process of industrialization, 'eliminating the colonial structure of the Indian economy and helping it to build a self-reliant economy'.<sup>45</sup> At the time of this visit, Prime Minister Nehru handed over an aide memoire prepared by Shri P.C. Mahalonobis, to the Soviet authorities seeking assistance from the latter in the implementation of the objectives of the Second Five-Year Plan which dealt mainly with the development of heavy industrial base for India. In response the Soviet Union agreed to provide all kinds of support as well as technical expertise for the creation and development of the national economy and consider the question of Indo-Soviet technical cooperation.<sup>46</sup> In this context it may be pointed out that some of the most important industries as well as public sector companies in India were set up with Soviet assistance. Noteworthy among them are the Bhilai and Bokaro

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<sup>44</sup> K.P.S Menon, "Report on Talks Between Prime Minister (Jawaharlal Nehru) with Soviet Leaders," *Subimal Dutt Collection, Subject File No 16, June-July, 1955* (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1955): 76.

<sup>45</sup> Arun Mohanty, "Six Decades since Nehru's First Official USSR Visit," *Russia Beyond*, July 2, 2015, accessed March 14, 2018, [http://rbth.com/arts/2015/07/02/six\\_decades\\_since\\_nehrus\\_first\\_official\\_ussr\\_visit\\_44003](http://rbth.com/arts/2015/07/02/six_decades_since_nehrus_first_official_ussr_visit_44003)

<sup>46</sup> "Diplomatic Notes on Technical Cooperation Exchanged Between India and the Soviet Union," *Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security*, October 28, 2016, accessed April 21, 2022. <https://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopica5ee.html?lng=en&id=96453&navinfo=96318>.

steel plants, Heavy Machinery Plant at Ranchi, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and the like.

#### **KHRUSHCHEV'S INDIA VISIT:**

Nehru's Moscow visit was reciprocated on November 18, 1955 when Khrushchev and Bulganin visited India for two weeks. This visit again brought to the fore the extent to which Soviet Union tried to instil confidence among Indian policy circles regarding its determination to promote friendly relations between the two nations. During this visit the Soviet leaders through their statements clearly conveyed their respect for the principles and policies that India stood for in the conduct of her foreign relations and also acknowledged the fact that India being a great power definitely has the right to carve out a prominent niche for herself in world politics. But the most important gesture that impressed the Indians was Soviet Union's unrelenting support for India's cause in Kashmir and Goa. While for Kashmir the Soviet stand was that Kashmir was indisputably an integral part of India, for Goa the Soviet Union sharply criticised the Portuguese for forcibly occupying the territory and constantly vouched for Goa's freedom from the Portuguese rule. These gestures profoundly impressed India (particularly against the background of the US stand which backed the Portuguese occupation of Goa) and also laid the groundwork for new beginnings in relations between the two nations. Indians also received immense satisfaction from the fact that they received, for the first time, the express support of a superpower and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on an issue (Kashmir) that has been a pertinent problem ever since the partition of the country in 1947. And this show of support did not end in India itself; even after returning to Moscow, Bulganin also

mentioned it in his report to the special session of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>47</sup> Particularly with regard to Kashmir, Soviet endorsement of the Indian position found reflection even at the UNSC, when the former vetoed a number of Western-backed resolutions on the issue in the 1950s and even went to the extent of stating that the status of Kashmir, as an integral part of the Republic of India has been determined by the people of Kashmir themselves by means of adoption of the state constitution on November 17, 1956. The Soviet Union also stood by the idea of bilateral settlement of disagreements (whatever still existed) on the Kashmir question without any outside intervention.<sup>48</sup> Under circumstances where the US was trying to pressurise India into joining the Western bloc by forming military alliances with Pakistan, such a gesture on part of the Soviet Union, a superpower and also a permanent member of the UNSC, was highly appreciated in India.

The end of the visit witnessed the issue of a Joint Communiqué whereby both countries agreed to exchange trade representatives to look after their growing trade relations and USSR agreed to provide all kinds of assistance to India for oil exploration and erection of hydroelectric projects.<sup>49</sup>

This visit in many ways marked a significant development in the bilateral relations of the two countries. India became quite a popular topic of discussion in Soviet media circles. Particularly, India's ascendancy to the status of a 'Great Power' widely attracted Soviet media attention which actually vouched for an increasing role of India in international affairs. *Pravda* even declared that though formally India was not a 'Great

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<sup>47</sup> Naik, *Soviet Policy Towards India*, 92.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Digital Library, Security Council Official Records, Twelfth Year, 765<sup>th</sup> Meeting (1957): 16-17, accessed April 21, 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/632175?ln=en>.

<sup>49</sup> Sanjay Gaikwad, "Indo-Soviet Relations: India's Independence to Tashkent Summit," In *USSR/CIS and India's Foreign Policy*, ed. Verinder Grover (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1993), 29-30.

Power' in reality she actually was one and that 'she should be given one of the first places among the Great Powers'<sup>50</sup> (Ray, 1973). The impact of this visit on Indo-Soviet relations was captured by an article in the Los Angeles Times in the following words: 'In the three decades since, the Soviet Union and India have formed one of the strongest, if oddest, partnerships between nations.'<sup>51</sup> In short, this was a period of blooming ties between the two countries.

#### **HUNGARIAN CRISIS AND SUEZ CRISIS:**

In the history of the evolution of Indo-Soviet relations two events need special mention: the Hungarian Crisis and the Suez Crisis. The roots of the Suez Crisis lie in the decision of Egyptian president Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956. This antagonized the British and the French which, along with Israel, launched a retaliatory attack on Egypt on October 29 the same year. Such an aggressive move by the three powers provoked critical reactions from both the USSR and India. While the USSR threatened a nuclear strike in case of non-withdrawal of British, French and Israeli forces, India emphasized the sovereignty of Egypt over the canal under the 1858 Charter and other agreements and called for a peaceful settlement of the crisis. But as the crisis was taking a bad to worse turn, Nehru became more forthright in his condemnation of the egregious act of the concert of British-French-Israeli forces. He termed the act as extremely 'brutal' and viewed it as 'a flagrant case of aggression by two strong powers against a weaker country with the purpose of enforcing their own will.'<sup>52</sup> In fact, India considered the act of the Anglo-French forces as 'a revival of old-

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<sup>50</sup> Hemen Ray, *Indo-Soviet Relations 1955-71*.

<sup>51</sup> Rone Tempest, "Old India Mood, New Ideas Await Gorbachev Visit," Los Angeles Times, November 23, 1986, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-11-23-mn-12608-story.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches September 1946-April 1961* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), 525.

style colonialism'<sup>53</sup>. Both India and the USSR were unanimous in their outright condemnation of the incident and their common approach was highlighted, particularly, in the London Conference where the proposals presented by India were backed by the Soviet Union. This common approach further strengthened the basis of their friendly relations and 'each appreciated the courage and firmness of the other in adopting a principled stand in the interests of world peace.'<sup>54</sup>

The Hungarian crisis, however, saw a dilution of India's attitude for which India had to face severe criticism. In this respect, K. P. S Menon remarked, "Nothing has caused much misunderstanding regarding India's foreign policy than her attitude towards the Hungarian Revolution."<sup>55</sup> The 1956 Hungarian uprising which started as a demand for establishing a more democratic form of government free from the Soviet control was seen as an outright challenge to the Soviet authority for which the latter took every step to deliver a mortal blow to this spontaneous popular uprising of the Hungarians. Though, like the Suez Crisis, this also involved a question of a nation's sovereign rights, in this case India's response was quite lukewarm. Nehru tried to take stock of the situation very cautiously, lest his position damage India's national and international interests.<sup>56</sup> In a Lok Sabha discussion he emphasized the importance of the right to self-determination of the people of Hungary and spoke in favour of withdrawal of all foreign forces from the former's territory. Nevertheless, the half-hearted attitude of India on the issue came to light when India abstained from voting [Resolution 1004 (ES-II)]<sup>57</sup> which condemned Soviet intervention thereby calling upon the Soviet Union to desist

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<sup>53</sup> Christopher S. Raj, "West Asian Conflicts and Indian Responses," in *West Asia and India's Foreign Policy*, ed. Verinder Grover (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1992): 120.

<sup>54</sup> Jagjit Singh Anand, *Indo-Soviet Relations: A More Glorious Future* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1979).

<sup>55</sup> K. P. S. Menon, *India and the Cold War* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966).

<sup>56</sup> Hemen Ray, *Indo-Soviet Relations*.

<sup>57</sup> *Yearbook of the United Nations* (New York: Department of Public Information United Nations, 1956), 70, accessed April 21, 2022.  
<https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210602136>.

from all kinds of intervention forthwith. At the UN, India opposed a resolution [Resolution 1005 (ES-II)]<sup>58</sup> calling for conduct of elections under the supervision of the UN. In the words of Nehru, the logic behind such a stance was:

“...We took strong exception to this because we felt this was contrary to the Charter and would reduce Hungary to less than a sovereign state. Any acceptance of intervention of this type, namely foreign supervised elections, seemed to us to set a bad precedent which might be utilized in future for intervention in other countries...We abstained from voting on all other parts...In regard to the paragraph about elections under the United Nations supervision we voted against it.”<sup>59</sup>

The idea of ‘setting a bad precedent’ clearly reflects the fact that the Kashmir issue was obviously in the mind of Nehru while adopting such a stance. He was apprehensive of the fact that since such a resolution was moved by Pakistan along with other countries<sup>60</sup>, the former might, eventually, also try to bring up the issue of Kashmir and demand for such an election under UN supervision which will potentially threaten India’s stake in Kashmir. India, along with Ceylon and Indonesia, also proposed amendments to a draft resolution (A/3325) sponsored by the US<sup>61</sup> by removing each and every reference to the Soviet Union that was incorporated in the resolution.<sup>62</sup> In justifying the amendments, India’s representative Krishna Menon noted that though the main purpose of the resolution was humanitarian in nature, yet the wording of the resolution seemed

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>59</sup> Nehru, *India’s Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches*, 556.

<sup>60</sup> The other nations were Cuba, Ireland, Italy and Peru. Resolution available in General Assembly Official Records, Doc. A/PV.571, Dag Hammerskjöld Library, November 9, 1956, accessed June 12, 2019, <https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/emergency>.

<sup>61</sup> UNGA Doc: A/3319, dt. November 8, 1956, Second Emergency Special Session, United Nations Digital Library, accessed April 18, 2021, <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/848171?ln=en>.

<sup>62</sup> UNGA Doc: A/3325, dt. November 9, 1956, Second Emergency Special Session, United Nations Digital Library, accessed April 18, 2021, <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/848305?ln=en>.

to add a political overtone to it thereby making it ineffective. According to him, ‘half the troubles arising from political controversy would disappear if we would separate the humanitarian aspects from our own political objectives.’<sup>63</sup> The amendments were rejected by 45 votes to 18, by 12 abstentions.<sup>64</sup> India also abstained from voting a resolution envisaging the formation of a committee, against the wishes of the Soviet Union and the Hungarian government, for overseeing the situation in Hungary. Not only that, when both the USSR and Hungary protested against the report of the Committee, India emphasized the problem-solving rather than the fact-finding role of the UN.<sup>65</sup>

India was quite slow to react to the situation in Hungary. This was mainly due to lack of proper information regarding the ground situation in the country which made India quite cautious in its response. To quote Nehru:

In regard to Hungary the difficulty was that the broad facts were not clear to us...we had to be a little surer and clearer as to what had really happened and what the present position was. Therefore, we were a little cautious in the expression of our opinion in regard to facts.<sup>66</sup>

Again, in comparison to the Suez Crisis, India was not so forthright in its criticism of the Hungarian crisis. Yet that is not tantamount to saying that India did, in any way, defend Soviet actions in Hungary. Prime Minister Nehru constantly called for

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<sup>63</sup> “571<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting of the Second Emergency Special Session of the UNGA, dt. November 9, 1956,” 69, United Nations Digital Library, accessed April 18, 2021, <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/856693?ln=en>.

<sup>64</sup> “571<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting of the Second Emergency Special Session of the UNGA, dt. November 9, 1956,” 80. To be referred to for the entire list of the members who voted for and against the draft resolution (A/3325) as well as those who abstained from.

<sup>65</sup> Pratap Kumar Mishra, “India’s Representation-Patterns and Diplomatic Interactions at the United Nations: A Comparative Study of the 1950s and the 1960s.” (PhD Diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1995):94, accessed May 12, 2020, Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/35030>.

<sup>66</sup> Nehru, *India’s Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches*, 537.

withdrawal of foreign forces and also expressed his anguish over the tragic situation in Hungary. He even went to the extent of saying that, in any situation and under conditions of fulfilling the obligations of a military alliance, foreign troops may be placed in a country only under circumstances of *coup d'etat*. In case of Hungary, therefore, the presence of Soviet troops cannot be justified, even under the terms of the Warsaw Pact, as it was a case of national uprising and not a *coup d'etat*. Nevertheless, unlike the US, he stopped short of using provocative languages against the USSR as he believed that the key to solving such a quagmire lies in the adoption of a constructive approach rather than a negative approach (as was evident from the 20-power resolution adopted in the UN General Assembly) that might have the potential of aggravating the situation.<sup>67</sup> Such views were also echoed by the Indian representative at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) when he said, that though a major part of the responsibility for stabilizing the situation in Hungary lies with the USSR, yet the US also cannot escape its share of responsibility. In Menon's own words:

We think a constructive step has to be taken. I referred to the responsibility resting on the Soviet Union. My Government would say with great respect that an equal or even greater responsibility rests on the United States...there rests on the United States, in our opinion, the responsibility for diplomatic initiative and not merely condemnation and things of that nature.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that in pursuit of a constructive and mediatory role, though India stopped short of using harsh words against the Soviet Union, it did not shy away from showing its displeasure regarding Soviet actions in Hungary. However, there was

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<sup>67</sup> Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches*.

<sup>68</sup> UNGA Official Records, 614<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the Eleventh Session of the UNGA, dt. December 10, 1956, 610, United Nations, accessed June 13, 2020, <http://undocs.org/A/PV.610>.

also another strategic reason behind India's response to the Hungarian crisis. At that time, much to the irritation of India, the US had entered into military alliance with Pakistan which alienated the two of them (US and India). On the other hand, after 1953, relations between India and USSR were showing considerable improvement. Realising the fact that it was the USSR which India could fall back upon, it made all efforts so as not to antagonize the former and retain its goodwill.

That India and Soviet Union shared a warm relation was also evident in the unstinted support that the USSR provided to India whenever the Kashmir issue was taken up in the UNSC. In 1957, the USSR, twice, vetoed resolutions which were deemed to threaten India's position in Kashmir. Such a public endorsement of India's stand on Kashmir amidst Western manoeuvres in favour of Pakistan ensured India of uninterrupted Soviet support whenever India's interests were in jeopardy and this further helped in strengthening the feeling of mutual trust and confidence. In case of Goa, too, when India faced harsh criticisms from the leading Western powers, it was Soviet Union that came to her rescue by lauding her in removing the last vestiges of colonialism on her soil<sup>69</sup>.

#### **INDO-CHINA WAR OF 1962**

However, the most critical phase in the evolution of Indo-Soviet relations came when India was invaded by China resulting in an armed aggression in October, 1962. But before going into the details of this conflict, a very brief reference should be made as to how the Chinese factor brought the two countries closer to each other. Though in the early part of the 1950s, China shared cordial relations with the Soviet Union, this could not last long as differences between the two nations on questions of ideology, economic development and attitude towards the West began to emerge thereby creating a rift

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<sup>69</sup> Anand, Jagjit Singh. *Indo-Soviet Relations: A More Glorious Future*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1979.

between them in the latter part of the 1950s. On the other hand, since 1957, border disputes between India and China became more accentuated and intensified in 1959 when illegal possessions of parts of the Indian territory by China came to light. Added to this was India's grant of political asylum to the Dalai Lama which drew the ire of the Chinese government. All these factors contributed to the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations, one of the manifestations of which were the frequent border skirmishes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) culminating in the (in)famous border dispute of 1962. Hence, throughout the 1950s whereas India's relations with the Soviet Union showed signs of improvement, fault lines began to deepen in the relations between the two communist nations (China and USSR) contrary to the efforts to portray some semblance of unity. Nevertheless, the 1962 Indo-China border dispute presented a real challenge to the development of relations between India and the USSR which, at that juncture, showed positive signs of improvement. This argument holds ground, particularly given the fact that it placed Soviet Union in an uncomfortable position of choosing between a communist power and a non-communist nation. Added to this was the international situation where the Soviet Union had to face the US power in the wake of the Cuban Missile crisis which ran parallel to the 1962 Indo-China border war. Realising the need to rally the communist camp in order to destroy American designs, the Soviet Union took utmost caution so as not to alienate China on the Indo-China front. 'Having been checkmated in Cuba, Khrushchev could not afford to make another mistake.'<sup>70</sup> In line with this, the Soviet side issued statements that clearly portrayed a pro-China stand. For instance, an editorial in Pravda critically spoke of the McMahon Line as being forcefully imposed upon India and China and yet never recognized by the latter. It also spoke

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<sup>70</sup> Dietmar Rothermund, "India and the Soviet Union," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 386, no.1 (1969): 81.

highly of the statement of the Chinese government issued on October 24, 1962 which, according to the Soviet people, manifested sincerity on part of the former to bring an end to the Indo-China conflict.<sup>71</sup>

Such a reversal of Soviet position vis-à-vis India, however, did not last long. As the Cuban dilemma began to ebb away, there was a perceptible change in the Soviet attitude. Various media reports, press releases and public statements made it clear that Soviet Union no longer gave credence to Chinese actions and that China must disengage from fighting. For instance, a Pravda editorial of 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1962 advised for peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiations and even almost ordered China to put a halt to the fighting.<sup>72</sup> This gave a sense of relief to the Indian side but also led to the pronouncement of the Sino-Soviet split. Thereafter, on many occasions and much to the chagrin of the Chinese government, Soviet Union criticized Chinese belligerency towards India and the obstinacy of the former on using military prowess against the latter.

The 1962 conflict was also an eye-opener for India's military backwardness. Immediately after independence, Indian policy makers obsessed with the 'poor India' mentality placed utmost priority to economic development and relegated the importance of defence planning to a secondary role. Though the approach was understandable, given India's emergence from years of economic plunder and exploitation, yet the neglect of defence preparedness spelt disastrous consequences for the country. This became evident by the reckless defeat of the Indian army in the hands of the far more advanced People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1962. In the face of such humiliating defeat, India was quick to take initiatives to come out of the long-held policy of military

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<sup>71</sup> Naik, *Soviet Policy Towards India*, 154.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 155.

retrenchment and focussed increasingly on improving its military might. And it was Moscow (also the US to some extent) that stepped in to fill the lacunae of the Indian defence industry.

In fact, it was the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 that facilitated the entry of Soviet Union into the South Asian scene as an arms supplier when it concluded an agreement with India for the supply and eventual manufacture in India, under license, of MiG-21 fighter planes. This was followed by various other agreements for the supply of light tanks and other related equipment, helicopters, missiles, submarines and other necessary materials for setting up MiG factories in India. The interesting thing to note here is that within a very short span of time, Soviet Union emerged to become the largest supplier of military equipment to India and between 1961 and 1965 its arms aid to India amounted to over \$300 bn. Henceforth began ***USSR's defence relations with India*** (this will be discussed in details in Chapter 3) which, in course of time, would evolve to become one of the most durable pillars of Indo-Soviet/Russian bilateral relations.

### **LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI ERA:**

The year 1964 saw a change of government in both the USSR and India. The new leadership in both the nations emphasized continuing the line of action followed by their predecessors with respect to development of bilateral relations. Yet the nature of Indo-Russian relations also witnessed very subtle changes. The successors of Khrushchev decided to reorient USSR's policy in South Asia by cultivating the friendship of Pakistan. This was done in order to woo Pakistan away from two of USSR's main contenders-US (its main contender of the capitalist camp) and China (with which its relations have been deteriorating sharply particularly following the 1962 Indo-China conflict). USSR's desire to normalise relations with Pakistan was manifested in its

efforts to establish economic relations, entering into cultural agreements and even providing loan to Pakistan<sup>73</sup>. Even in case of Kashmir question this changed stance was quite evident. Contrary to USSR's earlier approach, where it consistently supported India explicitly in the UN on the Kashmir issue by vetoing resolutions that ran counter to Indian interests, in 1964 when the issue was raised in the UN it adopted a more cautious approach by stating that the dispute between the two parties should be settled by peaceful means. This new posture of the Soviet Union got crystallised in the Indo-Pak war of 1965 where the former preferred to adopt a neutral stance<sup>74</sup> and even acted as a mediator that ultimately resulted in the signing of the Tashkent Declaration between India's Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistan's President Mr. Ayub Khan in 1966 thereby bringing about an end to the 17-day tussle between the two South Asian powers. The Tashkent episode constituted an important diplomatic win for the Soviets as it highlighted its peace-making role in the South Asian subcontinent particularly between two arch rival powers. It also reinforced Soviet claims of being an Asian power as much as a European power and challenged China's desire to solely control affairs of Asia. As T. N Kaul writes, the Tashkent Agreement "was a compromise agreement between India and Pakistan and was a success also of Soviet diplomacy and good offices."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> N. Jayapalan, *Foreign Policy of India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2001): 163.

<sup>74</sup> USSR's neutral approach to the issue was amplified by the letter sent by Soviet Prime Minister A. Kosygin to Indian Prime Minister which stated that rather than investigating the causes of the conflict and playing the blame game the need of the hour was to immediately put a stop to the ongoing crisis. Similarly, in the UNSC, too, the Soviet side called for a peaceful settlement of the dispute based on respect for mutual interests between India and Pakistan. See for more details A. Roy, *India and Soviet Union: A Chronology of Political and Diplomatic Cooperation* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1982): 25-26.

<sup>75</sup> Jayapalan, *Foreign Policy of India*, 164.

## **POST-TASHKENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS: INDIRA GANDHI ERA:**

Shastri died hours after the Tashkent Agreement was concluded and this heralded a new era of leadership with Mrs. Indira Gandhi at the helm of the affairs. Upon assuming office, she declared her commitment to the principles of her father, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, and Lal Bahadur Shastri in the conduct of foreign relations. To quote in her own words,

The fundamental principles laid down by my father, to which he and Shastriji dedicate their lives, will continue to guide us. It will be my sincere endeavour to work for the strengthening of peace and international cooperation so that people in all lands live in equality, free from domination and fear.<sup>76</sup>

Such an approach was also reflected in the speeches of Mrs. Indira Gandhi when she undertook her first official visit to the Soviet Union in 1966. Terming the Indo-Soviet relations as ‘unshakeable’, she emphasized the importance of the Soviet Union in Indian foreign policy priorities. She also spoke in favour of pursuing the twin policies of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence among nations and opposition to all forms of exploitation and domination, principles that were espoused by her father. A Joint Communique that was issued at the end of the visit provided for the goal of ensuring international peace and security and also highlighted the identical views of both the nations on Vietnam War, abolition of military alliances and the conclusion of the German peace treaty.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Foreign Affairs Record,” MEA Library, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1966, accessed July 1, 2020, <http://mealib.nic.in/?2588?000>.

<sup>77</sup> Sanjay Gaikwad, *Dynamics of Indo-Soviet Relations: The Era of Indira Gandhi* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1990).

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's second visit to Moscow was on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1967. The occasion was celebrated with much pomp and grandeur and India was one of the only two non-communist nations that were invited to the USSR. As a reciprocal gesture, in 1968, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin was invited to attend the Republic Day celebrations in India as a special guest. This was again followed by a visit of the then Indian President, Dr. Zakir Hussain, to the USSR and thereafter such visits to each other's countries became quite common providing the basis for further consolidation of bilateral ties.

#### **SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAKISTAN**

Amidst such goodwill gestures, though, there also appeared some underlying strains in the relationship due to the change in Soviet policy towards Pakistan. The situation was something like this: USSR wanted to draw Pakistan away from the US and China and also continue the improvement in relations that commenced in the post-Tashkent phase. On the other hand, the neutrality portrayed by the Soviets in the Indo-Pak war of 1965 convinced Pakistan of Soviet desire to bring peace in the subcontinent. Added to that was the difficulty that Pakistan faced as a result of the suspension of arms transfer by the US at a time when it sought to strengthen its military arsenal. All these factors contributed to Pakistan's growing interest in the Soviet Union. Subsequently, there were official visits from both sides to each other's countries which gradually enabled in removing misconceptions and misperceptions and laid the groundwork of improving relations.

In retaliation to US decision to ban supply of arms to Pakistan, the latter announced its decision to close the *Badaber* air base which it had agreed to lease to the US in 1959. Sensing this to be an opportune moment in improving ties with Pakistan, USSR's Prime Minister Kosygin visited Pakistan and the two sides even concluded an agreement

regarding delivery of Soviet arms to Pakistan. Such a decision on part of the Soviet Union was met with sharp reaction from the Indian side and India complained about the fact that apart from upsetting the regional security environment, the decision could also create strains in Indo-Soviet ties. The Soviet efforts to allay India's fears by claiming that the arms aid would in no way run counter to India's interests could not placate India's growing concerns. The frustration within India reached such an extent that some even termed the Soviet action as 'anti-India' and a sign of 'betrayal' of the trust and friendship of India. Yet the Soviet Union continued to pursue its pro-Pakistan stand while simultaneously assuring India that it would not take any step that might prove to be a source of tension to the hitherto established Indo-Soviet ties.

#### **NEED FOR REVISION OF SOVIET POLICY:**

The post-1968 dynamics of the international system necessitated an overall revision of the Soviet position. In June, 1969, Leonid Brezhnev proposed the creation of a system of 'Collective Security' in Asia in view of the power vacuum created by the proposed retraction of Britain from the 'East of the Suez by 1971'. However, this proposal was not received with much enthusiasm in Asia, particularly India which was opposed to its 'military overtures' and the concept of a 'power vacuum in Asia'<sup>78</sup>. The failure of the Soviet venture in attracting the interests of the Asian powers made it reorient its policies accordingly thereby culminating in the concept of a regional economic grouping of Asia. This idea was appreciated by India in view of the fact that India, too, regarded economic cooperation among the Asian countries as a key to the attainment of their developmental goals. This was evident from India's Foreign Minister, Mr. Dinesh Singh's statement where he said:

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<sup>78</sup> Sreemati Ganguli, *Indo-Russian Relations: The Making of a Relationship: 1992-2002*. (New Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2009): 16.

“We are interested in closer economic cooperation which will be able to strengthen each individual country to defend itself, and will create interest in the area in which one would be interested in welfare, progress, development and stability of the countries concerned.”<sup>79</sup>

But Pakistan outrightly rejected both these two proposals as these were construed to be anti-Chinese and as Soviet designs to contain Chinese power in Asia. Since Pakistan viewed China as a guarantor against any Indian (mis)adventurism, hence it refused to accept such Soviet proposals to the detriment of Chinese interests. Such Pak refusal to become targets of Soviet blandishments and the growing proximity of Sino-Pak relations rang alarm bells among Soviet policy circles thereby necessitating a revision of Soviet policy of neutrality vis-à-vis India and Pakistan. It also made the Soviets realise that they can never neglect the importance of India in their global strategic calculations.

#### **INDO-SOVIET TREATY OF 1971: EPITOME OF A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP:**

The massive carnage that took place in East Pakistan in 1971 and the resulting unending influx of refugees into India became a matter of great concern for India and also opened up the possibility of war in the South Asian subcontinent. With such an option looming large, the then President of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan gave a warning that he would declare a war against India in the event of any sort of intervention from the latter. He also exuded confidence that Pakistan would not be alone in this war mainly because of the unqualified support that Beijing assured Islamabad against New Delhi. Added to

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<sup>79</sup> A. G. Noorani, *Brezhnev Plan for Asian Security: Russia in Asia* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1975): 119.

this was the emerging strategic alliance between Washington and Beijing (which was of course facilitated by Islamabad) that helped in strengthening the stand of Pakistan. Such a belligerent attitude of Pakistan coupled with the emergence of a close US-China-Pakistan nexus 'exacerbated the sense of insecurity and isolation prevailing in India during the summer of 1971'<sup>80</sup>. This resulted in New Delhi turning towards Moscow and the latter realising that its geopolitical objectives would best be served by consolidating its ties with New Delhi, opted for a closer alignment with New Delhi.

In line with this the then Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko made an official visit to India on August 8, 1971 with the purpose of further strengthening and consolidating their friendly relations in the international realm. Subsequently on August 9, 1971 the Foreign Minister of India Sardar Swaran Singh and the Foreign Minister of USSR, Gromyko inked the famous Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation as a means of intensifying their multifaceted cooperation and neutralising the effect of the new US-China-Pakistan axis.

When in December 1971, Pakistan launched a full-fledged war on India after bombarding airfields on the Western borders of India, Soviet Union, in line with the spirit of the treaty, offered complete assistance to India. The USSR not only strongly denounced Pakistan's belligerence but also vetoed anti-India resolutions in the UNSC on three occasions. It also took appropriate measures to prevent foreign intervention by despatching its own naval force in the Indian Ocean in response to US's despatch of the carrier 'Enterprise' and a task force from the Seventh fleet to the Bay of Bengal.

Finally, on December 16, 1971 the Pakistani forces surrendered to the Joint Command of India and Bangladesh which was followed by the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire

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<sup>80</sup> Surjit Mansingh, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy 1966-1982* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984): 143.

by Mrs. Gandhi. This ultimately led to the creation of an independent sovereign state of Bangladesh in the map of South Asian subcontinent.

### **TOWARDS CONSOLIDATION OF BILATERAL TIES:**

The emergence of Bangladesh proved to be an important stimulant in further consolidating the relationship between India and the USSR. The liberation of Bangladesh definitely acted as a catalyst in establishing India's credentials as an important power to reckon with in South Asia and in this entire episode the role of the USSR can in no way be belittled. At a time when India was totally cornered by the newly emerging coalition of US-China-Pakistan along with other formidable forces like France, Turkey, Jordan rallying around them, it was USSR's intervention in India's favour that helped in thwarting a situation that could have given rise to multiple power centres challenging the leadership potentiality of India. Even after the end of the war, several developments took place between the two sides which helped in furthering their hitherto expanding multifaceted ties. This includes the setting up of the Soviet-India Joint Commission for Economic Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation in 1972, signing of an agreement between USSR State Planning Committee and the Planning Commission of India in 1973.

### **BREZHNEV'S VISIT IN 1973:**

Leonid Brezhnev's tour to India in 1973 was an event of far-reaching significance. During his visit he exhorted the value that Soviet Union attaches to India's friendship and the fact that since the time of India's emergence as an independent state, Soviet Union has always been to India's side and there is no reason to believe that there shall be any interruption in the pursuit of this policy in the future. His visit witnessed the signing a 15-year Economic and Trade Agreement which aimed at further strengthening

economic ties. There was also another agreement which provided for direct ties between the planning bodies of the two countries thereby emphasizing the importance of planned economic development. At the end of the visit a joint Indo-Soviet Declaration was signed which not only harped on the continuous expansion of cooperative ties between the two sides but also identified the various areas of shared concern in international relations. It also highlighted the common approach that the two countries formulated with respect to all major international issues particularly the issue of international security. This Declaration also called for the transformation of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace which would, they believed, help in ensuring peace and stability in Asia.

The economic agreements signed during this period imparted special credence to the bilateral ties as these helped in solving the various economic problems that India had been facing at that point of time. Apart from the 15 years 'Agreement on the Further Development of Economic and Trade Cooperation', the agreement on the cooperation between two Planning Bodies also helped in boosting the economic sector by providing for opportunities for mutual consultations in order to explore the possibilities for rapid development. The mutual trade turnover increased from Rs 412 crores in 1973 to Rs 550 crores in 1974<sup>81</sup>.

## **THE EMERGENCY OF 1975 & CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN INDIA (1977):**

The emergency of 1975 is regarded as one of the most critical phases of Indian politics. The emergency which was clamped by the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi in order to consolidate her power was met with severe criticism from across the entire

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<sup>81</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report 1973-74 & 1974-75*: 61,4 (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 1973-74, 1974-75).

political and social spectrum of India. Many viewed this as a means of chocking the voice of democracy and maintaining her authoritative role in Indian politics. Yet in spite of such condemnation, Mrs Gandhi's measure found full support in Soviet Union as the latter acknowledged the step as a necessary and progressive measure for the given situation.<sup>82</sup>

However, the 1977 general elections unseated Mrs Gandhi's government and the Janata Government took over the reins of power. On coming to power the Janata government professed its commitment to the policy of 'Genuine and Proper Non-Alignment' which led to apprehensions that India might distance itself from the Soviet Union. By introducing the concept of so-called 'genuine and proper' non-alignment, the Janata government, upheld the fact that the non-alignment policy that was followed by the previous government was not true to its spirit as in some way or the other it gave the impression of aligning with one particular power (read Soviet Union). Elaborating specifically on the prefix of 'genuine and proper' then External Affairs Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee stated: "...India should not only remain non-aligned but must also appear to be so. If anything, we may say or do gives rise to the feeling that we have leaned towards a particular bloc...it will be a deviation from the straight but difficult path of non-alignment."<sup>83</sup> Apart from that, the new regime also harboured some sort of resentment against the USSR owing to latter's unflinching support to the emergency regime of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. This raised alarm bells in the USSR and the latter took all efforts necessary to retain the friendship, cooperation and cordiality that had been

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<sup>82</sup> Many Soviet newspapers and magazines came out with reports and articles that clearly supported the actions of Mrs. Gandhi. Most of them blamed the right-wing parties for creating chaos in India and hence extended full support to the steps taken by the Indian government at that point of time. In an article in the *New Times*, it was observed that 'the intrigues of the Right-wingers had forced Indira Gandhi's government to declare a state of emergency'. *New Times* No. 27 (1975): 11.

<sup>83</sup> Satya Bhusan Jain, *India's Foreign Policy and Non-Alignment* (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd, 2000): 215.

the hallmarks of their bilateral ties over the years. Realising the fact that India was important to Soviet interests and fearing a denigration in relations, the Soviet government was quick enough to send Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to India in order to discuss matters with the new Indian government while the latter also reciprocated by acknowledging the assistance that the former provided in the economic development of India while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining the warm and amiable ties between both sides. During the visit of Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai to Moscow in October 1977 a Joint Declaration was signed between the two countries which stated, among other things, that the Indo-Soviet friendship 'is not subject to transient considerations and serves as an important factor of peace and stability in Asia and in the world.'<sup>84</sup> Such an assertion dispelled all the apprehensions regarding a possible shift in Indo-Soviet relations consequent upon the coming of the Janata government to power.

Brezhnev's decision to allow Indian licensed production of certain new Soviet systems at concessional rates and his readiness to obtain payment in rupees also added a new dimension to Soviet-Indian defence ties as it made India heavily dependent on USSR in this sector.

### **RETURN OF INDIRA GANDHI TO POWER:**

After the return to power of Mrs. Gandhi in 1980 India-USSR relations reached new heights. This period was significant in the sense that immediately before Mrs. Gandhi's coming to power USSR had invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 on grounds of security concerns and the possibility of Western encroachment of Afghanistan. Though this action of the Soviet Union was met with almost worldwide condemnation, yet

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<sup>84</sup> Gaikwad, *Dynamics of Indo-Soviet Relations*: 215.

India's position on the issue was rather soft. In fact, whereas the USSR faced the possibility of isolation on the international front, it was India which came to its assistance and proved that 'it could be relied upon to try and solve or at least ease Soviet problems.'<sup>85</sup> This was exemplified by India's abstention from voting against the Soviets in the UN when the vast majority of the countries severely condemned the USSR for meddling in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. India's response to the Afghan crisis raised definite questions about the former's non-aligned status, yet given the international situation<sup>86</sup> and considering the constant support that the USSR had been extending to India on various international forums on critical questions such as the Kashmir issue, the latter could ill afford to jeopardize its relations with the former. India's support to Soviet presence in Afghanistan was further ensured with Gromyko's Delhi visit in February 1980. Later that year when Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev visited India, the leaders of both the countries expressed mutual satisfaction at the development of bilateral ties and also reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in further solidifying the relations. In the Joint Declaration that was signed at the end of the visit both sides attached utmost importance to their relations of mutual understanding and co-operation to further the cause of peace and stability in Asia and the world at large. In addition, the visit also saw the signing of various documents like the *Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, Trade Agreement for the years 1981-1985, Programme of Cultural, Scientific and Educational Exchanges for the years 1981-82* and *Protocol on the co-operation in the*

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<sup>85</sup> Ramesh Thakur, "India and the Soviet Union: Conjunctions and Disjunctions of Interest," *Asian Survey*, 31, no. 9 (1991): 829.

<sup>86</sup> The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan led to a sudden change in US attitude towards Pakistan whereby the former decided to lift the arms embargo imposed on the latter on the wake of the 1965 war. This development perturbed India as would have the potential to destabilize security in South Asian continent. Besides, the US drive to maintain military bases in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) also seemed to threaten India's security interests and herein there was a convergence of interests between the USSR and India as both the nations showed readiness in designating the IOR as a 'zone of peace' and hence opposed the creation of any military base there.

*field of cinematography.* This was followed by the visit in 1982 of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to USSR which also saw elaborate discussions and exchange of opinions on matters of concerns in bilateral ties as well as regarding the international environment, particularly with regarding to preservation of international peace and the prevention of nuclear arms race. Such high level official friendly visits added momentum to the trajectory of successful and cooperative relations.

## **INDO-SOVIET TIES UNDER RAJIV GANDHI & MIKHAIL GORBACHEV:**

The death of Mrs. Gandhi in 1984 saw the transfer of power to her son, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. Meanwhile there was also a change in leadership in the USSR following the demise of former President Brezhnev. Following two very brief periods of leadership by Andropov and Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985. The changes in the political milieu also saw addition of new dimensions to the relationship. But both sides reaffirmed their commitments at further strengthening the relationship and making constant efforts at taking it to higher levels. The 1980s witnessed a string of high-level visits with Mr. Rajiv Gandhi visiting Soviet Union in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1989; and Gorbachev visiting India in 1986 and 1988. All these visits while acknowledging and applauding the time-tested friendship between the two nations, also took strides in sustaining the positive momentum in the relations and taking the relations to a higher level of maturity. There was unanimity in all the endeavours, be it the Delhi Six initiative or the agreement on a comprehensive security system<sup>87</sup>. Various agreements were also signed for expansion of cooperation in the economic, political and cultural fields as well as in the field of science and

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<sup>87</sup> V.D. Chopra, *Significance of Indo-Russian Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2008).

technology. The Soviet Union also extended assistance in the form of credits to finance various developmental projects in India. An important point to be noted in this respect is that these credits could be paid by export of goods from India. This provision was of considerable importance at a time when India used to run chronic balance-of-payment deficits with the rest of the world and its reserve position was generally not very comfortable.<sup>88</sup> Apart from that, the flow of defence equipment from USSR and the tradition of providing licensing permission, which began since the 1960s, also continued uninterrupted throughout the 1980s. This aspect of Indo-Soviet relations is quite noteworthy in the sense that it demonstrated the seriousness with which the USSR treated India given the fact that the same licensing permission was denied to China, a socialist nation. According to S. Ganguli, the convergence of geo-political interests between the two partners factored in the emergence of the USSR as the dominant defence supplier of India. Though the Soviet Union resisted the usual trend in the arms market that saw Western powers selling defence technologies to the Third World, India was an exception. It was believed that India was the only power that could actually absorb the imported technology with the necessary development in infrastructure and technology.<sup>89</sup> The Gorbachev era assumes significance in the way Soviet foreign policy became detached from ideological moorings and became entrenched in ethical ground. Such a development brought the two nations closer to each other than ever before resulting from increasing convergence of their global interests.<sup>90</sup> This became evident from the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration that was hailed as a 'logical combination of the most important Marxist values, Leninist foreign policy of the Soviet

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<sup>88</sup> Muchkund Dubey, "Indo-(Soviet) Russian Relations," *Mainstream*, no. 40 (2012), accessed February 2, 2018, <https://mainstreamweekly.net/article3704.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Ganguli, *Indo-Russian Relations*: 39.

<sup>90</sup> Muchkund Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy: Coping with the Changing World* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2016): 263.

Union, humanism, and the great Indian traditions of culture and history.<sup>91</sup> Most importantly the declaration, inter alia, set forth the vision for a nuclear weapons free, peaceful world order. Rather than perpetuating arms race the declaration spoke of social and economic development through proper channelization of resources. The sincerity of the commitment of both the nations towards establishment of a nuclear weapons-free world became all the more evident by the proposal of concluding an international convention banning the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, pending the elimination of the same.<sup>92</sup> This was an important achievement for India in the sense that it succeeded in concluding such agreement with a power which, at that point of time, was the second largest possessor of nuclear weapons in the world.

Nevertheless, this honeymoon period gradually dissipated towards the close of the 1980s with Rajiv Gandhi being voted out of power followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Gorbachev regime.

## **DISINTERGRATION OF SOVIET UNION & EMERGENCE OF RUSSIA**

The year 1991 was a watershed period in the history of international politics. This period saw the collapse of Soviet Union and with it 'an entire epoch of contemporary history came to an end, as did the Indo-Soviet relationship, as it was shaped and had evolved during the Soviet era.'<sup>93</sup> Post-Soviet Russia not only witnessed several changes in its domestic policies, but its foreign policy also underwent considerable changes. The former superpower was reduced to an ordinary power possessing, at best, certain symbolic roles in international scenario following the end of Cold War. The economy

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<sup>91</sup> Shrinath Sahai, *The Delhi Declaration, Cardinal of Indo-Soviet Relations: A Bibliographical Study* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1990): 1.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy*, 264.

of Russia was in a state of decline, there were also drastic transformations in the political system coupled with a sense of loss of national prestige among the people. In such a situation, Boris Yeltsin who took over the control of Russia in December 1991 embarked upon a journey to re-design the domestic as well as foreign policy orientations of the new-born Russian state. Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev believed that the only way to restore the lost prestige of Russia was to cultivate good relations with the developed West. Such a perception led to an overhaul of the foreign policy approach followed by the erstwhile Soviet Union as the new Russian foreign policy concept began to give increasing importance to the idea of integration with the West. As pointed out by Dubey, Yeltsin's Russia began to see itself more as a European power notwithstanding the fact that vast tracts of its territory lay in Asia and this factor contributed, to a great extent, in denigrating the special relationship that the former Soviet Union had with India.<sup>94</sup>

#### **POST-COLD WAR INDO-RUSSIA RELATIONS:**

No other country was as profoundly affected by the fall of the Soviet Union as India. And this was due mainly to the change in the foreign policy orientation in Russia under the new leadership of Yeltsin. Immediately after the collapse of Soviet Union, the nascent Russian state that was born out of it explored every possible way to align itself with the West. It even coveted for membership in organizations like North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which it had completely denounced during the Soviet era. This new Russia had no major ambition, no global role, no coherent strategy but only an indomitable desire of joining the Euro-Atlantic club.<sup>95</sup> This desire to strengthen relations with the West had its roots in the policies adopted by Mikhail Gorbachev

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Zafar Imam, *Foreign Policy of Russia 1991-2000* (New Delhi: New Horizon Publishers, 2001): 97.

during the final years of his rule. In order to reform the Soviet society and to restructure the economy he formulated two policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Generally speaking, these policies aimed at breaking the shackles of socialism and embracing principles of political democratization, market reforms and the like-ideals primarily inspired by the West. Such principles on being applied domestically led to certain unprecedented changes in the social structure thereby resulting in the downfall of the USSR. When Yeltsin assumed leadership, he continued with the policies of his predecessor, more vigorously. His revolutionary struggle against the Soviet communist system made him look upon the West as his allies in building a new Russian society based on principles of liberalism and democracy.<sup>96</sup> Besides, the economic crisis precipitated by the fall of the Soviet Union also factored significantly in Russia's turn to the West. If one looks at the list of presidential tours undertaken by Yeltsin, one will notice that, immediately after assuming power he mostly went on to tour major Western countries like USA, France, Germany and UK. India was added much later to his itinerary. Such a westward leaning on part of Russia led to much erosion of the warmth that characterized the relations between India and erstwhile Soviet Union. There were various irritants in the bilateral relations which included the cryogenic deal controversy, problems with supply of spare parts for Russian weaponry, the issue of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Russia's changed stance on the Kashmir problem and a host of other problems which not only impeded relations with India but also curbed Russia's ability to adopt an independent stand in foreign affairs. Since the necessity of market reforms in Russian economy called for Western aid, in many cases (as in the cryogenic deal) Russia had to succumb to Western pressures which curbed the former's ability to

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<sup>96</sup> Michael McFaul, "What Are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 1, 1999, accessed July 16, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/1999/05/01/what-are-russian-foreign-policy-objectives-pub-424>.

pursue an independent foreign policy. Russia's decision to backtrack on the cryogenic deal, in particular, was received with much criticism from within. Many Russian commentators questioned Russia's prudence in toeing the line of the US and lamented about Russia's failure to resist buckling under US pressure.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, such an attitude on part of Russia resulting in the relegation of India in its foreign policy calculations caused a lull in bilateral ties. On account of this, a Russian commentator observed that "the Moscow-New Delhi ties had lost their basis with the end of the Afghan war, the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the USSR."<sup>98</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about some major changes in the economic relations between India and Russia. The 'rupee-rouble' scheme was replaced by the system of payment in free foreign exchange and this led to drastic transformations in the nature of Indo-Russian trade. There was substantial decline in the value of trade with two-way trade hovering around \$1 billion and \$2 billion till the end of the 1990s.<sup>99</sup> There were disruptions in supply chains and as a damage control exercise India, too, reached out to the West as also the countries of Southeast Asia. The 'Look East Policy' that kicked off in 1991, is an example in this respect.

Things, however, began to change, to some extent, with the visit of President Yeltsin to India in 1993. This visit somehow helped in restoring some semblance of order in Russian foreign policy which, after the collapse of the USSR, gravitated more and more towards the West. Though this visit could not completely repair the cracks that appeared

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<sup>97</sup> Yuri Glukhov of Pravda in his article 'Washington-Moscow: Know Your Place' severely criticised Russia's acquiescence to the West and wrote, "having received nothing as yet except promises of 24 billion dollars, we are already paying for the potential future credits." Mahapatra, Debidatta Aurobinda. "Russia and the Kashmir Issue Since 1991: Perception, Attitude and Policy." PhD Diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University. Accessed May 12, 2020. Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/16654>: 51.

<sup>98</sup> Shanta Nedungadi Verma, *Foreign Policy Dynamics: Moscow and India's International Conflicts* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1999): 180.

<sup>99</sup> Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy*, 265.

in the bilateral ties, yet it went a long way in removing some uncertainties that had been clouding the relations between the two nations. This visit witnessed the renewal of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty by eliminating the 'security clause' that was directed towards the US and China thereby giving due recognition to the changed geopolitical realities. Two other agreements included the Rupee-Rouble settlement agreement and an agreement on Defence Cooperation. While the first one addressed the problem of India's debt burden by reducing it to 30 percent, the latter provided assurance for uninterrupted supply of armaments and spare parts for the Indian security forces. Nevertheless, it was not until the latter half of the 1990s that reason, in the literal sense of the term, really began to dawn upon Russia. It realised that the flirtation with the West was a futile exercise as the latter would hardly, or for that matter never, provide the necessary assistance to Russia for regaining its lost prestige in world affairs. And why would it do so? Why would it share its sole superpower status with another nation with which it had to compete for nearly four decades to earn this position? Thus, as Russia began to see through things, it started to reorient its foreign policy approach. And this was initiated by Yevgeny Primakov who became the Foreign Minister of Russia in 1996. He attempted to strike a balance in Russia's external relations. Instead of tilting towards the West he sought to formulate a multivector foreign policy whereby Russia, in conjunction with other powers of the world, would act to create a stable and peaceful international order. He resuscitated the idea of reviving ties with Asian countries and even floated the idea of Russia-India-China (RIC) strategic triangle (1998) in order to counter the unipolar tendencies of the US that have been characterizing the international order ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This idea, however, was not received with much enthusiasm in either of the two countries,

i.e. India and China as both of them needed the US for some reason or the other and hence could ill-afford to antagonize the latter.

Moreover, it can be said that the brief hiatus in bilateral ties that followed in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union disappeared to a considerable extent towards the close of the 1990s. Though both the countries realised that it would be difficult to bounce back to the Soviet era relations, they admitted the fact that there were various common factors which would help in holding the two countries together. What needs to be done is to develop new approaches and new perspectives corresponding with the changed realities. The quest for both sides was not to become allies but to become equal partners. And the close and special relationship of the Soviet years provided a strong foundation for building this new relationship in conjunction with the changed circumstances.<sup>100</sup> Such a foreign policy approach was further crystallized by Vladimir Putin who became the President of Russia on December 31, 1999. On coming to power Putin made all efforts to build closer and stronger ties with India which resulted in placing Indo-Russian ties on a firm foundation. In 2000 Putin visited India (this was an overdue Presidential visit which was supposed to be undertaken by former President Yeltsin in 1998) and this visit stands distinguished as it witnessed the signing of the *Declaration of Strategic Partnership* between the two sides resulting in India becoming the first strategic partner of post-Soviet Russia. This was further elevated to the level of '*special and privileged strategic partnership*' in 2010, giving it a qualitatively new dimension to the relationship.

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<sup>100</sup> Prem K. Budhwar, "India-Russia Relations: Past, Present and the Future," *India Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2007).

## CONCLUSION

India and Russia have enjoyed multifaceted relations ever since they have become strategic partners. The two sides have cooperated intensively in various arenas like nuclear energy, oil and gas, science and technology, defence, etc. The two countries have also initiated the process of regular bilateral summits ever since 2000 which have helped both the sides to delve deeply into matters of mutual concern thereby formulating common positions on the same. Bilateral relations have been strengthened by the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IGC) which mainly supervises economic relations between the two nations (though economic ties have still not reached a satisfactory level). Besides the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) established in 2000 is co-chaired by the Defence Ministers of both the countries and plays a significant role in coordinating the issues of defence and technical cooperation.

In line with the Indo-Soviet legacy, both countries have enjoyed considerably warm ties with each other, except for a brief period of hiccup immediately following the demise of Soviet Union. Given the changed international environment both countries see the bilateral ties as essential component in fulfilling their own geopolitical interests. While India sees its ties with Russia as a tool for increasing its bargaining position in the international system, for Russia friendship with India is a part of its larger Asian strategy<sup>101</sup>. There is also a common understanding among the people regarding the importance of strengthening and intensification of Indo-Russian relations. However, as the geopolitical realities change, the contours of the bilateral ties also undergo changes

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<sup>101</sup> Anuradha M. Chenoy, "India and Russia in the Changing International Setting," *International Studies* 47, no. 2-4 (2010): 445, accessed July 18, 2019, doi: 10.1177/002088171104700423.

and this is quite evident in the interactions between the two time-tested partners. Ever since the end of Cold War and the emergence of Russia, there have been transitions and alterations in the geopolitical landscape which have had a considerable impact on the foreign policy calculations of both India and Russia. Keeping in view such a situation, the subsequent chapters would aim to indulge in a thorough study of the various parameters of cooperation between India and Russia in the context of the post-Cold War geopolitical landscape and the extent to which their interactions qualify the spirit of *special and privileged strategic partnership*.

## **CHAPTER III – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: INDIAN AND RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES**

The year 2000 may be considered as a significant year in the history of India-Russia relations. Though the bilateral ties, ever since the Cold War era, has been embedded in a history of mutual trust and convergence of interests, yet the immediate post-Soviet years saw a downturn in relations between the two. As discussed in the previous chapter, this could be attributed to Russia's pro-West foreign policy as was adopted by then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. It was assumed that in order for Russia to be bailed out of its economic crisis it was necessary to cultivate close cooperation with the West, particularly the US. Developing relations with India was given the least attention and in terms of priority India was placed even behind China and South Korea in Asia.<sup>102</sup> However, the hopes of Russia were betrayed when US failed to provide with necessary aid to Russia and this again made Russia to turn towards India. Though relations were not fully restored to the levels of the Soviet era, yet various efforts were taken to infuse life into the otherwise sluggish ties that were manifest in a series of official visits and the signing of certain agreements. However, a major boost to restructuring of ties came in 2000 with the signing of the 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership' upon President Putin's visit to India. Under Putin, there was a deep sense of realization in Russia that in order to reinforce its role as an important player in the global arena it is necessary for Russia to develop close strategic partnerships (SPs) with countries like India with which it shares certain common values and beliefs. In fact, the former Russian Ambassador Vyacheslav Trubnikov has preferred to use the term 'cooperation' rather than 'partnership' in order to point to the convergence of interests that these countries

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<sup>102</sup> V. P. Dutt, "Strategic Partnership with India, China," *World Focus* 18, no. 5 (1997): 21.

have in the sphere of international politics.<sup>103</sup> Ever since, the cooperation between both sides has been taken forward through regular summit level meetings and institutionalized dialogue mechanisms that facilitate bilateral interaction and consultation on issues of vital interests to both the sides.

However, keeping aside the developments in various spheres, which shall be dealt with in the subsequent chapters, what matters is the idea of strategic partnership. This terminology which emerged in the vocabulary of international relations particularly in the 1990s<sup>104</sup> has still remained a very contested concept with no unanimous definition among scholars. While a comprehensive analysis of the idea of ‘Strategic partnership’ is not the purpose of this chapter, it is worth noting that the idea has been used in a variety of ways by nations in the conduct of their foreign relations. The changing geopolitical landscape, the end of the bipolar world order and the movement towards a so-called multipolar system<sup>105</sup> has definitely created ambiguity and confusion regarding the usage of the term ‘strategic partnership’. Nevertheless, this chapter would focus briefly, as the starting point, on the idea of strategic partnership and shall then proceed to analyse Indian as well as Russian perspectives and narratives of ‘strategic partnership’ with attention to the ways in which this partnership has been realized or has been attempted to be realized.

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<sup>103</sup> Vyacheslav Trubnikov, “Relations Between India and Russia Represent Real Strategic Cooperation,” *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security* 16, no. 3 (2010): 5, accessed January 10, 2017, doi: 10.1080/19934270.2010.507071.

<sup>104</sup> Anna Michalski, “Diplomacy in a Changing World Order: The Role of Strategic Partnerships,” Swedish Institute of International Affairs 2019, accessed October 10, 2021, <http://ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/2019/ui-paper-no.-10-2019.pdf>.

<sup>105</sup> Cui Liru, “Towards a Multipolar Pattern: Challenges in a Transitional Stage,” *China US Focus*, April 14, 2014, accessed July 20, 2020, <http://chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/toward-a-multipolar-pattern-challenges-in-a-transitional-stage>.

## CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Cold War heralded a new type of international system, the exact nature of which has been a subject of intense speculation among scholars. Though immediately after the Cold War, there were scholars who described the world as a 'unipolar'<sup>106</sup> or 'unimultipolar'<sup>107</sup> one, in recent times the concept of 'multipolarity' seems to figure invariably in discussions regarding the conceptualization of the international order.<sup>108</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that in today's world though the US continues to function as a formidable power, yet there are also some emerging power centres (say India, China, Germany, Russia) that pose potential challenges to the US power in all respects-politically, economically as well as militarily. In addition, there is the process of globalization which has unleashed a complex arrangement that has rendered the strictly defined territorial boundaries, to a great extent, obsolete thereby entangling states into a complex network of interdependencies.<sup>109</sup> To cope with such a situation, it becomes an absolute necessity for the US to invest its efforts in establishing relations

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<sup>106</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990/1991) & Stephen G. Brooks & William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2002).

<sup>107</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lone Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March-April 1999), doi: 10.2307/20049207.

<sup>108</sup> Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon observed that the world is increasingly and irreversibly moving towards multipolarity. "Remarks at Stanford University," United Nations, January 17, 2013, accessed July 21, 2020,

<http://un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2013-01-17/remarks-stanford-university>.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also recognized the multipolar nature of the world order when, during her speech at the Council of Foreign Relations in 2009, she observed that the US would 'lead by inducing greater cooperation among a great number of actors...tilting the balance away from a multi-polar world and towards a multi-partner world.' "A Conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton," Council on Foreign Relations, July 15, 2009, accessed July 21, 2020,

<http://cfr.org/event/conversation-us-secretary-state-hillary-rodham-clinton-1>.

<sup>109</sup> This idea of interdependence and international cooperation, in the context of globalization, was popularized by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in their book entitled *Power and Interdependence* (1977). Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye Jr., *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977).

with these emerging powers since the former will have to confront the latter in some or the other way in pursuing its developmental goals and national interests.

The aforementioned claim applies not only for the US but for all the states. The end of Cold War brought in its wake the existence of an international system characterized by a substantial degree of complexity and uncertainty. In such an uncertain environment while pursuing the task of fulfilling their national interests, states, in course of their existence, are also forced to confront with a host of challenges (e.g. climate change, poverty, nuclear proliferation, sustainable development), most of which require concerted efforts and calls for new forms of cooperation and partnerships for delivering proper results. In this respect strategic partnerships have emerged as one of the newest forms of cooperation<sup>110</sup> for the fulfilment of politico-security and economic interests of nations in a globalized world. However, the problem lies in the fact that in spite of the widespread use of the term, it lacks a clear definition.<sup>111</sup> In general, the term ‘strategy’ or ‘strategic’ is often believed to have military or security connotations<sup>112</sup> but once one looks into the various strategic partnerships that have been established by various players at the regional as well as the global level over time, it clearly transcends the

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<sup>110</sup> Ieva Gajauskaite, “Strategic Partnerships in Foreign Policy: Comparative Analysis of Polish-Ukrainian and Lithuanian-Ukrainian Strategic Partnerships,” *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 11, no. 1 (2014): 190, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10243-012-0028-x>.

<sup>111</sup> Many political commentators and scholars working on the subject have expressed their concern about the lack of a precise meaning of the term strategic partnership. This definitional problem has been a result of the frequent usage of the term to characterize relations of various character and nature. Renard has contended out that “most of the literature on strategic partnerships is a mere recycling of the existing literature, and there is therefore a profound lack of understanding of strategic partnership as a foreign policy instrument or as a strategy.” Thomas Renard, “The EU and Its Strategic Partners: A Critical Assessment of The EU’s Strategic Partnerships,” In *The Routledge Handbook of European Security*, ed. Sven Biscop and Richard G. Whitman (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 302.

Wilkins (2012) is also of the opinion that strategic partnership as a concept remains unclear in international relations. Thomas S. Wilkins, “*Alignment*’, not ‘*alliance*’- The Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>112</sup> Andriy Tyushka & Lucyna Czechowska, “Strategic partnerships, international politics and IR theory,” in *States, International Organizations and Strategic Partnerships*, ed. Lucyna Czechowska et al. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).

narrow boundary of defence and security issues to encompass relationships across a wide range of political, economic, social and even cultural issues.

In order to get an idea of what constitutes ‘strategic partnership’, this section would deal with some of the definitions of the same as they exist in the current body of literature. At the very outset it must be pointed out that very few scholars have actually made efforts to conceptualize the idea of strategic partnership and to look into the reasons as to why the term has gained so much popularity since the 1990s. Most of the academic literature on the concept are scattered in the sense that they deal with relations between countries or between countries and multilateral institutions that focus mainly on particular aspects of the partnership and their influences on regional and global politics. Most of the scholars have attempted to explain the implication of the term on a case-to-case basis without offering a definitive meaning.<sup>113</sup> In other words, a single definition cannot be assigned to the term ‘strategic partnership’ because it has been used to describe relationships of various character and nature. For Emerson, strategic partnership denotes a type of partnership between two actors capable enough of taking a strategic action together, i.e. organizing perfect congruity of interests, values and behaviour<sup>114</sup>, though how far the so-called ‘perfect congruity of interests’ can be attained is questionable. Czechowska sees it as a ‘supplement for the multilateral negotiations on the global pressing issue. The extraordinary closeness of the subjects comes from the mutual share of common strategic goals, and belief that a long-term

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<sup>113</sup> For instance, Lessa, analyzing the concept in terms of Brazil’s international experience has pointed out that strategic partnership has a fixed definition regardless of time and place. According to him it is a “a priority political and economic relations, reciprocally compensating, established on the basis of an accumulation of bilateral relations of a universal nature.” Antônio Carlos Lessa, “Brazil’s Strategic Partnerships,” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 53 (2010): 119.

<sup>114</sup> Michael Emerson et al., *The Elephant and the Bear: The European Union, Russia and their Near Abroads* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2001), 45.

cooperation effectively facilitates its implementation.’<sup>115</sup> Grevi has attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the term ‘strategic partnership’ in the following way:

‘Partnerships do not become strategic by virtue of defining them as such. The debate on who is a strategic partner and who is not is a circular one and the practice of attributing such political status is quite inconsistent. Both the ‘strategic’ quality and the ‘partnership’ nature of relations with individual countries are often questioned...Strategic partnerships are those that both parties regard as essential to achieve their basic goals...Strategic partnerships are therefore important bilateral means to pursue core goals. As such, they may concern pivotal global but also regional actors’<sup>116</sup>.

Though Grevi has conceptualized the idea of strategic partnership in the course of discussing the concept as it appears in European Union (EU) foreign policy debates, yet his definition has brought to light a very pertinent problem regarding the usage of the term, i.e. the lack of conceptual precision. Just labelling a relationship as ‘strategic’ doesn’t elevate it to that status. Rather there must be a clear understanding as to what goals are sought to be realised through such an arrangement and most importantly what types of relationships can really be brought under the category of SPs.

Basrur and Kutty<sup>117</sup> point out that since the 20<sup>th</sup> century the notion of power has undergone vast changes in its interpretations in the sense that the mere possession of

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<sup>115</sup> Lucyna Czechowska, “The Concept of Strategic Partnership as an input in the Modern Alliance Theory,” *The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies* 4, no. 2 (2013): 37.

<sup>116</sup> Giovanni Grevi, “Making EU strategic partnerships effective,” *Working Paper (FRIDE)*, no. 105 (2010): 2-3, accessed June 21, 2019, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130706/WP105\\_Making\\_EU\\_Strategic\\_ENG\\_dic10.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130706/WP105_Making_EU_Strategic_ENG_dic10.pdf).

<sup>117</sup> Rajesh Basrur & Sumita Narayanan Kutty, “Conceptualizing Strategic Partnerships,” in *India and Japan: Assessing the Strategic Partnership*, ed. Rajesh Basrur & Sumita Narayanan Kutty (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

power does not entail its application in foreign economic and security policy. Particularly, after the end of Cold War, power, specifically nuclear power, has acted as a deterrent rather than an incentive of war and large-scale confrontations. In addition, the current wave of globalization has also drawn states into a network of 'essential interdependencies' that compel them to cooperate and interact even with those with whom they share conflicting interests. In such a situation, the alliance system of power politics has been gradually losing its relevance thereby giving way to a new form of categorization called the 'strategic partnership'. They also note certain aspects of SPs which may be enunciated as follows:

- Unlike alliances, they are not directed towards any adversary and this keeps the door open for interaction with the latter.
- SPs are devoid of any legally binding commitments. As a result, states do not always take a strong position in favour of their partners in case of the latter's conflict with other states.
- SPs often involve regular meetings between high-level officials.
- Security cooperation in the form of arms transfers, bilateral military exercises, strategic dialogues and intelligence sharing are also often included in SPs.
- Apart from security, SPs also consist of other mutually beneficial exchanges, particularly economic.<sup>118</sup>

Holslag has also provided a comprehensive view of 'strategic partnership' by identifying five features namely '*identified common interests and expectations*', '*formulated for a long-term*' which are also '*multidimensional and operationalized in the economic, political and military areas of interests*' having a '*global range*' and

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

where ‘incentives should be of such a nature that they cannot be achieved without partnership and serve to distinguish from other relationships.’<sup>119</sup> Pointing to the multifaceted nature of SPs, Mansingh argues that ‘strategic partnerships’ are found when:

two governments agree to raise the level of their regular interactions to embrace levels from the lowest to the highest, to deal with the great variety of issues that concern each of them in a cordial and holistic manner seeking cooperation and understanding, and to make long-term commitments for mutual benefit and furthering their respective goals, but do not enter into alliance.<sup>120</sup>

So Mansingh’s definition emphasizes the all-comprehensive nature of SP where countries enter into cooperative relations with a long-term plan of action and which is definitely devoid of any military connotation.

All the above definitions point to one basic characteristic of SP: commonality of strategic interests. Hence, it can be safely assumed that states, before entering into SPs carefully weigh options to identify prospective partners. This, according to T. Wilkins, constitutes the formation phase of SPs. At this stage desirable collaborators are assessed upon the basis of common mutual interests for an overall strategic fit<sup>121</sup> which is then followed by the translation of these interests into specific strategic goals. In order to realise these goals, partners must implement the SP between them. So, in the implementation phase the SP is formalized on the basis of an agreement which adds

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<sup>119</sup> Jonathan Holslag, “The Elusive Axis: Assessing the EU-China Strategic Partnership,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011): 295.

<sup>120</sup> Surjit Mansingh, “India and the US: A Closer Strategic Relationship?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 22-23 (2005):2221.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?” *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (2008): 364, doi: 10.1080/13523260802284365.

elements of specificity, legal and moral obligation and reciprocity.<sup>122</sup> In other words, the agreement creates an overarching framework whereby the bilateral relations between/among the partners are institutionalized, the scope of the partnership is defined and the roles and responsibilities of the members are delineated. Generally speaking, this stage provides a blueprint for effective execution of the SP. Lastly, in order to further strengthen and expand this partnership, the same should undergo a process of evaluation from time to time. This becomes particularly relevant given the dynamics of international environment. The external environment in response to which the partnership was formed might undergo changes which calls for proper evaluation and reconfiguration of strategic goals. And not only does the external environment, but internal factors also necessitate an overall assessment of the SP. For example, the changes in the partners' national interests, their perspectives on the international system, their changing power equations with other nations, their opinions regarding the outcomes of the SP, and the like must also be considered while evaluating and thereby renewing the SP. In other words, the evaluation process helps in further deepening of the partnership and ensure its long-term stability even in the face of crises.

An important point to note here is that SPs involve multidimensional cooperation, i.e. partners seek to cooperate in a wide range of areas and this feature imparts them a distinctiveness in comparison to formal alliance systems whose focus is mainly on military or security cooperation. In reality while entering into SPs countries take stock of their strategic goals and whether there is a degree of commonality of such goals shared by its partner. The more there is congruity among goals, the more there is incentive to participate and the more the incentive to participate, the more there are chances of success of the partnership. Moreover, in a very general sense, the mechanism

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<sup>122</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 8.

of 'strategic partnership' is considered to foster international cooperation while simultaneously advancing the national interests of countries.

## **PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

This section would, on the basis of the above definitions, attempt to surmise the purpose for which such partnerships are forged among countries. As mentioned in the previous section, a very common understanding of the term 'strategic partnership' is that it refers to a relationship between two countries having common vital goals. These goals correspond to their national interests and the basis of such type of partnership is mainly to secure such interests in cooperation with each other. Seen in this context, SPs are mostly goal-driven rather than threat-driven.<sup>123</sup> Such arrangements are directed, mainly, towards the achievement of certain shared goals which might pit the partners against one or more states as 'competitors' and not necessarily as 'enemies.' Nevertheless, depending on the power and position in the international system, the national interests of the states differ from each other and hence the respective utility of SPs. For a powerful state, SP might entail a mechanism for expanding its overall influence and preserving its domination in the international system. Whereas for a weaker state this might be a tool for protecting its own interests and dealing with powerful states. As S. Kay opines, the powerful states might use this tool to maximise their dominance in the international system whereas less powerful states use this to safeguard their security interests and restrain other states.<sup>124</sup>

An important characteristic of SP, as mentioned earlier, is that it is devoid of any tight treaty-based commitments between the partners. Though it may be formalized in the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 361.

<sup>124</sup> Sean Kay, *Global Security in the Twenty-first Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006), 42.

form of a written document yet it binds none of them to any rigid commitment, security or whatsoever, in relation to each other. The terms of the document merely reflect the aspirations and expectations that the signatories seek to realize by forging such partnership rather than coercing them into some firm alliance system. In other words, this gives room for some sort of flexibility and necessary adjustments which is the most noteworthy feature of such a relation. This assumes particular significance in the post-Cold War period where, in contrast to the monolithic bloc politics of the Cold War era, states now can execute their preferences in choosing their partners at the regional as well as the global level. According to John Ciorciari, developing countries, particularly, find this 'limited alignment' to be an attractive option as it delivers 'the best possible ratio of risks to rewards...are usually more attractive to developing countries than the ideal-type options of balancing, bandwagoning, or strict neutrality, especially when the risks and rewards of alignment are difficult to gauge.'<sup>125</sup> It also enables nation states, particularly the weaker ones, to articulate their policy goals and to conduct their foreign relations independent of external constraints.

Nations entering into SPs often taken into consideration certain opportunities and challenges that need to be met on a long-term basis, i.e. SPs are conspicuously long-term in their character. The partners must share a common perception of certain common goals which have the potential of uniting them in the long run. There must be a level of understanding and coordination among the partners, strong enough to address all sorts of misunderstandings and conflict of perceptions that might occasionally threaten to undermine the cooperation. In order for such partnerships to be successful

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<sup>125</sup> John D. Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment: Southeast Asia and the Great Powers since 1975* (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 18.

there must be consistency of purpose, flexibility in approach and the ability to translate goals into concrete cooperative actions.<sup>126</sup>

Since this research deals with the analysis of India-Russia bilateral relations hence, it becomes necessary to analyse the concept of 'strategic partnership' that has characterized their bilateral ties since 2000.

As has been mentioned earlier, the lack of consensus on the term has left much room for its interpretation according to situations and circumstances. In case of India-Russia bilateral ties, though the term 'strategic partnership' often finds mention in various foreign policy documents and speeches of government officials, it has never been defined in a clear-cut way, particularly by India. Therefore, in order to understand what is so 'strategic' about the 'partnership' between India and Russia it is relevant to examine the 'strategic objectives' of both the nations and the ways in which the term finds mention among policy circles and academic literature in both the countries.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: INDIA AND RUSSIA**

As far as Russia is concerned, if one goes by the various official documents (Foreign Policy Concept 2008, 2013, 2016; National Security Concept 2000; National Security Strategy 2015) one can very well surmise the key objectives of Russia's foreign relations. *Firstly*, Russia intends to view itself as one of the leading global actors with dominant role in major international issues and stands for the protection of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. That Russia harbours the desire to remain a great power in international politics has found expression in the comments of

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<sup>126</sup> Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing and the New Geopolitics* (London: Chatham House, 2008), 41.

many of its experts and officials. For example, Sergey Karaganov<sup>127</sup>, in an interview to the *Spiegel Online* said:

We want the status of being a great power: We unfortunately cannot relinquish that. In the last 300 years, this status has become a part of our genetic makeup. We want to be the heart of greater Eurasia, a region of peace and cooperation. The subcontinent of Europe will also belong to this Eurasia.<sup>128</sup>

*Secondly*, these documents clearly reflect the fact that Russia views the current world order as instable and conflict-ridden where there is constant competition for influence among various powers. While Russia emphasizes the central role of the United Nations (UN) in the settlement of various international problems, it also recognizes the part played by ‘particular states and intergovernmental associations to belittle the role of existing mechanisms for ensuring international security, above all the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)’<sup>129</sup>. *Thirdly*, the efforts of various states (a veiled reference to the West led by the US) to undermine the position of Russia and to disregard its interests while addressing various global issues have the potential to undermine ‘international security and stability and slow down the ongoing positive changes in international relations’<sup>130</sup>. Moscow has consistently voiced its concerns against the attempt to universalise Western values which can ‘stoke xenophobia, intolerance, and conflict in international affairs, leading ultimately to

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<sup>127</sup> Sergey Karaganov is the honorary head of the Council of Foreign and Defense Policy, which develops geopolitical strategy concepts for Russia.

<sup>128</sup> Sergei Karaganov, “We Are Smarter, Stronger and More Determined,” interview by Spiegel, *Spiegel Online*, July 13, 2016, accessed June 26, 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-putin-foreign-policy-advisor-sergey-karaganov-a-1102629.html>.

<sup>129</sup> National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, January 18, 2000, accessed April 24, 2022, <https://nuke.fas.org/guide/russia/doctrine/gazeta012400.htm>.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

chaos and an uncontrolled situation in international relations’<sup>131</sup> This calls for a process of democratization of global politics and creation of a more favourable balance of power in the international realm. *Fourthly*, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), the scourge of terrorism, the problem of drug trafficking, the increase in the number of regional conflicts-all pose a grave threat to international security and hence must be addressed on an urgent basis. *Fifthly*, Russia places utmost importance to developing relations with the states of the former Soviet Union which is exemplified by the fact that this goal occupies the first position in the list of regional priorities that are enlisted in the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Concept. Russia intends to consolidate its predominant position and influence in the states of the post-Soviet space and to prevent it from becoming a centre of competition among the Western powers to exercise their influence. The recent Russian adventurism in Crimea is a testimony to the fact. For Russia this constitutes its ‘Near Abroad’ where it seeks to maintain its traditional ‘privileged sphere of influence’ in order to strengthen the Putin system domestically and to showcase Russia as a great power in the emerging multipolar world order.<sup>132</sup> In addition it also aims at promoting and safeguarding the ‘rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots living abroad, including in various international formats.’<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016),” The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, November 30, 2016, accessed March 21, 2022, [https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp\\_insight/](https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp_insight/).

<sup>132</sup> Alexander Cooley, “Whose Rules, Whose Sphere? Russian Governance and Influence in Post-Soviet States,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 30, 2017, accessed May 6, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/30/whose-rules-whose-sphere-russian-governance-and-influence-in-the-post-soviet-states-pub-71403>.

<sup>133</sup> “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation,” November 30, 2016, accessed March 21, 2022, [https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp\\_insight/](https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp_insight/).

In case of India, the various *Annual Reports of the Ministry of External Affairs*<sup>134</sup> have, from time to time, spelt out the basic objectives of Indian foreign policy which includes ensuring national security, attaining economic transformation, preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity and addressing various global and regional concerns. After the end of the Cold War the geopolitical landscape has undergone tremendous transformation and the security environment has become highly uncertain and volatile. In recognition of this reality India believes that in order to meet this global security environment and its national security objectives there is a need to forge security and defence partnerships with friendly powers of the world. *Secondly*, linked to the first objective is the second one, i.e. securing economic transformation. In the immediate post-independent years, Indian economy, inspired by the Soviet model, was an inward-looking one which resulted in a hapless economic condition with unimpressive growth rates. It was not until the liberalization programme of the 1990s that some element of dynamism was injected into the economy thereby resulting in some sort of a revival. Since then a lot of emphasis has been placed on the process of economic transformation and modernization. Yet the menace of poverty continues to haunt India and as succinctly stated by Stephen Cohen, 'India is virtually synonymous with poverty in the Western mind, and poverty will remain both a moral and practical problem and a political embarrassment to any Indian government.'<sup>135</sup> In the present century economic power is regarded as one of the keys to a country's success in international politics. Besides, a thriving economy also constitutes one of the pre-conditions for a country's military preparedness. Hence in order to transform and bolster India's position in the world increasing focus has been put on strengthening the nation's economic

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<sup>134</sup> All annual reports available at: [https://www.mea.gov.in/annual-reports.htm?57/Annual\\_Reports](https://www.mea.gov.in/annual-reports.htm?57/Annual_Reports).

<sup>135</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, "India Rising," Brookings, June 1, 2000, accessed July 6, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/india-rising/>.

competitiveness and to place it on the path of higher economic growth. *Thirdly*, India too, like Russia, desires to see itself as a credible player in international politics. Unlike in the Cold War era, where it viewed itself as a leader of the Third World, in the contemporary period it views itself as having the potential to play a leading role in global politics. The desire for a major power status stems from the sheer size, vast economic potential, civilizational legacy and a functional democracy that has been the hallmark of post-independent India.<sup>136</sup> Besides, the economic reforms and the modernization of the defence sector undertaken by India in the post-Cold War era have also created a situation whereby the Indian political elite can articulate its willingness to occupy an eminent position in the comity of nations. This view has been endorsed by the former Foreign Secretary of India S. Jaishankar in his Fullerton Lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015 when he pointed out that the foreign policy dimension of India ‘is to aspire to be a leading power, rather than just a balancing power...a willingness to shoulder greater global responsibilities.’<sup>137</sup>

*Fourthly*, another important strategic objective of India is the promotion of an independent, autonomous foreign policy. This objective is consistent with the larger global role that India views for itself in the international realm. This idea of strategic autonomy dates back to the Nehru era when India adopted the policy of non-alignment as its foreign policy approach. Yet with the abolition of the binary construct of the Cold War era the means of preserving strategic autonomy has undergone changes. Rather than maintaining a strictly non-aligned posture, India today views multi-alignment as a necessary tool to advance its own interests. This is quite a realistic approach as forging

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> “IISS Fullerton Lecture by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary in Singapore,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 20, 2015, accessed July 6, 2019, [https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/25493/IISS\\_Fullerton\\_Lecture\\_by\\_Foreign\\_Secretary\\_in\\_Singapore](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/25493/IISS_Fullerton_Lecture_by_Foreign_Secretary_in_Singapore).

partnerships with various players actually gives a certain degree of leverage to India in its interactions with various powers, act according to its own national interests and ascend to the status of regional and global prominence. *Lastly*, India has always been advocating the creation of a multipolar world order where power shall be diffused rather than concentrated, where the world shall not be governed by Western-led values that tend to undercut national sovereignty, where each nation would have the opportunity to voice their own opinions and where solutions to international problems shall be formulated on the basis of a collective rather than a top-down approach.

On the basis of the above discussion and going by the various definitions that have been offered by various experts (as provided in the previous section), it may well be said that India-Russia relations fulfil most of the pre-conditions of SP, most importantly the mutuality of strategic goals. This is reflected in their common desire to create a just, peaceful and a rules-based world order which would uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, accept the central role of the UN and the supremacy of international law in global governance and one where power would be distributed among various poles rather than being concentrated in the hands of a single nation. Also, both stand for the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and seek to secure their respective geopolitical neighbourhoods (the former Soviet space for Russia and Pakistan for India) that have been marked by sporadic conflicts and hostilities due to incessant meddling by external powers. Both the nations have also avoided criticising each other whenever disputes regarding their neighbourhoods cropped up on the international scene.<sup>138</sup> The most important element that characterize their relationship

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<sup>138</sup> Russia, and Soviet Union in the past, has always backed India's stand on Kashmir and had also vetoed several anti-India resolutions in the UNSC. Even in 2019, India revoked Kashmir's special status, Russia preferred to stay away from intervening with the issue by labelling it as an 'internal matter' of India. On the other hand, India's refusal to join the chorus of international condemnation led by the US in the UNSC and its opposition to isolate Russia on the international front on the Crimean issue point to the former's reluctance of taking anti-Russia stance.

is that of trust and goodwill. None of them perceive any kind of existential threat from each other and are, somehow, assured of the fact that neither would pursue any policy that would endanger the other's interests in the international system. It is this feeling of trust and faith that strengthens the bond between them which is also a pre-requisite for any kind of 'strategic partnership' to be successful. Though the 21<sup>st</sup> century world is very much different from that which existed during the Cold War period (from which Indo-Russian (Soviet) relations actually started), yet both the nations have managed to hold their ties firmly and have been consistent in their approach towards each other. This reflects the long-term nature of their relation which constitutes an important element of SP. Further, in order to strengthen this partnership leaders of both the nations hold regular summit-level meetings in order to discuss and deliberate on issues of mutual concern. One may, however, point out that the economic relationship, which constitutes one of the most important pillars of SP, is quite weak in Indo-Russian case. Though this can in no way be denied, there are also signs that both sides are trying hard to shore up economic ties and move beyond mere defence relations to focus more on trade and investment.

## **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: THE DECLARATION**

After having examined the strategic objectives of India's and Russia's foreign policies and the extent to which these meet the requirements of a so-called 'strategic partnership', let us now focus on the declaration which laid the foundation of such partnership between the two nations. After Vladimir Putin came to power, there was a noteworthy change in Russian foreign policy orientation, that marked a departure from the westward course<sup>139</sup> that Russia steered itself into immediately after the collapse of

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<sup>139</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, "Introduction: Russian Foreign Policy in Historical Perspective," In *The New Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998).

the Soviet Union. In the Foreign Policy Concept that was promulgated in 2000, it was clearly indicated that Russia would follow a policy of developing friendly relations with Asian states, particularly India and China.

Referring to the traditional partnership that Russia (or in that case Soviet Union) shared with India, the former aimed at strengthening its relations with the latter in the international sphere and also to aid the latter in securing peace and stability in the South Asian region.<sup>140</sup> Though this change in stance could be attributed to Russia's desire to regain its lost status in the regional as well as global affairs<sup>141</sup>, yet this was a significant development in the context of India-Russia bilateral ties given the initial hiccups that characterized the relations immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union<sup>142</sup>. Moreover, with the coming of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000, this changed attitude was crystallized in the form of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership between the two sides, thereby injecting a new momentum to bilateral relations. The main aim of this partnership, as per the Declaration, is to elevate the ties to a 'qualitatively new level' and infuse a spirit of dynamism at the bilateral as well as at the global level. The two sides professed their commitment to the creation of a just, stable and a multipolar world order based on the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity among the states and the rationale of non-interference in internal affairs. Setting out the shared aims and visions and emphasizing the complementarity of interests<sup>143</sup> between the two sides, the document clearly set forward the tone for the future trajectory of bilateral ties. Nevertheless, it also clarified that the fundamental aim of the 'strategic partnership'

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<sup>140</sup> The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, June 28, 2000, accessed on July 15, 2019, <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>.

<sup>141</sup> B.M Jain, "India and Russia: Reassessing the "Time-Tested" Ties," *Pacific Affairs* 76, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>142</sup> Meena Singh Roy, "The Trajectory of India-Russia Ties: High Expectations and Current Realities," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 11, no. 4 (2016).

<sup>143</sup> "Visit to India of H. E. Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation Opening Statement by Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Joint Press Conference," PMO (Prime Minister's Office), October 3, 2000, accessed on July 18, 2019, <https://archivepmo.nic.in/abv/speech-details.php?nodeid=9096>.

would be to expand cooperation in various fields and it should in no way be viewed as a politico-military alliance directed against any state or a group of states. Hence, as per the statement of the document, ‘strategic partnership’ for Indian and Russia implies a means of forging mutually cooperative relations in a number of areas ranging from defence, economic, political to cultural, in order to fulfil the shared visions in the international realm. Having said this, the following section would attempt to analyse the Indian and Russian perspectives on the issue.

## **RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Before understanding how Russia sees its strategic partnership with India, it is desirable to, first, see how the phrase has been used by Russia in general. For Sergey Karaganov, Head of the Council of Foreign and Defence Policy, “strategic partnership is a rather meaningless term that covers up any relationship, except openly hostile.”<sup>144</sup> For him, therefore, ‘strategic’ is nothing more than a mere adjunct to the term ‘partnership’ devoid of any special meaning and lacking the potential to impart any special character to relationship between nations as all but ‘hostile’ relations come under its purview. In contrast to this, there are viewpoints within Russian academic and policy circles that point to the significance of strategic partnership as a means of achieving certain common vital goals in the changed geo-strategic landscape. For instance, according to Alexey Kupriyanov, SP for Russia means unity of aims and goals in the international context: it is not about any military or economic bloc but just about having the same aims. SP for the Moscow point of view is ‘always to help each other and never be against each other.’<sup>145</sup> This apart, an attempt to analyse Russian interpretation of the

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<sup>144</sup> Sergei Karaganov, “Russia should postpone the contract with the European Union,” (translated version) Rossiyskaya Gazeta, May 16, 2007, accessed July 6, 2019, <https://rg.ru/2007/05/16/karaganov.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Alexey Kupriyanov (distinguished scholar) in discussion with the author, October 11, 2021.

term SP on a case-by-case basis will also help in understanding the ways in which Russia has viewed the concept. For example, in case of EU, Russia sees SP as built on principles of equality, pragmatism, mutual respect for each other's interests and common approaches to key security issues.<sup>146</sup> With regard to China, the comprehensive strategic partnership connotes a multi-dimensional interaction in the field of politics, security, practical cooperation, humanistic exchanges and international cooperation. It also includes the objective of promoting multilateralism, and the formation of a reasonable, just and multipolar world order.<sup>147</sup> With Vietnam Russia's SP mainly revolves around defence and security although it includes elements of education, health, trade, investment and economic development.<sup>148</sup> In fact, the defence aspect has been regarded as the most consequential form of cooperation which helps in strengthening and facilitating the strategic partnership.<sup>149</sup> With South Africa, Moscow's SP aims at extends to the political, trade-and-investment, humanitarian and other areas as well as to various multilateral for a like the BRICS, Group of Twenty (G20) and the UN for the purpose of maintaining security and creating a polycentric world order.<sup>150</sup>

While there is a lack of concrete definition of strategic partnership among Russian circles, it is somewhat reasonable to say that concept has been used to denote the various objectives (which have been differently defined under different circumstances) that Russia seek to achieve through the application of this term in its relations with

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<sup>146</sup> "Joint Press Conference Following the Russia-European Union Summit," President of Russia, June 27, 2008, accessed April 11, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/575>.

<sup>147</sup> "Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the Development of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Collaboration in the New Era (full text)," Bilaterals.org, June 6, 2019, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.bilaterals.org/?joint-statement-of-the-people-s>.

<sup>148</sup> Duy Nguyen, "Vietnam-Russia Strategic Partnership: 20 Years and Prospect," Hanoi Times, April 6, 2021, accessed April 14, 2022, <http://hanoitimes.vn/vietnam-russia-strategic-partnership-20-years-and-prospect-316918.html>.

<sup>149</sup> Stephen Blank, "Russia's Growing Ties with Vietnam," The Diplomat, September 19, 2013, accessed April 14, 2022, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/russias-growing-ties-with-vietnam>.

<sup>150</sup> "Russia to Continue Policy of Strategic Partnership with South Africa-Foreign Ministry," TASS, May 12, 2019, accessed July 15, 2019. <https://tass.com/politics/1057823>.

countries. As far as India is concerned, though there have been some subtle alterations in the nature of India-Russia bilateral relations, the congruity of their respective interests still holds them together for a promising long-term strategic cooperation. In an interview to India Today magazine Russian President Vladimir Putin, prior to his October 2000 India visit said,

“India and Russia can become very effective mutually complementary forces...We are interested in maintaining relations with such great power as India as we pursue our goals on the international arena: stability and a modern democratic world order. The same concerns our goals in bilateral relations. Russia and India are natural partners also due to their mutually complementary economic, scientific and technological potentials.”<sup>151</sup>

Noting the firm pedestal on which Indo-Russia relations stand, Putin in his message to former Indian President Dr. A. P. J Abdul Kalam also stated, “Russia highly assesses and earnestly cherishes its noble ties of friendship and multifaceted cooperation with India which, in recent years, has evolved into a strategic partnership of the two nations.”<sup>152</sup> Since the year 2000 the Russian government, under the stewardship of President Putin and for a brief span of time under President Medvedev, has directed much of its efforts in developing relations with India. This was based on the recognition of the importance of establishing close ties with a country with whom Russia shares a substantial amount of faith and goodwill and whose regional as well as global interests

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<sup>151</sup> President of Russia, “Interview with the Indian Magazine India Today and the Weekly Russian Journal,” interview by India Today and the Weekly Russian Journal, *The President of Russia*, September 29, 2000, accessed August 11, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24229>.

<sup>152</sup> K. K. Nayyar, “Indo-Russian Strategic Cooperation,” In *New Trends in Indo-Russian Relations*, ed. V. D. Chopra (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications): 78.

are, to a great extent, compatible with that of Russia. The Declaration of Strategic Partnership was a result of such realisation. However, if one compares this Declaration with that of the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation (these two being landmark agreements in the history of India-Russia relations) one will see that while the latter was directed towards China and US, the former is not directed against any third party. Its main purpose has been to raise Indo-Russian ties qualitatively to a new level so as to preserve their time-honoured relationship even in the changed geopolitical circumstances. President Putin's statement was indicative of this when he said that 'strategic does not mean some kind of alliance or military bloc. When we say strategic we mean long-term, a partnership in keeping with the pragmatic national interests of our two countries...not talking about military competition, but economic, scientific and technological competition.'<sup>153</sup> Likewise, former Russian Ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin, emphasized the idea of SP to mean the shared views that India and Russia had regarding the world, that both of them stood for a multipolar world order, that both of them would work towards political cooperation and abhor terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. For him, SP is a long-term partnership that will last for decades, irrespective of the changes that take place anywhere in the world.<sup>154</sup> It is also the 'optimal model of bilateral and foreign policy interaction between Russia and India (...) aimed at long-term prospect' which has 'proved its vitality and efficiency' and is also attaining global importance.<sup>155</sup> In an interview with the Diplomatist, Russian Ambassador to India, N.R. Kudashev emphasised the common goals and the sense of

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<sup>153</sup> Raj Chengappa, "Collapse of Soviet Union Changed Ideological Foundation of Our State: Vladimir Putin," India Today, October 9, 2000, accessed June 18, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/interview/story/20001009-collapse-of-soviet-union-changed-ideological-foundation-of-our-state-vladimir-putin-778183-2000-10-09>.

<sup>154</sup> Amit Baruah, "India, Russia May Invite China to Join Fighter Aircraft Project." The Hindu, June 27, 2004. Accessed June 18, 2019. <https://www.thehindu.com/2004/06/27/stories/2004062701130900.htm>.

<sup>155</sup> AM Kadakin, "Russian-Indian Magnet," *Indian Defence Review* 17, no. 4 (2002): 42.

trust and mutual understanding that both India and Russia share with each other which will further enable them to strengthen their strategic partnership in the future. Besides, the ‘unprecedented ways’ in which the two sides interact with each other, in not only bilateral terms but also in multilateral formats, also make their relations truly ‘special.’<sup>156</sup> Former Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, referring to the wide gamut of cooperation between the two, pointed out that the SP between India and Russia transcends mere political dialogue to include cooperation and collaboration in trade, economy, military, technical and even cultural enterprises.<sup>157</sup> Referring to the ‘special and privileged’ nature of the SP, the Russian Foreign Policy dossier on Strategic Partnership with India states that it ‘has become a concrete reflection of the mature, multifaceted and rich nature of Russian-Indian relations...based on a high degree of mutual understanding and trust, the closeness of the priorities of economic and social development, the coincidences of approaches to ensuring global peace and security, to the formation of a new architecture of the world order.’<sup>158</sup> Reflecting on the past history, Alexei Zakharov states that these are the two countries that never have had any conflict of interest nor have they posed to be a major threat to each other’s security. In that sense, the SP between India and Russia is the genuine continuation of the friendship between the two, even though there was a brief period of instability or misunderstanding in the period immediately following the end of the Cold War.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Nikolay Kudashev, “Interview: H. E. Nikolay Kudashev, Ambassador of Russia to India,” interview by the Diplomatist, *Diplomatist*, December 15, 2019, accessed April 24, 2022, <https://diplomatist.com/2019/12/15/h-e-nikolay-kudashev-ambassador-of-russia-to-india/>.

<sup>157</sup> Vladimir Radyuhin, “Medvedev Calls Indo-Russian Relations a Privileged Strategic Partnership,” *The Hindu*, July 14, 2011, accessed July 9, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/medvedev-calls-indo-russian-relations-a-privileged-strategic-partnership/article2227259.ece>.

<sup>158</sup> “Strategic Partnership with India,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, September 5, 2019, accessed September 15, 2019, <http://mid.ru/ru/strategiceskoe-partnerstvo-s-indiej>.

<sup>159</sup> Alexei Zakharov (distinguished scholar) in discussion with the author, September 21, 2021.

Convergence of interests, spirit of trust and goodwill, shared views regarding the international order-terms and phrases that have, time and again, resonated themselves in the statements of officials have, indeed, been a sustained feature of Indo-Russian ties for more than seven decades. Notwithstanding the initial disruptions of the immediate post-Cold War period, the two countries have always maintained a stable relationship devoid of any sort of political contradiction which eventually resulted in a partnership of enduring strategic significance for both. So, while the Russian official positions nowhere clearly define the term strategic partnership, the key positions which animate Russia's pursuit of the so-called 'special and privileged strategic partnership' are as follows:

- a. Convergence of approaches to ensuring universal peace and security, and to the formation of a new architecture of the world order.
- b. Proximity of positions on most acute global problems like regional conflicts, international terrorism, cross-border drug trafficking, etc.
- c. High level of military-technical cooperation, including joint development of advanced weapons
- d. Proximity of economic and social development priorities.<sup>160</sup>

## **INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

In the post-Cold War era, India has entered into SPs with more than a dozen countries beginning with France with which it established such a relation in 1998. Since then, building SPs has become one of the notable dimensions of Indian foreign policy. Be it Russia, US, Germany, United Kingdom, China, Australia or even countries like Rwanda, Seychelles, India has preferred to conduct bilateral relations with each of them

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<sup>160</sup> Ms. Emel'yanova Natal'ya (research fellow, Moscow State of University) in discussion with the author, July 21, 2020.

at the ‘strategic level’, though any official definition of the term is still lacking<sup>161</sup>. This, nevertheless, leads one to ponder as to what actually ‘strategic partnership’ means for India. Is the term too loosely used or is it really used to denote any special kind of relationship? This ambiguity becomes more pronounced in the context of India’s conferment of the same status to a vast array of such countries with which there are variations in the nature of its bilateral ties. For e.g. India has strategic partnership with Russia as well as China. Yet at the bilateral level, the relations that India shares with each of these countries are somewhat different. Whereas with Russia the relations are not marked by any major conflict of interests<sup>162</sup>, with China India has a long border dispute that has created a sense of mistrust and suspicion among them. Yet India has added, at least formally, the same qualifier to its ‘partnership’ with both the countries. This concern, however, has been addressed by different scholars in different ways. According to Ashok Behuria India’s forging of ‘strategic partnerships’ with a variety of countries is absolutely in consonance with India’s zeal of maintaining a strategically autonomous status in international politics. Referring to the ‘realist’ and ‘neo-liberal’ approaches to international relations, he points out that ‘strategic partnerships’ while allowing states to cooperate in multiple arenas also helps in augmenting a state’s relative power. India’s SPs can be looked at from such a prism. He has specifically referred to the cases of India’s SPs with the US and China to explain how the contemporary nature of international politics has drawn states into ‘complex web of interdependencies’ that, indeed, helps them to sail through the choppy waters of

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<sup>161</sup> Amb. P. S. Raghavan (former diplomat) in discussion with the author, May 18, 2018.

<sup>162</sup> Arun Mohanty, “Indo-Russian Strategic Partnership: A Reality Check,” *Mainstream* XLIX, no.16 (2011), accessed October 3, 2017, <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article2679.html>.

international politics in ways that are much more un-threatening than the Cold War era.<sup>163</sup>

However, one thing must be noted here. Though there is a lack of clarity among official circles as to the meaning of the term, there is, nevertheless, an unanimity regarding the fact that SPs do in no way imply any formal legally binding alliance among the signatories. They do not draw nations into legally binding commitments and are not directed towards any third party. They are strategic due to the fact that they envisage long-term cooperation and consultation on matters of vital interests to the countries involved. Former Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, views ‘strategic partnership’ somewhat as an extension of India’s policy of non-alignment in the context of ‘the new world of globalisation, interdependence, connectivity and multi-polarity.’<sup>164</sup> The Cold War era bloc politics lured India to adopt a policy of non-alignment by means of which it sought to maintain good relations with all the countries without showing allegiance to a particular bloc. Nevertheless, the disappearance of such bloc politics in the post-Cold War era has thrown open a number of possibilities for countries to forge partnerships with each other and India is no exception to this. For Sibal, India’s policy of entering into SPs with a range of countries having diverse levels of socio-economic development, political culture and so on, is consistent with its philosophy of engagement with countries of different international profiles ‘without getting caught into any rivalries or threatening international peace and stability’.<sup>165</sup> And when we place Russia in this context, India’s partnership with it not only reflects ‘common interests

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<sup>163</sup> “Piyush Garodia asked: What is the Function of Strategic Partnerships? Why has India Signed So Many of Them and Even with a Long-Term Adversary Like China?” Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, December 24, 2018, accessed July 19, 2020, <http://idsa.in/askanexpert/What-is-the-function-of-strategic-partnerships>.

<sup>164</sup> Kanwal Sibal, “‘Strategic’ Relations Suit India,” India Today, December 26, 2012, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/opinion/kanwal-sibal/story/strategic-relations-suit-india-india-today-125309-2012-12-26>.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

and proximity of approaches to the fundamental issues of development and economic progress<sup>166</sup> but is also a manifestation of the desire to continue the legacy of the Soviet period.<sup>167</sup> The SP provides a solid framework for long-term cooperation and all-round development of bilateral ties. The core objectives of this SP, as spelt out in various official documents, constitute mutual security, development and prosperity of the peoples of both the nations.<sup>168</sup> Amb. P. S. Raghavan refuses to view SP as identity of interests and exclusivity of relations given the changing geopolitical construct of the post-Cold War era. For him, in order to become strategic partners countries should be sensitive to each other's concerns and there must also be a commonality of strategic and political outlook which adds a degree of strength and consistency to such kind of partnership. According to Amb. Raghavan, when one talks about Indo-Russia SP one must remember that it is a very old one and retains a very special ethos from the Cold War days which may have gone into characterising the bilateral relations as 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' in 2010. From the Indian perspective, be it the case of defence cooperation or in the field of nuclear energy or even in various international fora, Russia is the only country which has professed unwavering support to India's interests in each and every sphere. Added to this is the geostrategic logic, which makes Russia a genuinely significant partner of India. If one looks at the geography of Russia one sees that it is a huge landmass spanning across the Eurasian continent and it borders many countries that are of vital strategic importance to India

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<sup>166</sup> "India-Russia Joint Statement During Visit of Prime Minister to Vladivostok," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, September 5, 2019, accessed July 21, 2020, [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31795/India\\_Russia\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_during\\_visit\\_of\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_to\\_Vladivostok](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31795/India_Russia_Joint_Statement_during_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Vladivostok)

<sup>167</sup> Kanwal Sibal, "'Strategic' Relations Suit India," India Today.

<sup>168</sup> "Delhi Declaration on Further Consolidation of Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, December 4, 2002, accessed August 14, 2020, [http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?53/Bilateral/Multilateral\\_Documents](http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?53/Bilateral/Multilateral_Documents)

like China, Central Asia, West Asia and across to Europe. Given such a geographical location it is but natural for India to maintain close relations with Russia.<sup>169</sup> Emphasizing the deep convergence of interests, former Ambassador Ajai Malhotra states that the term ‘strategic partnership’ has a special implication when applied in the context of India-Russia bilateral ties. They not only reflect the goodwill between the two sides but is also a testimony of their sensitivity to each other’s concerns. In addition, the common positions that the two sides adopt in various multilateral fora also make their strategic partnership, special and privileged one.<sup>170</sup> A study conducted by a Delhi-based think tank, Foundation for National Security Research (FNSR) has attempted to analyse the concept by assessing India’s strategic partnership with six countries namely the US, Russia, France, United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, on the basis of three parameters: defence cooperation, economic cooperation and politico-diplomatic cooperation. Among all the nations, the study observes, Russia occupies the first place, followed by the US and France, in terms of substantiality and sustainability of strategic partnership with India. Be it in the politico-diplomatic sphere or in the area of defence cooperation, Russia’s support to India has been forthright and its sensitivity to India’s concerns has been consistent. However, the study also observes that in order to make the Indo-Russia SP more sustainable and meaningful, the economic content of the relationship needs to be strengthened as it is the sole fragile part of the otherwise healthy relationship. With regard to the usage of the term ‘strategic partnership’ the study observes that though India has entered into ‘strategic partnerships’ with a host of other countries, apart from the aforementioned ones, it must take into consideration the actual

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<sup>169</sup> Amb. P. S. Raghavan (former diplomat) in discussion with the author, May 18, 2018.

<sup>170</sup> Dadan Upadhyay, “On Eve of Indo-Russian Summit, Ambassador Malhotra Lauds Special Relationship,” *Russia Beyond*, October 13, 2013, accessed February 7, 2020, [http://rbth.com/politics/2013/10/18/on\\_the\\_eve\\_of\\_indo-russian\\_summit\\_ambassador\\_malhotra\\_lauds\\_special\\_rela\\_30249](http://rbth.com/politics/2013/10/18/on_the_eve_of_indo-russian_summit_ambassador_malhotra_lauds_special_rela_30249).  
Amb. Ajai Malhotra (former diplomat) in discussion with the author, May 7, 2018.

connotation of the term before bestowing upon a country such status. In other words, ‘the respectable nomenclature of a Strategic Partner should be bestowed only on those countries with which there is a strong and mutually beneficial relationship in all the three sectors of political-diplomatic, defence and economic cooperation.’<sup>171</sup>

Nevertheless, a review of the prevalent literature as well as expert opinions point to the fact that they have tried to analyse the nature of India-Russia strategic partnership from the standpoint of commonality of interests in the changed geopolitical environment. This congruity of interests mainly lies in the respect for the principles of non-interference and territorial integrity, a shared vision for a revised world order, mutual misgivings about Western imperialist designs and the determination to fight the menace of terrorism which have equally victimized both the countries.<sup>172</sup> That is not to say that Indo-Russia ties are devoid of any contradictions, yet the legacy of their time-tested friendship and the extent to which they display sensitivity to each other’s core concerns imparts a qualitatively different character to their bilateral relations.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude it may be said that both India and Russia view SP as an important instrument of asserting themselves as a major centre of power in the otherwise ‘polycentric’ world order. For both the sides the main criterion of forming a SP is having a degree of commonality of interests and certain strategic aims which are long-term and multidimensional in nature. The officials of both sides believe that there is a congruence of views between them regarding various regional as well as international

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<sup>171</sup> Satish Kumar et al., *India’s Strategic Partners: A Comparative Assessment*, New Delhi: Foundation for National Security Research, 2011: 13, accessed July 21, 2020.  
[http://indianstrategicknowledge.com/web/Indias\\_Strategic.pdf](http://indianstrategicknowledge.com/web/Indias_Strategic.pdf).

<sup>172</sup> M. O. Slobodchikoff & Aakriti Tandon, “Shifting Alliances and Balance of Power in Asia: Transitions in the Indo-Russian Security Ties,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 2 (2017).

issues and it is against this background that effective cooperation and coordination among them is supposed to strengthen efforts towards the creation of a world order where various decisions shall be taken on the basis of a collective approach. The changed geopolitical dynamics has necessitated forging of similar partnerships with other nations. Yet, both the countries are aware of the fact that the amount of trust and faith that each can place in the other can hardly be replicated in their ties with other countries. For instance, no matter in what ways Russia tries to strengthen its relations with China or for that matter India with US, at the end of the day these relations come with a string of conditionalities and constraints. Such conditionalities, if imposed, has the potential of putting a brake on the global aspirations of both the nations and endanger their goal of becoming global powers. But such problems are not to be found in the interactions between India and Russia. In fact, both the nations are interested in each other's growth or to put in the words of Amb. D. B. Venkatesh Verma, "we rejoice in each other's strength and that has been a tradition for several decades now and that is also explainable by the fact that there is great geopolitical compatibility that is very rare to find in international relations."<sup>173</sup> And it is out of such ethos and sentiment that a strong sense of strategic trust has been born that has characterized the relations for several decades. Hence, it would not be an overstatement to say that in spite of their attempts to explore and strengthen newer strategic links, India and Russia will always cherish their decades-old friendship which was manifested in their upgradation of the 'strategic partnership' to the level of 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' so as to show that it is a special among the various other special partnerships.

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<sup>173</sup> *India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Ready for an Upgrade?* YouTube video, 1:52:29, posted by "Carnegie Live," June 26, 2020, accessed August 10, 2020, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=1YxSzCtv5ys>.

## CHAPTER IV – INDIA-RUSSIA DEFENCE RELATIONS

Defence co-operation has been the cornerstone of Indo-Russian relations ever since the time of the Cold War. In fact, the strategic mutuality that has characterized the ties between the two countries since the mid-1950s has strengthened in some sectors, defence being the most important among them. ‘The importance of defence relationship with Russia can be gauged from the fact that the expenditure on defence imports, since the late 1990s, has exceeded the spending on the rest of the imports from Russia’.<sup>174</sup> According to the latest Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reports, India’s arms arsenal comprises of 61 percent of imports from Russia while the latter continue to dominate the Indian arms market as the largest supplier followed by the US.<sup>175</sup>

It is a well-known fact that a nation’s foreign policy is guided solely by its national interests. Whenever two nations enter into any sort of interaction, it is bound to be driven by their own strategic calculations. The consolidation of Indo-Russian defence ties also has the same story to tell. The changing geopolitical landscape along with the congruence of their strategic interests and security concerns has led both the nations to continue and eventually strengthen their defence ties. But there have also been some strains in the relationship in recent times given India’s attempt towards diversifying its sources to include the US, France, Israel and various other nations. On the other hand, Russian overtures towards China and Pakistan for expanding defence relations have

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<sup>174</sup> Rajan Kumar, “Indo-Russia Defence Cooperation,” In *Significance of Indo-Russian Relations in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, V. D. Chopra (Delhi: Kalpaz, 2008), 141.

<sup>175</sup> Inferred from data available at “Importer/Exporter TIV Tables,” SIPRI, 2021, accessed April 19, 2022, [https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php).

also raised serious concerns in India. It is against this background, that the chapter will seek to analyse the changing nature of defence partnership between the two nations.

## **INDO-RUSSIAN DEFENCE COOPERATION AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION:**

The end of Cold War and the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union was a watershed event in the history of international relations. It not only led to the collapse of one of the hitherto superpowers but also changed the geopolitical map of the world. The world was now dominated by a single superpower, i.e. the US and the USSR became non-existent and from its ashes emerged what is known as modern 'Russia'. 'Russia became the inheritor state on which devolved the responsibility of carrying out all the treaty obligations, agreements and contracts entered into by the Soviet Union with other countries, including India.'<sup>176</sup> But since the stupendous transformation necessitated political and economic reforms in the Russian society, hence there was a change in its foreign policy orientation and it was 'structured on a new paradigm imbued with democratic reforms, integration with multilateral international financial institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and increasing economic interaction with the West.'<sup>177</sup> The first phase of Yeltsin era was characterized by a pro-West inclination which placed Indo-Russia ties on the backburner. Various initiatives were taken which belied the spirit of trust and friendship that characterized Indo-Soviet ties in the Cold War era. These include Russia's attempt to build friendly relations with China and Pakistan, dropping the security clause in the

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<sup>176</sup> Muchkund Dubey, *India's Foreign Policy: Coping with the Changing World* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2016), 264.

<sup>177</sup> B. M. Jain, "India and Russia: Reassessing the Time Tested Ties," *Pacific Affairs* (2003): 379

new Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1993<sup>178</sup>, yielding to US pressure on suspending the sale of cryogenic engines and related technologies to India<sup>179</sup>, urging India to join the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and applying full scope safeguards to future nuclear supply agreements with India thereby curtailing the latter's ability to use civilian nuclear energy programme to produce fissile materials for nuclear weapons<sup>180</sup>. The various disruptions that engulfed the Russian society and the economy also had a profound impact on the Indo-Russian defence relations. Various policy shifts were seen in the defence transactions, the most important being the rupee vs. rouble issue<sup>181</sup>, which were to the detriment of India's interests thereby leading to straining of relations. There was also the problem of over-reliance of India on Soviet Union for supply of military hardware which curtailed the former's ability to indigenize the process of defence production. In 1991 India's defence industry's picture was something like this: 70 percent of army armaments, 80 percent of air force's and 85 percent of navy's equipment were of Soviet origin<sup>182</sup>.

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<sup>178</sup> This treaty replaced the earlier Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation that was signed in 1971.

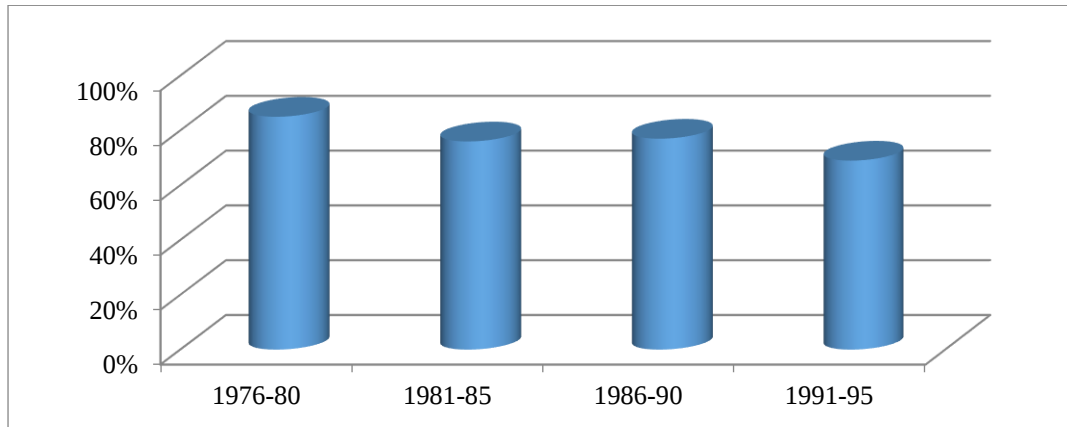
<sup>179</sup> Initially US opposed Russian decision to supply cryogenic engines to India on grounds that it violated the principles of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) to which Russia responded positively. But later after Yeltsin's visit to India in 1993 the decision was changed and the 1<sup>st</sup> cryogenic engine arrived in India in September 1998. This was followed by the arrival of six more such engines at an interval of six months each.

<sup>180</sup> Richard Weitz, "The Maturing of Russia-India Defence Relations," *Journal of Defence Studies* 6, no. 3 (2012): 77, accessed January 30, 2018, [http://www.idsa.in/jds/6\\_3\\_2012\\_TheMaturingofRussiaIndiaDefenceRelations\\_RichardWeitz](http://www.idsa.in/jds/6_3_2012_TheMaturingofRussiaIndiaDefenceRelations_RichardWeitz)

<sup>181</sup> Previously India paid for Soviet armaments in terms of export of various products which helped India in saving her foreign currency reserves. But with the disintegration of Soviet system this arrangement collapsed as Russia needed hard currency to stabilize its crippled Military Industrial Complex (MIC) and hence couldn't afford to deal with India on lenient terms as before.

<sup>182</sup> Jerome M. Conley, *Indo-Russian Military and Nuclear Cooperation: Lessons and Options for U.S. Policy in South Asia* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001), 62.

**Figure 1 Arms Imported by India from USSR/Russia as a percentage of total Indian arms imported**



Source: Jerome M. Conley, *Indo-Russian Military and Nuclear Cooperation: Lessons and Options for U.S. Policy in South Asia* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001), 65, Fig: 2.3

The pricking problem here was that since Soviet Union was the supplier of all these components hence, after the disintegration of the USSR, India found itself in a fix regarding the acquisition of the spare parts as the latter did not have the know-how to produce the same. This created a major hurdle in supply relations as a result of which the India's defence imports saw a sharp fall and this trend continued, at least, till the mid-1990s. Fig.1 shows how the percentage of India's imports from USSR/Russia decreased considerably in the 1990s as compared to the preceding years.

However, such a gloomy picture was somewhat cleared with the visits of Defence Minister Sharad Pawar to Russia twice in the year 1992 and the visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to India in 1993 which injected some degree of stability in the somewhat difficult relation. Realising the importance of structuring defence relations, a deal for the purchase of ten MiG-29 combat and training fighters worth about \$320

million was concluded.<sup>183</sup> Both the countries also concluded a long-term programme on defence cooperation till 2000. Again in 1998 during Yevgeny Primakov's visit to New Delhi this long-term agreement was extended till 2010 which envisioned the shifting of buyer-seller relation to joint development of new technologies.

### **PUTIN'S VISIT TO INDIA (2000):**

It can be well said that it was Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India in 2000 that infused new spirit and confidence in the post-Cold War bilateral relations between the two nations. The four-day visit of Putin in the month of October 2000 gave a tremendous boost to the multifaceted relation that the two sides enjoyed mostly during the Cold War period. During this visit the 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership' was signed which clearly envisaged 'the elevation of their multifaceted ties to an even higher and qualitatively new level, while imparting them with a specially close and dynamic character, both in the bilateral field and the international arena.'<sup>184</sup> More precisely it defined the contours of mutual interaction across a broad spectrum of issues ranging from defence, security and adoption of a coordinated approach to the creation of a multipolar world. This visit again placed the relations on a firm footing as it removed all the doubts and uncertainties that overshadowed Indo-Russian relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It marked the beginning of a new defence partnership with India entering into a contract with Russia for the supply of 300 T-90 tanks and also signing a protocol for the purchase of aircraft carrier, *Admiral Gorshkov*. The government also entered into another agreement that provided for the licensed

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<sup>183</sup> Rajendra K. Jain, "Indian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Major Powers," in *Regional and Global Regulation of International Trade*, ed. Francis G. Snyder (Oregon: Hart Publisher, 2002), 135.

<sup>184</sup> Press Trust of India (PTI), "Indo-Russian Strategic Cooperation for Enhanced Partnership," *The Hindu*, October 3, 2000, accessed July 5, 2018, <https://www.thehindu.com/2000/10/04/stories/02040009.htm>.

production of SU-30 MKI fighter at Hindustan Aeronautic Limited (HAL)<sup>185</sup>. Such agreements made it amply clear that in spite of the period of the disillusionment that followed the Soviet implosion, Russian arms industry could still depend on India as one of its important markets and a source of sustenance.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF ARMS TRANSACTIONS:**

India's desire to become one of the leading global powers and the threat perceptions emanating from its immediate neighbourhood compels the country to build up a robust system of defence preparedness. According to the SIPRI data India's arms imports have increased dramatically over the last five years and it has alone bought around 12 percent of the total global arms supply.<sup>186</sup> And the majority of armaments in its defence arsenal can be traced back to the Russian Military Industrial Complex, whose solvency and sustainability and even modernization<sup>187</sup> depends, to a great extent, on the huge market that it has been able to capture in India. Particularly given the urgency of expanding India's military capabilities and the lack of the capacity to indigenously produce high-end weapon technologies obviously makes India to look up to Russia as the supplier of its much-needed weapons system. For Russia, too, the importance of the Indian market emerges from the simple fact that China, the other hitherto significant customer of Russian military hardware<sup>188</sup>, has made great strides towards the path of indigenization of its defence industry which has consequently reduced its dependence on Russia as an

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<sup>185</sup> Devendra Kaushik, "Changing Perspective of India-Russia Relations," In *New Trends in Indo-Russian Relations*, ed. V. D. Chopra (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2003), 93.

<sup>186</sup> Ashok Swain, "India is the Largest Importer of Arms, then Why is the Army Chief Complaining?" Daily O, March 16, 2018, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/indian-army-arms-purchase-military-spending-defence-budget-china-sipri/story/1/22884.html>.

<sup>187</sup> Amb. Gleb Ivashentsov (former diplomat) in a discussion with the author, October 9, 2021.

<sup>188</sup> Till 2004 China occupied the first position on the list of Russia's largest military customers. But in 2004 a series of major orders like the SU-30MKI fighters by the Indian Air force and two Talwar class frigates by the Indian Navy, placed India above China as the largest importer of Russian arms. See Konstantin Makienko, "Military-Technical Cooperation Between Russia and India: Time for Radical Solutions," In *A New Era: India-Russia Ties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Konstantin Fets, et. al (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2015).

arms supplier and this has left India as the biggest market for Russian arms exports. Russian equipment comprised of about 75 percent of India's arms imports between 2004 and 2014. From 2009 to 2013, India and Russia signed deals amounting to approximately \$30 bn.<sup>189</sup> According to SIPRI reports Russian arms exports to India in 2011 and 2012 amounted to \$6.415 bn which constituted around 40 percent of total Russian arms exports for those two years.<sup>190</sup>

The defence ties that were revived during President Putin's visit in 2000 were further boosted in the following years with the purchase of several Russian equipment for India. These included SU-30MKI multi-role fighter aircraft, Il-78 mid-air tanker aircraft, Mi-17-IV military transport helicopters, Il-76 aircraft to be used as the platform for the Israeli Phalcon military transport helicopters, R-77 air-to-air missiles, Kilo class/type 877 E submarines, frigates, Ka-31 Helix airborne early warning helicopters, the aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorshkov* (renamed as INS Vikramaditya), MiG-29K carrier aircraft and Ka-31 helicopters; T-90 tanks, fire control radars, air and sea surveillance radars, combat radars, aircraft radars, anti-tank and anti-ship missiles besides other assorted military systems and equipment.<sup>191</sup>

The most important aspect of Indo-Russia defence cooperation is the level of trust that characterize the ties as exemplified by the nature of defence transactions between the two. India has been a recipient of sophisticated technologies and some high-end weapons from Russia which no other country has been offered. Again, India's defence arsenal comprises of certain advanced weapons system which it could have, otherwise,

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<sup>189</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia Remains India's Largest Arms Supplier (For Now)," *The Diplomat*, March 1, 2016, June 15, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/russia-remains-indias-largest-arms-supplier-for-now>.

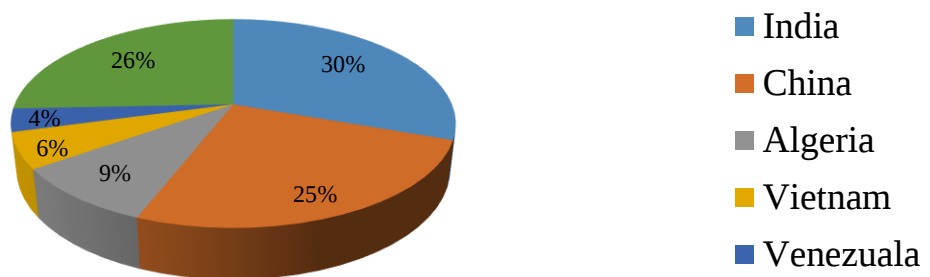
<sup>190</sup> Chandra Rekha, *India-Russia Post Cold War Relations: A New Epoch of Cooperation* (New Delhi: KW Publishers, 2016), 38.

<sup>191</sup> Brig Vinod Anand, "India-Russia Defence Cooperation Problems and Prospects", *India Strategic*, November 2008, accessed July 15, 2018, <http://www.indiastrategic.in/topstories203.htm>.

failed to procure from any other of its foreign supplier. Examples include INS Chakra, the BrahMos cruise missile, IL-76/78 transport planes, T-72 and T-90 tanks, Mi-helicopters, etc.

According to SIPRI (2017)<sup>192</sup> database, Russia has been the largest arms supplier after the US in the period between 2000 and 2017, its exports amounting to US\$108.7 bn of which India has received armaments amounting to US\$33.1bn which means almost 30 percent (in terms of Trend- Indicator Value or TIV) of Russia's arms exports have gone to India making it the largest recipient of Russian armaments (fig 2).

**Figure 2 Country wise share of Russian arms exports between 2000 and 2017.**



Source: SIPRI Database Calculated from <https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

The dominant position that Russia has held over the years as an external arms supplier of India is likely to remain in the near future also and such an assumption bodes well not only for India but Russia too. This is mainly due to the fact that after the fall of the Soviet Union the otherwise weak Russian defence industry was brought to life by the Indian requirements that not only helped in the revival of the Russian defence industry but also proved to be technologically productive. This fact has also been accepted in Russian official circles as evident from the acknowledgement of Vyacheslav

<sup>192</sup> Inferred from data available at: "Importer/Exporter TIV Tables," SIPRI (2017), accessed January 15, 2020, <https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>

Trubnikov, former Russian Ambassador to India (2004-2009) of India's role in keeping the 'Russian defence industry afloat.'<sup>193</sup> The Indian requirements for advanced weaponry stimulated the Russian defence industry and some of the advanced systems were also procured by Russia. Some of the examples include the Russian versions of the Indian Su-30MKI which was purchased by the Russian Air Force under the designation Su-30SM, the MiG-29 shipborne fighter for the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov, Project 11356 frigates for the Black Sea Fleet (based on the Talwar-class frigates) and submarines armed with the Club missile system. The Indian purchases of the 1990s and early 2000s also played a part in determining, to some extent, Russia's policy under the State Armament Programme to 2020.<sup>194</sup>

In order to improve its early warning system in the face of its increasing animosity with its neighbour Pakistan, IAF has also inducted three airborne warning and control systems (AWACS) developed on the basis of the Russian Ilyushin-76 military transport plane and fitted with Israel-made Phalcon radar system.<sup>195</sup> These three AWACS would, possibly, be aided by two more such planes as, after several years of deadlock over pricing issues, the Government is in the process of giving a final nod to the ambitious project.<sup>196</sup> Currently India also possess two indigenously built 'Netra' AWACS based on Embraer EMB-145 platform which proved its effectiveness during the Balakot strikes of 2019. The successful performance of the indigenously-built AWACS has now

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<sup>193</sup> Vyacheslav Trubnikov, "Relations between Russia and India Represent Real Strategic Cooperation," *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security* 16, no. 3 (2010): 7, accessed January 10, 2017, doi: 10.1080/19934270.2010.507071.

<sup>194</sup> Konstantin Makienko, "Military-Technical Cooperation Between Russia and India," In *A New Era: India-Russia Ties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 35.

<sup>195</sup> "India Set to Buy Additional Russian-Israeli AWACS Planes," Sputnik International, November 9, 2011, accessed January 6, 2019, <https://sputniknews.com/military/20111109168530024>.

<sup>196</sup> Rajat Pandit, "Government May Clear Purchase of Two More AWACS for Around \$800 Million," *The Times of India*, September 11, 2018, accessed November 15, 2018, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/government-may-clear-purchase-of-two-more-awacs-for-around-800-million/articleshow/65761377.cms>.

inspired the government to give a green signal for the development of six AWACS to be mounted on planes acquired from Air India.<sup>197</sup>

India-Russia military-technical cooperation is a long-term one and according to many experts this constitutes one of the most important foundations of the SP between the two countries. The India Russia Inter Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGCMTC-formed in 2000), presided over by the defence ministers of the respective countries, plays a vital role in pursuing this line of cooperation.<sup>198</sup> Such type of cooperation between the two sides assumes significance in light of two important aspects:

**Firstly**, Indian demands for armaments and sophisticated technologies have had a positive impact on the growth of the Russian defence industry. This has not only led to growing arms exports but has also resulted in increasing orders for modern weaponry from the Russian armed forces themselves.

**Secondly**, there has been a gradual transformation from a ‘buyer-seller’ model to a more cooperative framework involving joint development and production under which ‘the financial, technological and other project-related risks are shared.’<sup>199</sup> The development of the BrahMos supersonic missile and the Su-30MKI are the two most noteworthy examples in this respect.

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<sup>197</sup> Rajat Pandit, “India Plans Major Indigenous Project For Six Powerful ‘Eyes In The Sky’ AWACS,” The Times of India, December 16, 2020, accessed September 29, 2021, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-plans-major-indigenous-project-for-six-powerful-eyes-in-the-sky-awacs/articleshow/79766365.cms>.

<sup>198</sup> A. V. Kortunov et.al “70th Anniversary of Russia-India Relations: New Horizons of Privileged Partnership,” Russian International Affairs Council and Vivekananda International Foundation, October 11, 2017, accessed July 5, 2018, <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/activity/publications/70th-anniversary-of-russia-india-relations-new-horizons-of-privileged-partnership/>.

<sup>199</sup> Makienko, “Military-Technical Cooperation Between Russia and India: Time for Radical Solutions,” In *A New Era: India-Russia Ties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 38.

## JOINT VENTURE - I: THE BRAHMOS PROJECT

The Brahmos group of missiles constitute the most important manifestation of joint development project involving India and Russia. This joint venture project was started with an authorized capital of US\$250 million out of which 50.5 percent share was from India's side and 49.5 percent was from Russia's side.<sup>200</sup> In 1998 India and Russia signed an agreement that postulated the establishment of the BrahMos Aerospace for the purpose of producing BrahMos supersonic missiles. To meet increased orders from the Indian armed forces BrahMos Aerospace acquired Indian state-owned firm Keltec to manufacture and integrate BrahMos components and elements.<sup>201</sup> Having a flight range of up to 290 kms (this range has been increased to 450km after India joined the Missile Control Technology Regime MTCR) and a speed of Mach 3, BrahMos missiles can be launched from aircrafts, ships, submarines and ground vehicles. The uniqueness of the missile lies in the power, precision and the high speed reaching up to a level of Mach 3 which makes it quite difficult to intercept. Regarded as the stealthiest of all cruise missiles, this has the potential of enhancing India's strike capability thereby acting as a kind of force multiplier. In this connection India's rocket scientist Sivathanu Pillai states that when the air force also inducts the 'A' (air launched) version<sup>202</sup>, the Brahmos will be a war winner implying that that possession of the missile by all the three wings of the Indian armed forces will prove to be a force multiplier for India ensuring its rapid victory in any conflict.<sup>203</sup> While India wants to strengthen its security preparedness,

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<sup>200</sup> More details of the project are available at the Brahmos website: <http://brahmos.com/content.php?id=1>. A brief history of the same is available at: <http://cast.ru/products/articles/the-brahmos-project-history-and-outlook.html>.

<sup>201</sup> "BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile," Army Technology, April 24, 2013, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://www.army-technology.com/projects/brahmossupersonicru/>.

<sup>202</sup> The Indian Air Force has inducted the air launched version of the missile in 2020 giving a stimulus to India's combat capability.

<sup>203</sup> Rakesh Krishnan Simha, "Surgical striker: How the BrahMos is Becoming India's War Winner," Russia Beyond, April 10, 2017, accessed May 3, 2020, [http://rbth.com/blogs/stranger\\_than\\_fiction/2017/04/10/surgical-striker-how-the-brahmos-is-becoming-indias-war-winner\\_738872](http://rbth.com/blogs/stranger_than_fiction/2017/04/10/surgical-striker-how-the-brahmos-is-becoming-indias-war-winner_738872).

given the threat it perceives from its neighbourhood, the induction of such an advanced weapons system in the Indian arsenal proves to be a strategic asset. Besides, plans are also there to make certain improvements making the missile system all the more daunting. The BrahMos II, a hypersonic missile still under development by the Russian and Indian sides, is estimated to travel at a speed of more than Mach 5. Hypersonic weapons are considered to be extremely manoeuvrable and shooting them down has been compared to shooting a bullet with another bullet.<sup>204</sup> This might prove to be game-changer given the extreme velocity of the missile which will make it virtually impossible for any nation to detect it. The upgradation of the BrahMos has particularly been a cause of concern for China which has consistently issued stern warnings against India's deployment of such missiles on the border region thereby increasing competitiveness and antagonism in Sino-Indian relations.<sup>205</sup> However, given India's security requirements and its urge to pace up with its neighbour's military modernization drive, the BrahMos missile, particularly its upgraded versions, will definitely enhance the defence capabilities of India.

The decision of India and Russia to supply such a state-of-the-art weapon to third countries also bears relevance, particularly for India, which has hitherto been among the top five arms importers of the world. According to data available with SIPRI (TIV terms), between 2012 and 2016 the average value of arms exported by India per annum has amounted to US\$182 million.<sup>206</sup> India seeks to increase this value to US\$5 billion

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<sup>204</sup> Caleb Larson, "India and Russia's Missile Alliance: Why BrahMos Family of Missiles Could Be a Game-Changer," The National Interest, March 24, 2020, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/india-and-russias-missile-alliance-why-brahmos-family-of-missiles-could-be-a-game-changer>.

<sup>205</sup> Rezaul H Laskar, "China warns India against deploying BrahMos missile in Arunachal Pradesh," Hindustan Times, August 23, 2016, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-warns-india-against-deploying-brahmos-missile-in-arunachal-pradesh/story-ui0psBJZ3WOvn3aJzLCqIJ.html>.

<sup>206</sup> Inferred from data available at the SIPRI website, accessed January 18, 2020, <https://sipri.org/databases/financial-value-global-arms-trade>.

within a decade and in this respect the sale of the BrahMos missile, the most advanced weaponry in India's arsenal, seems to be an attractive proposition. Talks about the sale of BrahMos to third countries has been going on for quite a few years and the potential clients include Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam (though the Indian government has recently denied any such discussion with Vietnam) in South Asia, Chile in Latin America, UAE in the Middle East and South Africa in the African continent. Reports were, however, doing rounds that a deal with the Philippines would be sealed in 2020. However, in March 2021 the government of India concluded an agreement with the government of the Philippines for the sale of defence equipment which is also likely to include BrahMos. This can be seen as a major step towards opening up of other markets thereby giving a boost to India's defence exports.

Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the fact that the BrahMos project also has the potential to reap significant benefits for Russia. On one hand, while the sustenance of the Russian economy, to a great extent, depends on the export of the advanced defence technologies that it possesses, on the other hand India is the only country with which it is willing to share the most 'sensitive' technologies. It is important for India to seize this opportunity and take initiatives to embark upon similar such projects that would help it in promoting its defence exports but would also give a fillip to its 'Make in India' initiative. For Russia, this would enable it to reinforce its special position in the Indian defence sector and expand its defence technology market.

#### **JOINT VENTURE – II: SU-30MKI**

Of all the military aircrafts produced in India under Russian licenses, the Su-30MKI heavy multi-role fighter aircraft is the most important one specifically designed to meet Indian needs. It is jointly developed by the Sukhoi Design Bureau of Russia and the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) of India. The development of Su-30MKI started

in 1995 and it was in the year 2000, that a contract was signed between HAL and Rosoboronexport for the licensed production of the aircraft in India. The aircraft is a development of the Su-27 (Flanker) fighter aircraft designed by the Sukhoi Design Bureau. Whereas the first Su 30MKI, designed by Russia, was inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) in 2002, the first indigenously assembled aircraft developed by HAL was inducted into the IAF in 2004.<sup>207</sup> Regarded as the most dynamic form of aircraft in the IAF inventory, it has undergone various stages of modernization and is capable of performing multiple roles ranging from a precision bomber to a strike fighter, an AWACS killer and a dedicated air superiority fighter.<sup>208</sup> This will help in augmenting the strength and capability of the IAF and given the presence of the two hostile neighbours, such upgradations and adoption of cutting edge technologies becomes an absolute necessity for meeting India's security requirements. Particularly, the plan to upgrade the Su-30 fighters with munitions such as the AL-41 thrust vector engines, Ibris-E radars, R-37M hypersonic air-to-air missile<sup>209</sup> and the like might help India in enhancing air combat capability and enable it to counter the threats posed by China's highly modernized air defence systems. India is also looking forward to upgrading the Su-30MKIs into 'Super Sukhois' which will consist of advanced weapons system to enhance the jet's stealth features<sup>210</sup>. On materialization this may very well prove to be

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<sup>207</sup> For further details: "Su-30MKI Multirole Fighter Aircraft," Airforce Technology, May 22, 2020, accessed November 14, 2020, <https://airforce-technology.com/projects/su-30mki-multirole-fighter-aircraft-india>.

<sup>208</sup> "Indian Su-30MKI fleet could reach staggering 350 fighters as HAL expects further orders for license production," Defence Aviation Post, April 1, 2020, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://defenceaviationpost.com/2020/04/indian-su-30mki-fleet-could-reach-staggering-350-fighters-as-hal-expects-further-orders-for-license-production/>

<sup>209</sup> Also "India Upgrades Su-30MKI to the Most Fearsome Fighter Jet in the Region," Bulgarianmilitary.com, October 17, 2019, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/bulgarianmilitary.com/2019/10/17/india-upgrades-su-30-mki-to-the-most-fearsome-fighter-jet-in-the-region/>

<sup>210</sup> Also Manu Pubby, "India aims to export Sukhoi upgrade," The Economic Times, August 20, 2019, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-aims-to-export-sukhoi-upgrade/artcileshow/70746927.cms?from=mdr>.

a competitor to the Chinese advanced jets like the Su-35 and J-31. Apart from developing India's combat capabilities, such phased upgradations will also open up new export markets for India. As the HAL chief has rightly pointed out that there are several countries which use versions of the Russian origin aircraft like Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Algeria. And once India successfully retrofits the jets with such modern technologies, it can also sell them to these countries for the sustenance of the latter's aircrafts.<sup>211</sup>

Though, the Su-30MKI may be regarded as an important hallmark of the implementation of the 'Make in India' initiative, one point to be noted is that in some cases due to unavailability of Russian-origin spare parts, India has been forced to procure the same from Israel and France. The problem of spare parts has been a persistent issue between the two nations, which shall be taken up in the subsequent sections of this chapter. However, to state briefly, one way of addressing the problem is to adopt a less time consuming and a cost-effective approach of engaging in the joint production and manufacturing of spares that can boost the operational capabilities of the fleet.<sup>212</sup> Such a step might go a long way in removing one of the major hurdles of India-Russia defence cooperation and might even make the two nations an important part of the global supply chain of weapons.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Steps in direction, however, have been taken as evident from the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed between India and Russia on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019, to 'operationalize a mechanism for collaboration on joint manufacturing of spare parts, components, aggregates and other products for the maintenance of Russian-origin arms and defence equipment in India under the Make in India programme through the transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures.' Suhasini Halder and Dinakar Peri, "India Russia to Conclude Mutual Logistics Agreement," The Hindu, November 4, 2019, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://thehindu.com/news/national/india-russia-to-conclude-mutual-logistics-agreement/article29881623.ece>.

### JOINT VENTURE - III GLONASS

Another area of cooperation, in terms of joint development, has been in the area of satellite navigation system. It is a known reality that India, in order to boost its military prowess, must have access to a proper satellite technology. This enables the defence forces to have proper navigation, surveillance and tracking facilities. The urge to create an indigenous navigation system was felt by India, particularly, after the Kargil War of 1999 when the lack of proper GPS data created various constraints for the Indian side. Consequently, India developed its own satellite programme called the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), rechristened as Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) in 2016. With this, India enters into the club of nations having their own satellite systems like the US, Russia, Japan, EU and China (among all these nations only US and Russian systems allow for global coverage). This has, in a way, destroyed the monopoly that the US had, for several years, been enjoying regarding tracking of location through its indigenously developed GPS. Nevertheless, even before the system became functional in India, it was Russia that came to former's assistance in this matter. During the visit of President Putin to India in 2004, both the countries started discussions on Indian role in the GLONASS system which was followed by an agreement in 2005 for the joint development and use of the same. This agreement postulated the launch of GLONASS-M satellite from Indian launch vehicles and the joint development of the GLONASS-K variant of satellite. In 2016 this was further supplemented by another agreement whereby the two sides (ROSCOSMOS of Russia and ISRO of India) agreed to set up ground base stations in each other's nations for their respective navigation satellites (Russia in Bangalore and India in Novosibirsk).<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> S. Sarkar, P. Banerjee and A. Bose, "A Review of 36 Years of GLONASS Service from India," *Gyroscopy and Navigation* 9, no. 4 (2018), accessed August 25, 2020, doi: 10.1134/S2075108718040065.

Though India was also partnering with the EU for the Galileo system yet the same was to be used for civilian purposes only. Hence, India's joining of the GLONASS project assumed significance in view of the latter's military usage. And given India's geographical location being surrounded by hostile neighbours, the access to satellite navigation for precision guidance and real time tracking of enemy movements becomes absolutely vital. Hence, when Russia offered Indian access to its GLONASS technology in return for launching GLONASS satellites from Indian launch pads, the latter readily accepted it.

## **DEFENCE RELATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF MAKE IN INDIA INITIATIVE**

India's defence sector is heavily invested in imports of defence equipment with almost 60 percent of its weapons being procured from foreign markets.<sup>214</sup> Yet in order to strengthen its defence capabilities and increase the competitiveness of the defence sector, India needs to encourage the development of its domestic defence industry. In addition, to establish itself as a major global as well as a regional player, the development of a strong defence industrial base is not only a choice but a necessity. It is in view of this imperative that the Indian government has opted to increase self-reliance in the defence sector through the much talked about 'Make in India' policy. It urges for domestic demands to be met by domestic industries thereby paving the way for reduced dependence on imports. The Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), which lays down the procedural framework for defence acquisitions, seeks to promote indigenization, development and manufacturing of defence equipment, platforms, systems and sub-systems, thus giving a further boost to the 'Make in India' policy.

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<sup>214</sup> Dalip Bharadwaj, "Make in India in Defence Sector: A Distant Dream," Observer Research Foundation, May 7, 2018, accessed September 3, 2020, <http://orfonline.org/expert-speak/make-in-india-defence-sector-distant-dream>.

Preference has been given to ‘Buy (Indian)’, ‘Buy and Make (Indian)’ and ‘Make’ categories over ‘Buy (Global)’ and ‘Buy and Make (Global)’ categories.<sup>215</sup> Further in 2017 the government also flouted the model of Strategic Partnership whereby the defence sector was opened up for private sector participation to attract foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to tie up with these firms for stimulating indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities.<sup>216</sup> However, these initiatives have so far failed to produce expected results. A 2019 report in the Times of India suggested that projects worth over Rs 3.5 lakh crore are still stuck in various phases of procurement and no final agreement for launch of production has still been signed. These include the Kamov 226T helicopters, naval utility helicopters, diesel-electric submarines, future infantry combat vehicles, 12 warships, fighter jets and medium transport aircraft.<sup>217</sup> Nevertheless, and also as per the suggestions of the report, the India-Russia joint project for the manufacture of Kalashnikov AK-203 assault rifles in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, might be expected to take off soon with long-pending deal<sup>218</sup> for the same being finalized between the two nations in August 2020. However, until and unless the process of production and the weapon’s induction into the armed forces is expedited, the mere conclusion of the deal holds little value. And it is mainly because of this reason that we have such a long-list of pending projects. Added to that, if one looks at the contracts signed by the current Modi government, one will notice that all the purchases hitherto made have been off-the-shelf with no transfer of technology, be it the case of

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<sup>215</sup> For details Make in India, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://makeinindia.com/sector/defence-manufacturing>.

<sup>216</sup> Defence Manufacturing Sector Achievements Report, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Department of Defence Production, February 13, 2017, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://makeinindia.com/article/-/v/defence-manufacturing-sector-achievement-report>.

<sup>217</sup> Rajat Pandit, “No Major ‘Make in India’ Defence Project Has Taken off in 6 yrs,” Times of India, December 2, 2019, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/no-major-make-in-india-defence-project-has-taken-off-in-6-yrs/articleshow/72323928.cms>.

<sup>218</sup> The deal for the same, however, has been signed at the 21<sup>st</sup> India-Russia annual summit held in December 2021 in New Delhi.

the Rafale jets from France or the S400 missiles from Russia or the Apache helicopters from the US. Nevertheless ‘Make in India’, if thought in terms of indigenization of India’s defence industrial base, has a long way to go before becoming a reality. So, the best option, for the time being, for India would be to go for licensed production which it had undertaken even between the early 1960s and the late 1980s like the production of the MiG-21 and MiG-27 fighter jets, T-55 and T-72 tanks, missile corvettes from the Soviet Union and even the Jaguars from France.<sup>219</sup> India can enter into contracts with foreign companies for the joint production and development of various weapons that will have the potential of taking forward the former’s ‘Make in India’ initiative. Prof. S. K. Pandey has pointed out that since ‘Make in India’ in terms of indigenization will not happen too soon, the best possible option for India is to go for licensed production with a fair amount of local inputs and technology and also for joint development and production of weapon platforms. In this context he has cited the example of the BrahMos as a partial fulfilment of the ‘Make in India’ initiative. Although the major portion of the components and inputs came from Russia, India in its own way has contributed to its development and most importantly much of the production of the missile also took place in India.<sup>220</sup> Besides, Russia seems to capture a very special place in the entire ‘Make in India’ scheme. Russia is the only country which has shared advanced and sophisticated weapons systems and technology with India and that too without imposing stringent terms and conditions unlike the Western suppliers. While this presents Russia as an attractive defence partner for India, it also provides an additional leverage for the former vis-à-vis other nations in capturing the lucrative defence market of the latter. Though India has opted for diversification of defence

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<sup>219</sup> Ash Rossiter and Brendon Cannon, “Making Arms in India? Examining New Delhi’s Renewed Drive for Defence-Industrial Indigenization,” *Defence Studies* 19, no. 4 (2019), accessed September 12, 2020. [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3555592](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3555592)

<sup>220</sup> Prof. S.K. Pandey (distinguished professor and scholar) in discussion with the author, September 10, 2020.

suppliers, Russia is and shall continue to remain a dominant player in India's defence market. And most importantly, whatever business India conducts with any country, be it Russia or US or France or Israel, the main aim should be to eventually move towards the path of developing India's own technology so as to realize the ultimate goal of attaining self-reliance. In that case, whichever country is willing to supply more advanced technologies that might go a long way in enhancing India's indigenous defence capabilities (obviously India will also have to put in sincere efforts for localizing and modernizing those technologies), it is but natural for India to accord priority to that country in its policy calculations. And by reviewing the history of military transactions with various countries, Russia seems to have an edge over all others in this respect. Russia can also offer India new and exclusive state-of-the-art technologies that is desperately needed by the latter in order to enhance its defence preparedness. New projects of mutual interest must be identified which might also give a boost to the 'Make in India' initiative. As Brig. Kanwal has pointed out that Russian Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) need to demonstrate their competitiveness and enter into joint ventures with Indian public and private players to bid for future contracts in accordance with the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) of 2016.<sup>221</sup> This has the prospect of attracting more purchases from New Delhi which will also be vital for the survival of the Russian defence industry.

### **BILATERAL MILITARY EXERCISES: INDRA:**

Another noteworthy aspect of Indo-Russian defence diplomacy is the conduct of the bilateral military exercise INDRA. Though it started in 2003 involving only the naval

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<sup>221</sup> Brig Gurmeet Kanwal, "Defence Cooperation: India-Russia Strategic Partnership in Recess," Vivekananda International Foundation, October 23, 2018, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2018/october/23/defence-cooperation-india-russia-strategic-partnership-in-recess>.

forces of India and Russia, later it was extended to include the army and the air force. These exercises help in strengthening security cooperation between the two countries and in consolidating the existing strategic partnership. In addition, they also help in boosting interoperability between the two armed forces which in turn might help in addressing various challenges like terrorism and maritime piracy. In 2014 the air forces of both the nations participated in their first ever joint exercise named ‘Avia INDRA-2014’. Since much of the Indian aircrafts are of Russian origin, such exercises help Indian air force personnel to acquire knowledge about latest Russian technologies. Till 2017 these exercises were conducted as a single service exercise alternately between the two countries, which were then upgraded to the Joint Tri-Service Exercise in Vladivostok. The latest naval and army versions of the exercise were held respectively in the Baltic Sea and Volvograd in 2021. While the naval exercises aimed at increasing interoperability between the two navies and strengthening understanding of complex maritime operations and army exercises aimed at facilitating joint training between the two armies for conducting counter-terror operations under the UN mandate.<sup>222</sup>

## **EMERGING ISSUES IN INDO-RUSSIA DEFENCE**

### **COOPERATION:**

In recent times, notwithstanding the fact that Russia still occupies the topmost position in the Indian arms market, certain trends have developed in India’s arms market that is stipulated to pose challenge in the often-hailed defence ties between India and Russia.

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<sup>222</sup> Dinakar Peri, “Indian, Russian navies conclude Exercise Indra Navy in Baltic Sea,” The Hindu, July 30, 2021, accessed December 3, 2021, <http://thehindu.com/news/national/india-russia-hold-mega-naval-war-game-in-baltic-sea/article35621690.ece>.

## PROBLEM WITH SUPPLY OF SPARES:

First and foremost, there has been a persistent complaint on part of India regarding the inadequate supply and unreliability of Russian spare parts. And this is not just a recent development but can be traced back even to the Soviet era purchases. Though prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, defence supplies from the Soviets proved to be of immense benefit to India, yet the issue of spare parts constituted a major bottleneck in these transactions. In fact, too much reliance on Soviet weaponry proved to be a bane for India after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. The period following the breakup of the USSR witnessed a scramble for spares on part of India from various other suppliers scattered around the former Soviet Union, a task that was previously coordinated by a central Soviet ministry. Not only was India in a fix regarding the procurement of spare components but there were also instances where Indian requests for hardware were turned out by the newly independent states. According to Indian military officials such shortages of spare parts led the Indian military to:

‘Ground as many as 50 percent of the fighter planes in its air force...consider mothballing up to one-third of its tanks and armoured personnel carriers...shut down assembly lines producing Soviet-designed T-72 tanks...cancel major army and naval exercises’.<sup>223</sup>

In the 1990s, the Indians complained about the poor maintenance and insufficient supply of spare parts for the Russian-built aircraft, including the Sukhoi interceptors.<sup>224</sup> However as Brig Vinod Anand has pointed out that the Russians alone are not to be

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<sup>223</sup> Molly Moore, “India’s Military Hit by Soviet Collapse,” The Washington Post, October 4, 1992, accessed December 5, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/10/04/indias-military-hit-by-soviet-collapse/b175b1a5-6cd2-40fe-8eb6-46656381204f/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.8304717ae5bb](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/10/04/indias-military-hit-by-soviet-collapse/b175b1a5-6cd2-40fe-8eb6-46656381204f/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8304717ae5bb).

<sup>224</sup> Richard Weitz, *Global Security Watch-Russia: A Reference Handbook* (Praeger Security International: 2010), 25.

blamed for such lapses as there had also been negligence on part of India while entering into such negotiations.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, complaints from the Indian side have not seemed to subside and even in the recent past there have been reports regarding the poor state of equipment or unavailability of spare parts which has, particularly, been a cause of concern for the Navy and the Indian Air Force as in case of Sukhoi Su-30 fighter aircraft, MiG-29 naval fighters, Kamov and Mi-series helicopters. Apart from that the delay in supply of spares for T-72 and T-90 tanks; BMP-2 infantry combat vehicles; Smerch and Grad multibarrel launcher; Kvadrat, Pechora, Shilka and Tunguska air defence systems has also adversely affected the serviceability of these platforms thereby casting a negative impact on the combat effectiveness of the armed forces.<sup>226</sup> However, as a panacea to this problem, in 2019 both the sides agreed to an Inter-Governmental Agreement to upgrade their defence relations by providing for the manufacture of spare parts and components for Russian-origin weapon systems in India, which was finally signed in 2020. This agreement provides for a transfer of technology from Russia for manufacture of spare parts in India under joint production programme. Given the priority accorded by the government to the 'Make in India' programme, this initiative is supposed to add a noteworthy dimension to the defence partnership, though how far it can address the diminishing serviceability of Russian-made weapons platform is yet to be seen.

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<sup>225</sup> The negotiators did not go into the minute details while concluding agreements which excluded life cycle support clause. Again, there were also instances where the users of the equipment from absent from actual negotiations. And apart from all these lacunae at the official level there were also certain climate induced problems that led to greater wear and tear of equipment. Brig. Vinod Anand, "India Russia Defence Cooperation Problems and Prospects," India Strategic, November 2008, accessed July 15, 2018, [www.indiastrategic.in/topstories203.htm](http://www.indiastrategic.in/topstories203.htm).

<sup>226</sup> Vivek Raghuvanshi, "Russia Allows Companies to Work with India to Supply Weapon Spares," Defense News, January 23, 2017, accessed September 23, 2020, <http://defensenews.com/pentagon/2017/01/23/russia-allows-companies-to-work-with-india-to-supply-weapon-spares/>.

## PRICING PROBLEMS AND DELAYS IN DELIVERY:

Delays in deliveries and cost overruns have been the two other major problems that the Indian defence contracts have faced and, in this respect, the most noteworthy example has been the saga of INS Vikramaditya. By an agreement in 2004 India decided to buy the carrier *Admiral Gorshkov* from Russia to replace the ageing INS Virat that was supposed to retire in 2007. It was decided that India would only have to pay the cost for upgrading the carrier while the hull itself would be delivered to India free of cost. Yet, just before the delivery, there emerged certain contradictions whereby the Russian side, being unable to stick to the terms of the contract, demanded more money for the carrier's refurbishment that took the cost to more than US\$2bn, a huge leap from the original estimate. However, after several rounds of negotiations and re-negotiations *Admiral Gorshkov*, now renamed as *INS Vikramaditya*, was handed over to the Indian Navy in 2013. The delay in delivery was not only due to disputes associated with cost overruns but also because of technical difficulties as was evident from the engine failure that the vessel encountered during sea trials in September 2012. Russian shipbuilders also faced delays in delivering multi-role frigates and modernizing a diesel submarine for the Indian Navy<sup>227</sup>.

The delivery of Akula II class Nerpa nuclear submarine, which Russia promised to give India on a 10-year lease, also suffered delays due to production issues and an onboard accident caused by accidental release of toxic Freon gas from a fire suppression system during trials in the Sea of Japan.<sup>228</sup> In 2006 Indian government signed a contract with Russia for the supply of three Talwar class frigates the delivery of which, according to

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<sup>227</sup> Richard Weitz, *Global Security Watch-Russia*, 27.

<sup>228</sup> "India's Nuke Submarine Delivery Could Be Delayed," *The Indian Express*, October 9, 2009, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/indias-nuke-submarine-delivery-could-be-delayed/>

government sources, were delayed by one year to fourteen months.<sup>229</sup> Such problems, at times, created disquiet between the two and such grievances were sometimes vented out in official meetings. For instance, at the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the India-Russia Inter-governmental Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) the then Defence Minister of India Shri A. K. Antony raised the issue of ‘delays in receiving export clearances for vital equipment needed to repair Russian weapons systems India has already purchased.’<sup>230</sup> Another important development of contemporary times has been the decision of India to back out of the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) project after a span of 11 years<sup>231</sup> due to various differences over cost-sharing and technological capabilities.

### **EXPANSION OF INDIA’S IMPORT:**

Russia’s urge to retain its dominant position in Indian arms market has been met with tough competition arising from the likes of US, Britain, France and Israel. In fact, it has been pointed out quite often that the persistent delays in meeting delivery deadlines coupled with unreliable character of Russian equipment have forced India to look for other sellers round the globe. And added to this is the desire on part of India to enhance its defence preparedness and combat effectiveness that requires the most advance type of weapons in its defence arsenal.

According to Konstantin Makienko, a Russian analyst, ‘the US has become the No 1 arms supplier to India in terms of the value of new contracts’ and that the analysis of these defence contracts show that India has, in fact, ‘opted for American weaponry only

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<sup>229</sup> “Talwar Class Frigate,” Indian Defence, August 25, 2011, accessed February 6, 2016, [indiandefence.com/threads/talwar-class-frigate.10524](http://indiandefence.com/threads/talwar-class-frigate.10524).

<sup>230</sup> Richard Weitz, “The Maturing of Russia-India Defence Relations,” *Journal of Defence Studies*: 86-87.

<sup>231</sup> An Inter-governmental Agreement for the project was signed in 2007 which aims to co-produce a multi-role stealth fighter.

in those product categories where Russia simply has no competitive alternatives to offer'.<sup>232</sup> Recent reports have also shown that in the past two years US has topped the list of countries with which India has signed contracts for armaments whereas Russia has slipped to the fourth position. India has bought some high-end weapons from the US and in 2009 it imported some \$237 million in military equipment that, in 2013, amounted to \$1.9billion. Between 2006 and 2013 India purchased from the US the USS Trenton, new fighter jets and advanced C-130J Hercules military transport aircrafts along with related training, equipment and services.<sup>233</sup> In fact with the signing of the Defence Framework Agreement in 2005 the defence relations between the two countries have gathered a forward momentum and is posited to further deepen and bolster over time. The consolidation of the defence ties between the two countries is also dictated by the complex geopolitical realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century spearheaded by the growing assertiveness of China, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). While US factors predominantly in New Delhi's China policy, Washington also views cooperation with India as a means of counterbalancing the growing Chinese might.<sup>234</sup> In this context three foundational agreements become noteworthy that have given a new strategic dimension to the Indo-US defence ties- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA). India has also been given the status of a 'Major Defence Partner' by the US in 2016<sup>235</sup>, granted Tier I

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<sup>232</sup> Konstantin Makienko, "Where does India's Strategic and Defence Relationship with Russia stand in a world of two superpowers?" The Economic Times, July 13, 2018, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/where-does-indias-strategic-defence-relationship-with-russia-stand-in-a-world-of-two-superpowers/articleshow/50407554.cms>.

<sup>233</sup> Runa Das, *Revisiting Nuclear India: Strategic Culture and (In)Security Imaginary* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2015).

<sup>234</sup> "U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific," Trump White House, May 1, 2021, accessed October 18, 2021, <http://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>.

<sup>235</sup> "U.S. Security Cooperation with India," U.S Department of State, January 20, 2021, accessed September 25, 2021, <http://state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-india/>.

Strategic Trade Authorization Status in 2018<sup>236</sup> and has been consistently referred to as a critical player in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>237</sup>

Another country that has come to occupy an important place in India's defence sector is Israel with India emerging as the top most importer of Israeli arms with arms trade between the two nations reaching US\$715 million in 2017 (SIPRI data in TIV terms). In 2002 India imported two radar systems called Green Pine in order to bolster its missile defence system. There has also been technological cooperation between the two focusing mainly on surveillance radars, drones and missile systems. Major arms transactions between India and Israel include 3 Phalcon AWACS radar systems, 18 low-level quick-reaction Spyder missile systems, four EL/M-2083 Aerostat radars and the Barak ship-based air defence system.<sup>238</sup> However, one of the most noteworthy features of the Indo-Israel defence cooperation is the boost that Israel is providing to the 'Make in India' initiative. Both the sides agreed for the joint production and development of 'Medium Range Surface to Air Missile' (MRSAM) which ultimately culminated in the signing of a US\$2billion deal for the supply of advanced MRSAM having an indigenous content of 80 percent.<sup>239</sup> In 2017 another contract was signed between Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Israel Aerospace Industry (IAI) to jointly produce four long range surface to air missile (LRSAM) for the Indian Navy thereby boosting the 'Make in India' programme.

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<sup>236</sup> Tier I Strategic Trade Authorization Status allows a country to have license-free access to certain high-end sensitive technologies of the US. India is the third non-NATO country after Japan and South Korea to have been granted this status.

<sup>237</sup> "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision," U.S. Department of State, November 4, 2019, accessed September 25, 2021, <http://state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>.

<sup>238</sup> Joseph Noronha, "Israel and Aero India 2011", *Indian Defence Review* 26, no. 1 (2011): 70.

<sup>239</sup> S. N. Misra, "Indo-Israel Defence Cooperation: The Road Ahead," *Indian Defence Review*, April 14, 2018, accessed January 8, 2020, [www.indiandefencereview.com/news/indo-israel-defence-cooperation-the-road-ahead](http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/indo-israel-defence-cooperation-the-road-ahead).

Yet the most striking manifestation of India's outreach to other suppliers has been the issue of India's 126 medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) global tender. After several years of flight-testing French Dassault's Rafale emerged victorious beating Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet, Lockheed Martin's F-16IN Super Viper, Russian MiG-35, Saab's Gripen C/D and Eurofighter's Typhoon. The most noteworthy aspect of this contract was that in spite of the presence of other less expensive alternatives like the Russian MiG-35 and the European Typhoon <sup>240</sup>, the Indian side chose the French bid over everything else. This, however, did not go down well with the Russians and it was even contended that the subsequent cancellation, by Russia, of INDRA-series joint naval and army exercises in April and June 2011 respectively, was a manifestation of the Russian disquiet over the issue. Experts have pointed out that with the growth of India's economy, the improved financial clout of the country has led it to opt for high priced technological equipment and the Rafale episode was simply a reflection of such a trend.<sup>241</sup>

Now, while, India given its rapid economic growth and drive for indigenization, has attempted to diversify its import, Russia has also looked beyond India to other players such as China and Pakistan in its drive to attract more customers to its arms market. In 2014 Russia withdrew the arms embargo on Pakistan and signed a defence partnership agreement with it that has ever since enhanced defence cooperation between the two countries. There have been official visits by both sides to each other's countries to

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<sup>240</sup> In July 2015 the Eurofighter had written to the government offering to reduce 20% of the price it had earlier quoted for Typhoon. Ajai Shukla, "How Modi's Rafale Defence Deal Has Left India Lagging China, Pakistan," September 22, 2018, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2165161/how-modis-rafale-defence-deal-has-left-india-lagging-china>.

<sup>241</sup> Konstantin Makienko, "Military-Technical Cooperation Between Russia and India," In *A New Era: India-Russia Ties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 40.

enhance defence cooperation and based on an agreement signed in 2015 Pakistan received four Mi-35M helicopters in 2017. This was hailed to be a historic development given the excessive dependence of Pakistan on US military equipment for over six decades.<sup>242</sup> With US curtailing down military aid to Pakistan, the latter has found a new partner in Russia and such a bonhomie has raised alarm bells in Indian political circles. Particularly given the nature of defence linkage between India and Russia, the latter's inclination towards Pakistan has been a matter of concern for India. Such concern came to the fore when Russia, in spite of India's condemnation of the Pakistan sponsored Uri terror attacks of September 18, 2016, conducted the first ever joint military exercise with Pakistan on September 24, 2016. This raised serious apprehensions regarding fundamental shifts in Russian foreign policy orientations to which Russia stated it was simply a part of the efforts to develop cooperation and coordination between the ground forces of both sides and that Russia took all care to ensure that the joint exercises were not held in any part of the (disputed) territory that might hurt Indian security interests. Similarly, Russia and China, which were at one point of time adversaries, now have come closer in new ways. And one of the significant aspects of this closeness has been the deepening of defence cooperation between the two sides. The defence relations began to develop following normalization of relations between the two sides after the end of Cold War. While China, which was facing western embargo for the Tiananmen Square massacre, looked for a partner in its venture of modernizing its weapons arsenal, the newly formed Russia was also in search of a prospective market to keep alive its

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<sup>242</sup> Vinay Kaura, "Russia Signs Naval Cooperation Deal with Pakistan: Recent Warmth in Moscow-Islamabad Ties May Worry New Delhi," First Post, August 3, 2018, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/russia-warming-up-to-pakistan-is-the-elephant-in-the-room-in-moscow-new-delhi-ties-india-must-safeguard-long-standing-relations-4888711.html>.

waning defence industry. Such mutual needs paved the way for the establishment of defence relations between the two. According to SIPRI data, between 1992 and 2007, 84 percent of the Chinese weapons came from Russia. Yet, after 2007 (between 2007 and 2019 China's weapons' import from Russia went down to 69 percent) a downward trend could be witnessed owing to various factors, most important among them being the impressive growth of the Chinese defence industry. Nevertheless, since 2014, i.e. after the Crimean crisis, a new phase of arms trade began between the two countries in terms of Russia's decision to sell sophisticated weapons like S-400 missiles and Su-35 combat aircrafts to China. According to SIPRI expert Wezeman this was an important addition to Russia's total annual value of arms exports and also represented an important step in sustaining Russian presence in Chinese arms market in the face of growing Chinese defence modernization.<sup>243</sup> In 2016, both the countries implemented contracts worth US\$3 billion in the field of military technical cooperation.<sup>244</sup> There has also been development in technology cooperation with Russia agreeing to assist China in developing a missile-attack early warning system. Moreover, such developments were mostly prompted by the Ukraine crisis of 2014 whereby Russia sought to secure the support of China in the face of stringent western sanctions. And not only Russia, even China in the face of a tough US approach vis-à-vis itself is also likely to further, if not deepen, defence cooperation with Russia.

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<sup>243</sup> Siemon T. Wezeman. "China, Russia and the Shifting Landscape of Arms Sales," SIPRI, July 5, 2017, accessed October 26, 2021, <http://sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2017/china-russia-and-shifting-landscape-arms-sales>.

<sup>244</sup> Шойгу: Россия и Китай за год реализовали контракты в сфере ВТС на 3 млрд долларов (Shoigu: Russia and China completed contracts in the field of military-technical cooperation for \$3 billion in a year), ВЗГЛЯД, November 23, 2016, accessed October 22, 2021, <http://vz.ru/news/2016/11/23/845346.html>.

## **PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE:**

The changing nature of international politics particularly after the Cold war, the increasing level of global competition has definitely affected India-Russia relations. But that is not tantamount to an admission of drifting of relationship between the two. If we focus on the sphere of defence then definitely there has been an inclination of India and Russia towards the US and China and Pakistan respectively but then given the dynamics of post-Cold War international politics it is not so hard to comprehend the rationale behind such a behaviour. Unlike the Cold War period that was marked by watertight alliance systems or bloc politics, today countries are allying and re-allying themselves with one another in order to serve their national goals and find for themselves a credible place in an increasingly competitive international environment. Seen from this perspective there seems to be logic in what both India and Russia are doing. In fact, it is less likely that either of them would jeopardize their relations with the other over any other country. Besides, the trust and faith that have been the benchmark of their bilateral ties doesn't seem to have been relegated to the background whatsoever might be the circumstances. India is still the biggest importer of Russian weaponry and no other country would possibly supply hi-tech weapons and sophisticated technologies to India other than Russia. Even US which has quite recently attracted Indian defence purchases would always be selective as to which type of weapons they would like to make available for India. Again, while US arms transactions with India during the period 2005-2020 grew to around US\$ 4 billion the corresponding figure for Russia was seven times more. In fact, the value that India imparts to this special relationship was manifestly visible in the case of India's decision to purchase

S-400 missile defence systems from Russia in spite of US threat for imposing sanctions under the recently formulated Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions (CAATSA) Act. Adding to it, India's defence purchases are also vital for the sustenance of military-industrial complex of Russia and this injects an element of mutual dependence between the two nations.

So far as China and Pakistan are concerned, Russia is well aware of the fact that in spite of active engagement with them in recent years, such partnership can hardly match the level of trust and reliability that it shares with India. Though Pakistan has shown great interest in purchasing Russian armaments, yet there are little chances that it could even match the value of defence transactions that India has with Russia. For instance, between the year 2010 and 2016 while Pakistan accounted for only 0.5 percent of Russian arms in terms of value, the corresponding figure for India was 36.6 percent. Again between 2016 and 2020 though there has been a decrease in the value of arms transactions between India and Russia (23.3 percent of total value of Russian exports), yet when compared to Pakistan (0.9 percent), in absolute terms, we are still looking at a wide gap<sup>245</sup>(for details refer to Table 1).

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<sup>245</sup> "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database," SIPRI, 2021, accessed December 20, 2021, [http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php).

**Table 1 Russia's arms exports to India and Pakistan in comparison to Russia's total exports (2010-2020).**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Russia's total arms exports*</b> | <b>Exports to India*</b> | <b>Exports to Pakistan*</b> |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2010        | 6214                                | 2294                     | 31                          |
| 2011        | 8676                                | 2483                     | 31                          |
| 2012        | 8180                                | 3798                     | 31                          |
| 2013        | 7919                                | 3853                     | 31                          |
| 2014        | 5469                                | 1719                     | 22                          |
| 2015        | 5922                                | 1961                     | 44                          |
| 2016        | 6790                                | 1887                     | 49                          |
| 2017        | 6088                                | 1411                     | 44                          |
| 2018        | 6753                                | 1102                     | 70                          |
| 2019        | 5226                                | 1182                     | 44                          |
| 2020        | 3203                                | 969                      | 40                          |
| Total       | 70440                               | 22658                    | 436                         |

*\* values represent SIPRI TIV expressed in millions*

Source: SIPRI (2021). SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, accessed December 20, 2021,  
[http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export\\_values.php](http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php).

Apart from that, in qualitative terms too, India is much ahead of Pakistan so far as defence transactions with Russia is concerned. With Pakistan, Russia has confined its military transactions only to the sale of a few helicopters in comparison to India where one can find not only the sale of fighter aircrafts and submarines but also transfer of sensitive technologies. Besides, it is with India alone that Russia has entered into a military technical agreement on a long-term basis (2011-2020) which has been further extended for another ten years in the recently concluded bilateral summit in December 2021. Having said that, it is also upon Russia to formulate a very cogent perspective so much so that even if is attempting to build ties with Pakistan in order to expand its alternative defence markets it should not, in any circumstances, send ambiguous signals to its most trusted friend India that might push the latter more towards the West.

And with China, the impact of Chinese purchases on the innovation of Russian defence industries is far less than that of India. Indian orders have, over time, motivated the Russian defence sector to bring in new innovations in their production process which proved quite useful not only for India but Russia as well. For example, Indian demand pushed the Russian aviation industry to develop a combat aircraft which is quite modern and globally competitive and second only to the Su-34 tactical bomber in terms of demand from Russia's own armed forces.<sup>246</sup> Again India's order for the carrier-based MiG-29K, in effect, determined the Russian Navy's choice of next generation ship borne fighter.<sup>247</sup> Apart from the innovation factor, there have also been attempts on part of the Chinese to reverse engineer the technologies acquired from Russia which has created much disquiet among the Russians. The J-11B and J-15 fighters are instances of such a case. There have also been claims that China reverse engineered Russian technologies and sold it to third parties which threatens Russia's prospects in its traditional export markets. This trust deficit doesn't characterize Russia-India defence relations and hence though Russia has been trying to upgrade arms business with China to new levels it is highly unlikely it will share the same amount of sophisticated weaponry with China as it does with India.

## CONCLUSION

It could be considered that in order to overcome the various (recurring) strains, and re-energize the defence partnership, it is absolutely necessary for both the countries to take stock of the situation and jointly formulate ways in which they could face the challenges. In this respect it can hold meetings, arrange workshops highlighting each other's strengths and untapped potentials thereby exploring new avenues of

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<sup>246</sup> Konstantin Makienko, "Military-Technical Cooperation between Russia and India," In *A New Era: India-Russia Ties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 35.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

cooperation. New centres of research and development can also be established in both countries where potential technical know-how can be used in designing and developing spares of defence armaments. Such manufacture of defence parts can be outsourced to India which will help in the development of production capabilities thereby paving the way for the establishment of indigenous industries in the future. Moreover, defence being one of the vital components of the strategic partnership between the two countries, both India and Russia should nurture it as well as address the various constraints that have been characterizing this aspect of their partnership. This could help in mitigating all the possible adversarial impact having the potentiality of endangering their long-term interaction in the sphere of defence.

## **CHAPTER V – INDIA-RUSSIA ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

In today's globalized world whenever relationship between two countries are considered, the aspect of economic interaction is given utmost importance along with the political one. This is because of the fact that economics is regarded as the most important engine of growth and fostering economic relations helps in the growth of economies across the world. And this holds ground, particularly, in case of countries enjoying long-held far-reaching relations that has been crystallized into strategic partnership like India and Russia. India and Russia have enjoyed seventy-two years of close and friendly relationship permeating almost all aspects of bilateral interaction. The relations between the two sides have often been termed as 'time-tested ties', 'all-weather-friendship' and the like which denotes a positive momentum in relationship. And going by such versions, it can rightly be pointed out that the two sides definitely enjoy a certain type of bond characterized by enduring trust, faith and mutual respect of each other's interests that hardly find a parallel in the history of interaction among countries. The bilateral relations attained a new dimension with the signing of the 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership' in 2001 which was further elevated to the status of 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' in 2010 thereby further reaffirming the significance of ties between the two. However, while many of the facets of this strategic partnership boasts of success, when it comes to the economic part, the story is somewhat different. Economic ties have been the weakest link in the otherwise stable partnership between the two. Contrary to efforts from both sides to address this situation, most of them have been limited to mere promises and declarations without any effective change in ground realities. This chapter attempts to understand the nature of current economic relations, the reasons as to why India and Russia have not been successful enough in

translating their potentials into concrete actions and the prospects of a strong economic interconnection between the two.

## **TREND IN INDIA-RUSSIA TRADE RELATIONS:**

Going by the available literature, Indo-Russian (Soviet) trade and economic relations have often claimed to have been quite substantial before the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991. The bilateral trade was conducted on the basis of ‘Rupee Trade System’ based on annual plans which resulted in payments to be made in non-convertible currencies. The trade turnover between the two countries increased from Rs 2 crores in 1953 to almost Rs 8000 crores in 1990-91 and the balance of trade was also in favour of India.<sup>248</sup>

***Table 2 India-USSR Trade Relations, 1960-61 to 1990-91.***

| Year    | Exports (in Rs crores) | % share in total exports | Imports (in Rs crores) | % share in total imports |
|---------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1960-61 | 29                     | 4.5                      | 16                     | 1.4                      |
| 1970-71 | 210                    | 13.7                     | 106                    | 6.5                      |
| 1980-81 | 1226                   | 18.3                     | 1014                   | 8.1                      |
| 1990-91 | 5255                   | 16.1                     | 2528                   | 5.9                      |

Source: Economic Survey 2000-01, Ministry of Finance, Government of India as cited in Gulshan Sachdeva, “Indo-Russian Economic Linkages: A Critical Assessment,” in *India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Challenges and Prospects*, ed. Nivedita Das Kundu (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2010), 108.

As is evident from the above table that though the value of exports from and imports to India increased progressively between 1960-61 and 1990-91, yet the trade balance has always tended to incline towards India and this became maximum in 1990-91 when the

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<sup>248</sup> Gulshan Sachdeva, “Indo-Russian Economic Linkages: A Critical Assessment,” In *India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Challenges and Prospects*, ed. Nivedita Das Kundu (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2010), 108.

exports more than doubled the imports. This trading system based on non-convertible currencies proved beneficial for both the countries, particularly India, as it could import items without any burden on its foreign exchange reserves.

Yet this system did not continue for long and following the disintegration of the Soviet Union there was a steep decline in economic relations. The reason for this could be traced to the changing nature of their respective economies as well as the overall global context. While Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, transformed itself into a market economy, India adopted the policy of LPG, i.e. Liberalisation-Globalization-Privatization. The adoption of a market-based economy without proper planning inadvertently led to economic chaos in Russia and there was a crisis in the economic system as a whole. There was an overall decline in Russia's foreign trade following the breakup of Soviet Union mainly due to three factors: firstly, there was a disruption in production links that affected all the sectors of the economy; secondly, there was also a decline in prices of commodities that formed the bulk of Russian exports to the world and thirdly there was a reduction in imports on part of Russia due to the domestic economic crisis.<sup>249</sup> And with respect to India there was a reduction of import of Indian goods and export of oil and raw materials to India from Russia, stiffening of terms of Russian financing of Indian enterprises and a virtual absence of Russian investments in Indian economy.<sup>250</sup> Apart from that the two sides also did away with the earlier system of rupee-rouble trade set-up by virtue of the bilateral Framework Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation signed in 1993 that made hard currency a medium of all

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<sup>249</sup> Tahir Asghar, "Indo-Russian Trade: An Overview," In *India and Russia: Towards Strategic Partnership*, ed. Shams-ud-din (New Delhi: Lancer's, 2001), 219.

<sup>250</sup> Richard Weitz, "The Maturing of Russia-India Relations," Second Line of Defense, December 19, 2011, accessed May 4, 2018, <https://sldinfo.com/2011/12/the-maturing-of-russia-india-relations/>

sorts of trade transactions. This agreement also envisaged a debt repayment mechanism for the loans that had been taken by India from the erstwhile Soviet Union which provided for an annual repayment of US\$1bn dollars in rupees over a period of 12 years with smaller amounts to be paid subsequently over a period of 33 years. The rupee debt funds were supposed to be used by Russia for import of goods from India. However, Russia couldn't fully utilise the mechanism as there was decline in debt service repayment in Russia in 1992-93 amounting to a mere \$745 million when compared to \$977 million during the previous year.<sup>251</sup> Indian exports, which were facilitated through the debt repayment mechanism, saw a drastic decline once this arrangement came to an end as a result of which the balance of trade gradually began to tilt more in favour of Russia than India since the late 90s.

The year 2000 saw a revival of ties with the signing of the 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership' between the two countries and it also envisaged the development of close economic relations that would enable strengthening of the overall ties between the two nations. It called for annual summit level meetings and provided for the creation of India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) for further strengthening cooperation. It also recognized several areas of potential trade growth such as metallurgy, information technology, energy, etc and also emphasised the creation of an environment conducive for mutual investments. The need for simplifying customs and various other procedures related to trade was pointed out and emphasis was also placed

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<sup>251</sup> "Recent Developments in India's Foreign Trade," In *Issues in Indian Economy*, Vol. 2, ed. K.R. Gupta (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002), 176

on easing of travel procedures for businessmen of both the countries.<sup>252</sup> This somehow energized trade relations and since 2000 there were efforts on part of both the countries to adopt various policy measures to inject greater momentum to the hitherto weak aspect of the relationship. In fact, on a closer analysis it would be found that there was an eventual increase in the volume of trade from US\$1.3 bn in 2000-01 to US\$4.5 bn in 2009-10. Though apparently the figures might boast of a positive development, yet when put in the context of the entire international scenario it can be seen that in 2000-01 India's share of trade with Russia was merely 1.3 percent of its total world trade which further declined to 0.96 percent in 2009-10 (as per calculation of data available from the Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, Government of India). And given the otherwise robust ties that they enjoy in the political sphere, it is quite surprising to find that none of the two nations find a place among the top fifteen trading partners of each other. In 2010 both sides committed to increasing trade to US\$20bn by 2015 and also considered the possibility of a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with the customs union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Though initially Russia's non-membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) made the option of signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with it difficult for India, the accession of Russia to WTO in 2012 removed this obstacle and provided both the countries with the opportunity to enter into a FTA for facilitating free movement of goods, services and investments.<sup>253</sup> In 2014, both the countries, after years of

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<sup>252</sup> "Indo-Russian strategic partnership for enhanced cooperation," The Hindu, October 4, 2000, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/2000/10/04/stories/02040009.htm>.

<sup>253</sup> Dadan Upadhyay, "India, Russia to Negotiate on CECA with Customs Union," Russia Beyond, April 24, 2019, May 6, 2020, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/2013/04/03/india\\_russia\\_to\\_negotiate\\_on\\_ceca\\_with\\_customs\\_union\\_23479](https://www.rbth.com/economics/2013/04/03/india_russia_to_negotiate_on_ceca_with_customs_union_23479).

negotiations, finally agreed on setting up of a Joint Study Group (JSG) to examine the feasibility of the CECA between India and the Customs union.

As against the target of US\$20 billion, Indo-Russia trade merely amounted to approximately \$6.7 bn<sup>254</sup> which is not even half of the estimated target. Though the average annual growth of bilateral trade between 2006-07 and 2016-17 has been at a rate of about 10 percent, yet India suffers from a negative balance of trade which places it at an unfavourable position in relation to Russia, as is seen in Table 3.

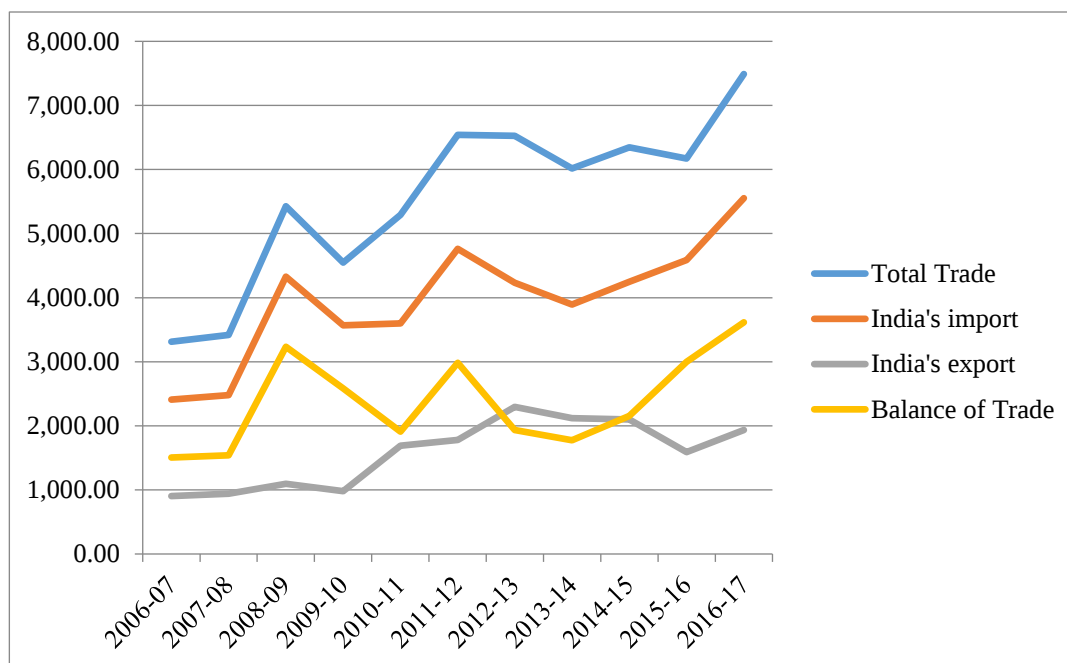
**Table 3 Trends of India-Russia bilateral trade between 2006-07 and 2016-17 (in US \$ million)**

| Year    | Total Trade | India's Import | India's export | Balance of trade |
|---------|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 2006-07 | 3312.74     | 2409.05        | 903.69         | -1505.36         |
| 2007-08 | 3418.77     | 2478.16        | 940.61         | -1537.55         |
| 2008-09 | 5424.62     | 4328.28        | 1096.34        | -3231.94         |
| 2009-10 | 4547.48     | 3566.79        | 980.69         | -2586.10         |
| 2010-11 | 5289.45     | 3600.02        | 1689.43        | -1910.59         |
| 2011-12 | 6542.58     | 4764.31        | 1778.27        | -2986.04         |
| 2012-13 | 6527.24     | 4231.56        | 2295.68        | -1935.88         |
| 2013-14 | 6015.66     | 3894.40        | 2121.26        | -1773.14         |
| 2014-15 | 6346.23     | 4249.22        | 2097.01        | -2152.21         |
| 2015-16 | 6172.79     | 4584.98        | 1587.81        | -2997.17         |
| 2016-17 | 7489.36     | 5552.30        | 1937.06        | -3615.24         |

Source: Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, GoI.  
<https://tradestat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp>.

<sup>254</sup> Arun S., "Russia-A Forgotten Trade Partner?" The Hindu, April 9, 2017, accessed April 26, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/russia-a-forgotten-trade-partner/article17898013.ece>.

**Figure 3 Compiled on the basis of data provided in Table 3**



Source: Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, GoI.

Whereas, Soviet Union was the largest importer of Indian goods in 1989<sup>255</sup>, yet now, as per the data available with the Department of Commerce, Government of India, Russia's share in India's total imports in 2016-17 is 1.4 percent and that of exports is merely 0.7 percent. In the same period whilst India-Russia overall trade was US\$7.4 bn, the figure is far below India's trade with its other major economic partners. For example, with the US during the same period India's overall bilateral trade was US\$64.5 bn, with China it was about US\$71.4 bn and the UAE it was US\$52.6 bn (as shown in Table 4). So, when compared to these figures, the quantum of trade with Russia is really a matter of concern.

<sup>255</sup> Himani Pant, "India-Russia Economic and Energy Cooperation: The Way Ahead," Observer Research Foundation, June 7, 2017. Accessed May 1, 2019. <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.orfonline.org/research/india-russia-economic-and-energy-cooperation-the-way-ahead/>

**Table 4 Comparison of India's Total trade with China, US, UAE and Russia during 2016-17 (in US\$ million).**

| Country | Import    | Export    | Total Trade |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| China   | 61,283.03 | 10,171.89 | 71,454.93   |
| USA     | 22,307.44 | 42,212.27 | 64,519.71   |
| UAE     | 21,509.83 | 31,175.50 | 52,685.33   |
| Russia  | 5,552.30  | 1,937.06  | 7,489.36    |

Source: Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, GoI,  
<https://tradestat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp>.

In order to improve the situation both the Governments have taken various initiatives to strengthen bilateral trade and investment so as to place economic relations on a sound footing. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, the 2000 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership' provided for the creation of IRIGC-TEC which works as the highest institutional forum for bilateral economic cooperation. It includes representatives from various ministries and agencies and consists of six working groups functioning together to devise ways and means for taking forward the economic partnership. Till 2018 the Commission met twenty-three times to discuss various issues and identify new possibilities of enhancing bilateral ties. In addition, there is the India-Russia Forum on Trade and Investment, India-Russia CEO's Council, Indo-Russian Joint Business Council, the Joint Council on Integrated Long-Term Programme, India-Russia Chamber of Commerce and the Strategic Dialogue between NITI Aayog of India and Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation (held in 2018) that further help in advancing business relations between the two.

## COMPOSITION OF INDIA-RUSSIA TRADE:

### RUSSIA'S EXPORT PROFILE

In the context of the overall economic relations between the two countries, it is necessary to analyse the composition of India-Russia trade and then move on to discuss the nature of investment relations between the two. At the very outset, it must be pointed out that though prior to the disintegration of Soviet Union there was a healthy trade relationship between India and the USSR, structural anomalies that were brought about in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union, had an adverse effect on the quantum of trade between the two partners. Particularly with regard to Indian exports, there was a sharp decline, whatsoever, in the quantity of goods exported from India to Russia. This could be attributed to various factors like the existence of multiple trading channels, lack of transparency in the utilisation of debt repayment funds, the activities of ‘fly-by-night’ operators from India and ‘shuttle traders’ from Russia and the like.<sup>256</sup> The signing of the ‘Declaration of Strategic Partnership’, though, sought to establish bilateral ties on a strong footing, results in the economic sphere seemed to be quite lacklustre. Between 2006-07 and 2011-12, total trade between the two nations increased by 97.5 percent, yet from 2011-12 to 2016-17 it again fell by 14.8 percent. However, in all circumstances, the balance of trade tilted in favour of Russia, whose trade surplus jumped more than twofold from US\$1.5bn in 2006-07 to US\$3.6bn in 2016-17 (calculated on the basis of data provided in Table 3). According to data available at the website of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, the main components that have, over the years, been the top ten items of Russia’s export to India include mineral fuels and mineral oils, fertilizers, rubber, natural or cultured pearls and iron and steel (for more details refer Tables 8 and 9). In 2016-17 these items constituted about 73.07

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<sup>256</sup> R. G. Gidadhubli, “India’s Exports to Russia: Complexities and Contradictions,” *Economic & Political Weekly* 30, no. 44 (1995): 2780.

percent of Russia's total exports to India of which natural or cultured pearls and precious stones alone comprised of 44.6 percent of the exports followed by mineral oils which accounted for 16.1 percent of the exports. This also indicates a failure on part of the Russian government to diversify its export profile. If one looks at the list of items exported by Russia across the world, one will find that mineral oils and mineral fuels<sup>257</sup> occupy the top most position followed by iron and steel and precious stones which clearly indicates the inability of Russian economy to diversify its export basket away from raw materials. This has been the main reason for the existence of episodic economic growth in Russia.<sup>258</sup> So while export of raw materials, particularly of minerals oils and fuels, remains vital with respect to India given the latter's deficient energy resources, Russia should also strive to increase its exports in various other sectors like mining, agriculture, aircraft engineering, consumer goods, articles of wood, metals like aluminium, copper, various kinds of machinery and the like. A report of the India-Russia JSG, 2007 suggested that while Russia's competitive advantage in the field of agriculture should not only be limited to shipments of goods but also to the sharing of technologies that could help in increasing agricultural productivity in India. Besides, various Russian companies can come together to supply various agricultural machineries to India which are well known for their low costs and safety standards.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> In 2006 mineral fuel, oil and energy products comprised of 65.7% of the total exports in terms of value. In 2016 though the share declined to 58.7%, still it indicates an over reliance of the Russian economy on the exports of natural resources. Data collected from the website of Federal Customs Service of Russia, accessed June 26, 2018, <http://stat.customs.ru/apex/f?p=201:1:993224529541445::NO>.

<sup>258</sup> For instance, if we look at the intermediate period between the two economic crises of 1997-98 and 2008, we will see that Russia recorded impressive growth rates and one of the factors responsible for this is the high revenues that it earned from exports of raw materials because of the surge in global oil prices. But once the crises receded and the price of oil fell, Russian economy witnessed a bust thereby slowing down the growth rate. Such periods of sporadic booms and busts can be attributed to Russia's over reliance on raw material exports which create barriers to sustaining long-term economic development. More details: Alexey Kudrin & Evsey Gurvich, "A New Growth Model for the Russian Economy," *Russian Journal of Economics* 1, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>259</sup> "Report of India-Russia Joint Study Group," Moscow-New Delhi 2007, accessed January 18, 2018, [https://commerce.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MOC\\_635567636562814678\\_Report\\_India\\_Russia\\_Joint\\_Study\\_Group\\_10\\_9\\_2007.pdf](https://commerce.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MOC_635567636562814678_Report_India_Russia_Joint_Study_Group_10_9_2007.pdf).

Russia can also be a valuable source of supply of coking coal for India which the latter needs for increasing the productive capacity of the steel mills. The insufficient availability of coking coal, one of the most important ingredients for making steel, has made the Indian steel industry too much dependent on imports of the product. With Australia gradually losing its place as an important supplier of coking coal for India, this place can be captured by Russia. Efforts are being taken by the Indian side to import Russian coking coal and, as per reports, the formation of a High-Level Working Group is also in the pipeline for facilitating cooperation in this respect.<sup>260</sup> India is one of the topmost consumers of wood and since the domestic production is not sufficient to meet domestic demands, India relies heavily on the import of wood, particularly timber. A major chunk of the imports has traditionally come, particularly from, Malaysia and Myanmar with Ghana, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea also capturing relatively smaller shares of the Indian market. Yet, from 2015 imports from Malaysia and Myanmar have begun to fall significantly for which India is having to look for other suppliers.<sup>261</sup> With a large forest area and with about 20 percent of the world's timber reserves, Russia is reasonably well placed to fill in this void. Besides the Russian government is also making serious efforts in promoting the timber industry through various steps including the provision of subsidised interest rates on loans taken for production purposes, financial assistance in priority investment projects particularly in the Far Eastern areas and the like<sup>262</sup>. Such efforts on part of the Russian government and the growing demand for timber in India creates a window of opportunity for both

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<sup>260</sup> "High Level Working Group Soon Between India and Russia for Coking Coal Import," The Hindu Business Line, May 7, 2020, accessed May 22, 2020, <https://thehindubusinessline.com/economy/high-level-working-group-soon-between-india-and-russia-for-coking-coal-import/article31523486.ece>.

<sup>261</sup> Inferred from data available at ITC Trade Map, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.trademap.org/>.

<sup>262</sup> Siddharth Goud, "Using Timber to Bridge India and the Russian Far East," Invest India, February 23, 2018, accessed May 23, 2020, <https://investindia.gov.in/team-india-blogs/using-timber-to-bridge-india-and-russian-far-east>.

the countries in cooperating with each other which, in turn, might help in shoring up their economic ties.

## **INDIA'S EXPORT PROFILE**

On the other hand, India's export to Russia has mainly comprised of items like pharmaceuticals; coffee, tea, mate and spices; electrical machinery and equipment; aircraft, spacecraft and parts thereof and miscellaneous edible preparations (for more details refer Table 6 and 7). But these items constituted only 37.6 percent of India's total exports to Russia during 2016-17 thereby indicating an adverse balance of trade for India. Of all these items, pharmaceuticals and medicinal items have, on an average, registered a consistent rate of growth occupying the first place in the list of Russia's imports from India. During 2016-17 the value of exports of pharmaceuticals stood at US\$351.05 million registering a growth of 35.5 percent over a period of six years (in 2009-10 the value of exports of the same was US\$258.96 million), while the product accounted for 18.1 percent of the total share of exports, in terms of monetary value, from India to Russia during the same time period. This has been mainly due to the sharp decline of the industry in Russia. By 1997 local production declined by 65 percent and 65 percent of the domestic needs had to be met by imported materials. Besides there was also the problem of high price that compelled Russian manufacturers to look beyond their country for cheap substances.<sup>263</sup> Given a rise in the number of ageing population, there is an urgent need for the supply of affordable high-quality medicines to meet the requirements of the healthcare system and herein lies the importance of India which is often called the 'pharmacy of the world'<sup>264</sup> for its ability to supply quality medicines at reasonable prices to various countries across the world. Besides the

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<sup>263</sup> Hari S. Vasudevan, *Shadows of Substance* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 98.

<sup>264</sup> See "Reasons why India is the pharmacy to the world," India.inc, June 3, 2016, accessed May 10, 2020, <http://indiaincgroup.com/reasons-india-pharmacy-world/>

Pharma 2020<sup>265</sup> programme of the Russian government has also opened up avenues for joint investments between Indian and Russian pharma companies. In line with this strategy India is also making efforts to localize pharmaceutical manufacturing in Russia.<sup>266</sup> A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Gujrat-based Cadila Pvt. Ltd. with the Government of Astrakhan in southeast Russia, in 2013, is an example in this respect.<sup>267</sup> But though India has been able to maintain a healthy share in Russia's imports of pharmaceuticals, yet this share has declined over the years in comparison to Russia's global imports (as shown in Table 5). On the other hand, US has emerged as the largest market of Indian pharmaceutical exports (according to Ministry of Commerce statistics, in 2016-17 the value of exports stood at US\$5.1 billion). Apart from pharmaceuticals, traditional items like tea, coffee and spices; cotton; clothing and the like have also witnessed a declining share in the Russian market. Though tea and coffee has been able to retain its position within the top ten items of export from India, when compared on a global scale, a major chunk of the Russian tea market has currently been overtaken by Sri Lanka and Vietnam. According to 2016-17/2017 estimates while Vietnam and Sri Lanka's value shares in the Russian tea market accounted for 15.1 percent and 13.8 percent respectively, the corresponding share for India was 9.78 percent.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> The Pharma Strategy 2020 aims at developing domestic support base for the production of pharmaceuticals in Russia. It aims at modernizing the industry by relying on both domestic and foreign technological assistance. Indian pharma companies are also considering joint venture projects under this programme.

<sup>266</sup> Russian International Affairs Council and Vivekananda International Foundation, *70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Russia-India Relations: New Horizons of Privileged Partnership* (Moscow: NPMP, RIAC, 2017), 21.

<sup>267</sup> Alexandra Katz, "Indian Drug Makers Fit Into Russia's Pharma Strategy," *Russia Beyond*, July 17, 2013, accessed May 6, 2020, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/2013/07/17/indian\\_drug\\_makers\\_fit\\_into\\_russias\\_pharma\\_strategy\\_27175](https://www.rbth.com/economics/2013/07/17/indian_drug_makers_fit_into_russias_pharma_strategy_27175).

<sup>268</sup> Inferred from data available at the Ministry of Commerce's website, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://tradestat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp> and the ITC Trade Map, Geneva, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.trademap.org/>.

**Table 5 Russia's import of pharmaceuticals and the share of some of the top importers of the product in the Russian market.**

| Partner             | Value (in US million dollars) |                 |                 | Share of imports (%) |              |              |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Country             | 2006-07/2007                  | 2011-12/2012    | 2016-17/2017    | 2006-07/2007         | 2011-12/2012 | 2016-17/2017 |
| <b>All Products</b> | <b>6696.14</b>                | <b>13393.87</b> | <b>10834.87</b> | <b>100</b>           | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   |
| Germany             | 1324.52                       | 2740.71         | 2259.77         | 19.78                | 20.46        | 20.86        |
| USA                 | 373.46                        | 746.27          | 784.07          | 5.58                 | 5.57         | 7.24         |
| Italy               | 321.38                        | 695.28          | 657.88          | 4.80                 | 5.19         | 6.07         |
| France              | 778.65                        | 1361.09         | 944.75          | 11.63                | 10.16        | 8.72         |
| Switzerland         | 432.34                        | 679.07          | 560.70          | 6.46                 | 5.07         | 5.17         |
| UK                  | 264.28                        | 608.15          | 592.75          | 3.95                 | 4.54         | 5.47         |
| <b>India</b>        | <b>281.17</b>                 | <b>401.10</b>   | <b>351.05</b>   | <b>4.20</b>          | <b>2.99</b>  | <b>3.24</b>  |
| Hungary             | 379.32                        | 624.13          | 430.28          | 5.66                 | 4.66         | 3.97         |
| Netherlands         | 253.90                        | 636.69          | 384.55          | 3.79                 | 4.75         | 3.55         |
| Slovenia            | 334.34                        | 501.54          | 377.37          | 4.99                 | 3.74         | 3.48         |

Source: Export Import data bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India and ITC Trade Map, Geneva. Calculations made by the author based on data available in these sites. Since the Government of India's website has provided the data for each financial year and the ITC Trade Map has provided the data for every calendar year hence the time period has been and will be subsequently, wherever necessary, shown as 2006-07/2007 and likewise.

Low domestic demand and lower prices of tea have enabled both the countries to enter into this area which, hitherto, had been the stronghold of the Indian business community.<sup>269</sup> More than 90 percent of the Indian tea (in terms of value) is consumed domestically thereby leaving little option for enhancing exports. For instance, in 2017 the total value of tea exported by India around the globe is merely 1.1 percent as opposed to Sri Lanka which exported around 15.9 percent of its tea production.<sup>270</sup> This trend is likely to continue in the near future and given the recent outbreak of the

<sup>269</sup> Dadan Upadhyay, "India Aims to Stir Russian Tea Pot," Russia Beyond, Last modified September 24, 2015, accessed April 22, 2022, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/cooperation/2015/09/24/india-aims-to-stir-russian-tea-pot\\_427549](https://www.rbth.com/economics/cooperation/2015/09/24/india-aims-to-stir-russian-tea-pot_427549).

<sup>270</sup> Inferred from data available at the Ministry of Commerce's website, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://tradestat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp> and the ITC Trade Map, Geneva, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.trademap.org/>

coronavirus epidemic the production of tea as well as its overseas demand is likely to fall thereby affecting India's overall exports capacity. Given the fact that Indian share amounts to a meagre 0.85 percent of the total Russian imports (according to 2016-17 data)<sup>271</sup>, it is absolutely necessary for the former to explore possibilities to enhance its trade volumes with the latter. One sector where India can enhance its trade volumes with Russia include the textiles sector. Indian textiles are quite popular throughout the world for their good quality and reasonable cost. Given the demand for textiles in Russia India can seek ways whereby it can increase its exports of the same to the former. Particularly, for items such as leather jackets, shawls, gloves and other woollen materials, Russia, with its extreme cold climate, provides an attractive market for India.<sup>272</sup> There is also opportunity for increasing agricultural exports to Russia. This assumes particular importance in the light of the food ban imposed by Russia against Western countries in retaliation of the sanctions imposed on it in the wake of the Ukraine crisis in 2014. The ban which was earlier supposed to stay in place for one year has been further extended till the end of 2020 by virtue of a Presidential Decree (No. 293) on June 24, 2019. Though it was presumed that this ban would help Russia in becoming self-sufficient in the food sector, yet a number of issues including lack of food variety, degraded soil, difficulty faced by the farmers in getting loans, shortage of sufficient work force, problems in acquiring land and the like have continued to make

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<sup>271</sup> Inferred from data available at the Ministry of Commerce's website, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://tradedstat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp> and the ITC Trade Map, Geneva, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.trademap.org/>

<sup>272</sup> "India Russia Textile Trade May Touch \$1bn," The Times of India, July 2, 2017, accessed May 22, 2020, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/india-russia-textile-trade-may-touch-1bn/articleshow/59405429.cms>.

the country dependent on imported products.<sup>273</sup> Whereas Russia imported agricultural products worth US\$ 25.03 billion during 2015-16/2016, India could capture only 1.5 percent of the Russian market<sup>274</sup>. According to a government on India's agricultural trade with Russia, there are a number of commodities which Russia imports from other countries but where India has considerable export potential. These include, among others, mangoes, bananas; barley, wheat, maize; coconut oil; soya bean; sugar and the like. Though in 2015 Russia's global import and India's corresponding exports of these commodities exceeded US\$ 5mn, yet the export figures of India vis-à-vis Russia was either zero or negligible.<sup>275</sup> Hence, India may very well explore opportunities for exporting these products to Russia. The image of India as an agrarian country which has made the Russians cautious about imports of machinery and automobile parts from the former<sup>276</sup> should be altered by facilitating exchange of information about consumer requirements in Russia and potential strengths of India in this sector. In this respect India's participation in the INNOPROM 2016, the largest annual international trade fair of Russia was significant where India got an opportunity to showcase its strengths and potentials of the engineering industry. India's engineering sector is the largest as well as a strategically important sector of the Indian economy. It comprises nearly 25 percent of the country's merchandise export and has shown an upward growth from \$65.23 bn

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<sup>273</sup> Michele Girard, "Trade and Transition: Russia's Agricultural Pitfalls and Prospects for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," (Honours Thesis, University of Maine, 2015), 23, Permalink: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=honors>.

<sup>274</sup> Inferred from data available at the Ministry of Commerce's website <https://tradedat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp>.

<sup>275</sup> Brief on India's Agricultural Trade with Russia, accessed May 22, 2020, <http://agricoop.gov.in/sites/default/files/India%20-Russia%20Agri%20Trade%202015-16%20.pdf>.

<sup>276</sup> Sanjay Kumar Pandey & Ankur Yadav, "Contextualising India-Russia Relations," *International Studies* 53, no.3-4 (2015): 243.

in 2016-17 to \$76.20 bn in 2017-18.<sup>277</sup> Given the capabilities of Indian engineering industry and given the fact that machineries, mechanical appliances, electrical machinery and equipment, vehicles, etc. constitute the dominant items of Russia's import, India should seize this opportunity to shore up its exports to the Russian Federation.<sup>278</sup> If both the countries are to reach the trade target of US\$30 bn by 2025<sup>279</sup>, then concrete actions must be taken by both of them to exploit their synergies vis-à-vis each other.

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<sup>277</sup> Sutanuka Ghosal, "India's Engineering Exports Hit an All-Time High of \$76 Billion," The Economic Times, April 30, 2018, accessed May 22, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/indias-engineering-exports-hit-an-all-time-high-of-76-billion/articleshow/63976632.cms?from=mdr>.

<sup>278</sup> Inferred from Russia's data on imports as available in ITC Trade Map, Geneva, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.trademap.org/>

<sup>279</sup> "Bilateral Relations: India-Russia Relations," Embassy of India, Moscow, Russia, accessed May 20, 2020, <http://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/bilateral-relations-india-russia.php>.

**Table 6 India's top 20 exports to Russia between 2006-07 and 2016-17**

| HS Code   | Product                                                                                                                                 | Rank      |          |          |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
|           |                                                                                                                                         | 2006-07   | 2007-08  | 2008-09  | 2009-10  | 2010-11  | 2011-12  | 2012-13  | 2013-14   | 2014-15  | 2015-16  | 2016-17  |
| 3         | Fish & crustaceans, molluscs & other aquatic invertebrates                                                                              | NA        | NA       | 18       | 19       | NA       | 19       | 14       | 12        | 8        | 11       | 10       |
| 8         | Edible fruit & nuts; peel or citrus fruit or melons                                                                                     | 17        | NA       | NA       | NA       | NA       | NA       | 13       | 10        | NA       | 20       | 11       |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Coffee, tea, mate and spices</b>                                                                                                     | <b>2</b>  | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>4</b>  | <b>3</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> |
| 13        | Lac, Gums, resins & other vegetable saps & extracts                                                                                     | NA        | NA       | 20       | NA       | 13       | 7        | 9        | 8         | 12       | 17       | 19       |
| 20        | Preparation of vegetables, fruits, nuts or other parts of plants                                                                        | 10        | 13       | 11       | 14       | 20       | 16       | 19       | 17        | 17       | NA       | NA       |
| <b>21</b> | <b>Misc. edible preparations</b>                                                                                                        | <b>4</b>  | <b>8</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>8</b> |
| 24        | Tobacco & manufactured tobacco substitutes                                                                                              | 9         | 9        | 6        | 4        | 8        | 11       | 11       | 13        | 16       | 10       | 15       |
| 29        | Organic Chemicals                                                                                                                       | 13        | 11       | 13       | 9        | 9        | 12       | 12       | 14        | 10       | 7        | 5        |
| <b>30</b> | <b>Pharmaceuticals</b>                                                                                                                  | <b>1</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |
| 39        | Plastics and articles thereof                                                                                                           | 11        | 12       | 15       | 12       | 11       | 10       | 10       | 11        | 14       | 16       | NA       |
| 52        | Cotton                                                                                                                                  | 8         | 6        | 7        | 8        | 14       | NA       | NA       | NA        | NA       | NA       | NA       |
| 61        | Articles of apparel & clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted                                                                        | 3         | 3        | 12       | 13       | NA       | 13       | NA       | 9         | 13       | 14       | 13       |
| 71        | Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi precious stones, pre metals, clad with pre-metal & articles thereof; imit. Jewellery, coin | NA        | NA       | 4        | NA       | NA       | NA       | NA       | NA        | NA       | NA       | NA       |
| 84        | Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery & mechanical appliances; parts thereof                                                             | 6         | 4        | 10       | 5        | 12       | 5        | 5        | 5         | 2        | 4        | 2        |
| <b>85</b> | <b>Electrical machinery &amp; equipment &amp; parts thereof</b>                                                                         | <b>5</b>  | <b>7</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>  | <b>7</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>6</b> |
| 87        | Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock & parts & accessories thereof                                                      | NA        | NA       | 14       | 10       | 6        | 9        | 7        | 7         | 6        | 6        | 7        |
| <b>88</b> | <b>Aircraft, spacecraft &amp; parts thereof</b>                                                                                         | <b>11</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b>  | <b>4</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |

NA: The items do not come under the top 20 items of export for the particular year.

Source: Export Import Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

**Table 7 Value of India's top 20 exports to Russia between 2006-07 and 2016-17.**

| HS Code | Product                                                                                                                                 | Value (in US million dollars) |               |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|         |                                                                                                                                         | 2006-07                       | 2007-08       | 2008-09         | 2009-10       | 2010-11         | 2011-12         | 2012-13         | 2013-14         | 2014-15         | 2015-16         | 2016-17         |
|         | <b>All products</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>903.69</b>                 | <b>940.61</b> | <b>1,096.34</b> | <b>980.69</b> | <b>1,689.43</b> | <b>1,778.27</b> | <b>2,295.68</b> | <b>2,121.26</b> | <b>2,097.01</b> | <b>1,587.81</b> | <b>1,937.06</b> |
| 3       | Fish & crustaceans, molluscs & other aquatic invertebrates                                                                              | n                             | n             | 12.38           | 9.58          | n               | 20.83           | 28.39           | 42.93           | 63.47           | 31.83           | 58.02           |
| 8       | Edible fruit & nuts; peel or citrus fruit or melons                                                                                     | 10.34                         | n             | n               | n             | n               | n               | 32.63           | 44.72           | n               | 23.68           | 44.65           |
| 9       | Coffee, tea, mate and spices                                                                                                            | 72.82                         | 79.09         | 91.25           | 103.76        | 123.98          | 139.44          | 139.03          | 117.93          | 109.68          | 115.97          | 124.45          |
| 13      | Lac, Gums, resins & other vegetable saps & extracts                                                                                     | n                             | n             | 10.38           | n             | 28.02           | 63.71           | 55.37           | 52.96           | 45.31           | 27.45           | 28.27           |
| 20      | Preparation of vegetables, fruits or other parts of plants                                                                              | 25.31                         | 17.84         | 28.65           | 17.42         | 12.69           | 22.74           | 26.13           | 33.62           | 37.1            | n               | n               |
| 21      | Misc. edible preparations                                                                                                               | 44.63                         | 35.35         | 36.71           | 60.8          | 58.04           | 86.83           | 71.46           | 36.86           | 56.89           | 64.22           | 68.63           |
| 24      | Tobacco & manufactured tobacco substitutes                                                                                              | 28.92                         | 28.89         | 40.14           | 47.98         | 42.35           | 36.74           | 42.71           | 41.94           | 37.37           | 38.7            | 32.51           |
| 29      | Organic Chemicals                                                                                                                       | 14.16                         | 20.5          | 22.16           | 25.87         | 39.74           | 35.49           | 39.06           | 40.67           | 55.37           | 53.88           | 94.9            |
| 30      | Pharmaceuticals                                                                                                                         | 281.17                        | 298.28        | 324.67          | 258.96        | 431.93          | 401.1           | 562.46          | 535.89          | 411.16          | 353.83          | 351.05          |
| 39      | Plastics and articles thereof                                                                                                           | 24.84                         | 18.8          | 19.84           | 23.53         | 33.67           | 45.62           | 49.19           | 44.65           | 38.6            | 28.54           | 23.38           |
| 52      | Cotton                                                                                                                                  | 30.75                         | 43.67         | 37.38           | 39.13         | 22.53           | n               | n               | n               | n               | n               | n               |
| 61      | Articles of apparel & clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted                                                                        | 63.19                         | 50.86         | 26.18           | 18.34         | n               | 24.35           | n               | 35.37           | 44.89           | 29.07           | 37.91           |
| 71      | Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi precious stones, pre metals, clad with pre-metal & articles thereof; imit. Jewellery, coin | n                             | n             | 41.07           | n             | n               | n               | n               | n               | n               | n               | n               |
| 84      | Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery & mechanical appliances; parts thereof                                                             | 36.49                         | 50.13         | 34.1            | 47.42         | 30.03           | 73.51           | 124.08          | 95.88           | 323.4           | 93.83           | 221.13          |
| 85      | Electrical machinery & equipments & parts thereof                                                                                       | 40.78                         | 40.78         | 36.74           | 44.98         | 110.13          | 235.96          | 280.27          | 170.32          | 64.76           | 49.34           | 72.95           |
| 87      | Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock & parts & accessories thereof                                                      | n                             | n             | 21.99           | 25.57         | 82.95           | 57.46           | 73.4            | 69.23           | 78.04           | 62.17           | 70.44           |
| 88      | Aircraft, spacecraft & parts thereof                                                                                                    | 16.41                         | 45.63         | 72.91           | 45.99         | 98.54           | 61.9            | 193.62          | 73.98           | 98.07           | 106.52          | 111.53          |

‘n’ denotes not relevant. Source: Export Import Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

**Table 8 Russia's top 20 exports to India between 2006-07 and 2016-17.**

| HS Code | Product                                                                                                                                            | Rank    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|         |                                                                                                                                                    | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| 7       | Edible vegetables, certain roots and tubers                                                                                                        | NA      | NA      | NA      | 15      | 20      | 10      | 9       | 11      | 10      | 6       | 6       |
| 10      | Cereals                                                                                                                                            | 2       | 2       | No data | NA      | NA      | No data | NA      | No data | No data | NA      | 19      |
| 25      | Salt; sulphur; Earths and stones; plastering materials, lime and cement                                                                            | 14      | 13      | 10      | 8       | 8       | 9       | 7       | 9       | 6       | 8       | 8       |
| 27      | <b>Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes</b>                                        | 5       | 5       | 3       | 2       | 4       | 4       | 5       | 2       | 2       | 3       | 2       |
| 28      | Inorganic chemicals; organic or inorganic compounds of precious metals of rare earth metals, or radi. elements or of isotopes                      | 15      | 14      | 15      | 13      | 13      | 14      | 13      | 10      | 13      | 13      | 10      |
| 29      | Organic chemicals                                                                                                                                  | 12      | 6       | 11      | 12      | 11      | 12      | 16      | 13      | 12      | 14      | 15      |
| 31      | <b>Fertilisers</b>                                                                                                                                 | 3       | 3       | 1       | 1       | 1       | 2       | 4       | 3       | 3       | 2       | 3       |
| 40      | <b>Rubber and articles thereof</b>                                                                                                                 | 6       | 8       | 6       | 5       | 5       | 7       | 8       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 9       |
| 48      | Paper and paperboard; articles of paper pulp, of paper or of paperboard                                                                            | 7       | 11      | 7       | 7       | 7       | 8       | 11      | 8       | 7       | 7       | 5       |
| 71      | <b>Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi precious stones, pre metals, clad with pre-metal &amp; articles thereof; imit. Jewellery, coin</b> | 13      | 9       | 4       | 4       | 2       | 1       | 1       | 1       | 1       | 1       | 1       |
| 72      | <b>Iron and steel</b>                                                                                                                              | 1       | 1       | 2       | 3       | 3       | 3       | 2       | 5       | 5       | 4       | 4       |
| 74      | Copper and articles thereof                                                                                                                        | 10      | 7       | 12      | 10      | 10      | 6       | 6       | 4       | 4       | 5       | 14      |
| 75      | Nickel and articles thereof                                                                                                                        | 4       | 4       | 8       | 6       | 6       | 5       | 3       | 6       | 11      | 12      | 13      |
| 76      | Aluminium and articles thereof                                                                                                                     | NA      | NA      | 19      | 18      | 18      | 20      | NA      | NA      | 14      | 10      | NA      |
| 84      | Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof                                                                      | 9       | 10      | 13      | 11      | 12      | 11      | 10      | 12      | 17      | 11      | 7       |
| 88      | Aircraft, spacecraft & parts thereof                                                                                                               | 8       | 17      | 20      | 19      | NA      | 19      | 12      | 19      | 9       | 17      | 17      |
| 89      | Ships, boats & floating structures                                                                                                                 | 18      | NA      | 5       | NA      | NA      | NA      | NA      | No data | NA      | 15      | NA      |
| 98      | Project goods; some special uses                                                                                                                   | 11      | 12      | 9       | 9       | 9       | NA      | 14      | 14      | NA      | NA      | 11      |

NA: The items do not come under the top 20 items of export for the particular year. Source: Export Import Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India

**Table 9 Value of Russia's top 20 exports to India between 2006-07 and 2016-17.**

| HS Code | Product                                                                                                                                 | Value (in US million dollars) |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                 |                 |                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|         |                                                                                                                                         | 2006-07                       | 2007-08        | 2008-09        | 2009-10        | 2010-11        | 2011-12        | 2012-13        | 2013-14        | 2014-15         | 2015-16         | 2016-17         |
|         | <b>All products</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>2409.05</b>                | <b>2478.16</b> | <b>4328.28</b> | <b>3566.79</b> | <b>3600.02</b> | <b>4764.31</b> | <b>4231.56</b> | <b>3894.40</b> | <b>4,249.22</b> | <b>4,584.98</b> | <b>5,552.30</b> |
| 7       | Edible vegetables, certain roots and tubers                                                                                             | n                             | n              | n              | 29.84          | 11.68          | 113.63         | 168.72         | 90.33          | 103.16          | 217.57          | 181.20          |
| 10      | Cereals                                                                                                                                 | 445.77                        | 291.09         | No data        | n              | n              | No data        | n              | No data        | No data         | n               | 34.13           |
| 25      | Salt; sulphur; Earths and stones; plastering materials, lime and cement                                                                 | 40.03                         | 57.13          | 88.62          | 89.74          | 107.96         | 138.92         | 216.13         | 131.28         | 188.39          | 132.73          | 116.10          |
| 27      | Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes                                    | 178.76                        | 155.82         | 478.54         | 880.22         | 435.03         | 307.90         | 337.51         | 433.04         | 530.81          | 440.78          | 895.84          |
| 28      | Inorganic chemicals; organic or inorganic compounds of precious metals of rare earth metals, or radi. elements or of isotopes           | 31.46                         | 35.31          | 44.61          | 38.32          | 49.75          | 66.90          | 71.96          | 119.65         | 68.34           | 60.21           | 96.50           |
| 29      | Organic chemicals                                                                                                                       | 55.42                         | 143.04         | 83.79          | 54.17          | 67.05          | 70.83          | 53.57          | 74.10          | 79.34           | 59.60           | 63.44           |
| 31      | Fertilisers                                                                                                                             | 314.06                        | 274.37         | 1602.22        | 975.74         | 695.59         | 733.96         | 340.51         | 385.88         | 456.70          | 626.24          | 359.91          |
| 40      | Rubber and articles thereof                                                                                                             | 110.26                        | 126.16         | 175.03         | 120.77         | 216.10         | 245.27         | 195.50         | 181.10         | 147.88          | 108.05          | 113.00          |
| 48      | Paper and paperboard; articles of paper pulp, of paper or of paperboard                                                                 | 94.66                         | 75.96          | 133.40         | 92.70          | 145.03         | 245.27         | 152.26         | 146.32         | 170.52          | 190.61          | 230.96          |
| 71      | Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi precious stones, pre metals, clad with pre-metal & articles thereof; imit. Jewellery, coin | 54.18                         | 96.39          | 312.16         | 240.64         | 635.24         | 1263.00        | 740.80         | 1080.91        | 1272.87         | 1488.19         | 2475.83         |
| 72      | Iron and steel                                                                                                                          | 480.80                        | 505.06         | 532.78         | 493.43         | 561.86         | 636.55         | 526.00         | 229.17         | 295.74          | 322.19          | 247.99          |
| 74      | Copper and articles thereof                                                                                                             | 66.39                         | 126.81         | 78.87          | 68.57          | 81.92          | 278.76         | 288.64         | 357.39         | 312.18          | 289.63          | 65.86           |
| 75      | Nickel and articles thereof                                                                                                             | 193.28                        | 255.73         | 130.90         | 94.72          | 196.49         | 296.40         | 441.78         | 194.87         | 82.17           | 69.58           | 70.10           |
| 76      | Aluminium and articles thereof                                                                                                          | n                             | n              | 22.93          | 23.58          | 15.18          | 15.41          | n              | n              | 53.09           | 104.16          | n               |
| 84      | Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof                                                           | 67.02                         | 96.26          | 70.67          | 54.93          | 58.29          | 101.37         | 159.84         | 76.21          | 45.24           | 76.34           | 126.74          |
| 88      | Aircraft, spacecraft & parts thereof                                                                                                    | 81.57                         | 21.27          | 22.28          | 18.65          | n              | 21.86          | 101.91         | 26.32          | 116.82          | 47.96           | 35.85           |
| 89      | Ships, boats & floating structures                                                                                                      | 12.88                         | n              | 184.56         | n              | n              | n              | n              | No data        | n               | 56.89           | n               |
| 98      | Project goods; some special uses                                                                                                        | 61.01                         | 68.95          | 105.30         | 73.89          | 87.80          | n              | 68.25          | 54.25          | n               | n               | 92.13           |

‘n’ denotes not relevant.

Source: Export Import Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India

## TRADE IN SERVICES:

A significant aspect of Indo-Russia economic relations constitutes the trade-in-services. To place it in the general context, service sector forms an important part of the economy, contributing significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of most of the countries and trade in services has a potential to improve a country's economic credibility and hence can play a noteworthy part of its growth strategy. Hence, the importance of the service sector. According to the report of the India-Russia JSG in 2005-06 while services accounted for 54 percent of India's GDP and service exports constituted 40 percent of the total exports, in Russia during the same period services accounted for 55 percent of its GDP and service exports grew by 21 percent in 2005 to US\$24 billion.<sup>280</sup> The WTO data for the first half of 2017 shows that while service export growth for the world was 4.3 percent, for India it was 9.9 percent, though the highest growth was registered by Russia at 18.4 percent. The ratio of services exports to merchandise exports saw an rise from 35.8 percent in 2000-01 to 58.2 percent in 2016-17 indicating the growing importance of the service sector in Indian economy.<sup>281</sup> On the other hand, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Trade Restrictiveness Index, in 2017 Russia exported services worth US\$58 billion.<sup>282</sup> Since the growth of the service industry in both the countries is witnessing a gradual increase and given the vital role that the service sector can play in propelling the economic performance of a nation, hence it is quite essential for both India and Russia to explore the potentials, as much as possible, of this sector in their respective economies. According to the report of the India-Russia JSG, in the context

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<sup>280</sup> Report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group, Moscow-Delhi, 2007, 83.

<sup>281</sup> Government of India, Department of Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey 2017-18, Vol. II* (New Delhi: Ministry of Finance, 2018), 156-157.

<sup>282</sup> "OECD Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI): Russian Federation," OECD, December 2018, accessed May 15, 2019, [https://www.oecd.org/russia/STRI\\_RUS.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/russia/STRI_RUS.pdf).

of bilateral services, whereas, the most dominant are facility construction and maintenance services provided by Russia to India and development of transportation and communication networks, other services such as tourism, telecom services, insurance-related services, financial services and the like account for a small portion of the services output of the two countries.<sup>283</sup> These sectors need to be boosted as part of the efforts of both the sides to improve bilateral trade flows. Besides, there are also other sectors that need to be revitalized for strengthening trade in this area, the most important being Information Technology (IT) and IT enabled Services (ITeS). The IT sectors of both the countries form a dynamic part of their respective economies. According to a recent report, India's IT service market is slated to reach US\$10 billion by the end of 2019, having a growth rate of 9.1 percent annually.<sup>284</sup> This shows the highly competitive position that India has for itself in the global IT market. In the same vein, Russian IT sector is also one of the fastest growing sectors of the Russian economy and is an active participant in the global market. However, the ground reality is that in spite of being successful in their respective economies, neither Indian nor Russian IT sector has been able to make sufficient contributions to each other's countries. This could be attributed to the lack of proper knowledge and enthusiasm on part of both India and Russia to utilize each other's potentials and explore new avenues of cooperation. Given the fact that both countries have a strong IT industry, it is but necessary for them to identify each other's comparative advantages in the field and make use of them so as to bring about quick positive results. For e.g. in India software is a major sector and has a worldwide reputation for its effectiveness. The growth of India's software has been, particularly, fuelled by the vast pool of technically efficient manpower and it is here

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<sup>283</sup> Report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group, Moscow-Delhi, 2007, 83-84.

<sup>284</sup> "India IT & Business Services Market to Reach \$14.3 Billion by 2020: IDC," The Economic Times, May 9, 2019, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/ites/india-it-business-services-market-to-reach-14-3-bn-by-2020-idc/articleshow/69221249.cms>.

that India can come to the advantage of Russia. Russia, at present, lacks the required strength of technical staff so as to assist the country in developing home-grown solutions for information security and software. In such a situation Russia may very well opt for IT-sourcing from India given the vast experience the latter has in this area.<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, speculations are rife regarding the fact that the proposed US H-1B visa restrictions might open the door of Indian IT industry in Russia with both the sides exploring cooperation in hardware as well as software sectors.<sup>286</sup>

With regard to India, the Smart City Mission launched in 2015 has been much publicized as an initiative seeking to create cities which provide core infrastructure and a decent way of life to the people. To achieve success in this sphere India can seek Russia's assistance in the sense that the latter has a facility (Skolkovo Technopark) empowered with the capacity to devise technologies for smart cities. Besides, Russia which has special expertise in the field of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) can very well assist India in this area thereby enabling the latter to provide AI-powered solutions in various sectors like cyber security, banking, finance and insurance related services, education sector and the like.

Tourism is another area where some serious efforts need to be put in. Apart from acting as a source of foreign exchange earnings of nations tourism also promotes people-to-people contact among countries. Yet in case of India and Russia neither of them figures in the top ten tourist markets of each other. In India though the beach state of Goa has

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<sup>285</sup> Viktor Kuzmin, "Indian Techies Could Help Fill Russian Programmer Shortage," Russia Beyond, September 16, 2014, accessed May 6, 2020, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/2014/09/16/indian\\_techies\\_could\\_help\\_fill\\_russian\\_programmer\\_shortage\\_38319](https://www.rbth.com/economics/2014/09/16/indian_techies_could_help_fill_russian_programmer_shortage_38319).

<sup>286</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "H-1B Visa Restrictions: India, Russia Look for Cooperation in IT Sector," The Economic Times, May 1, 2017, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/ites/h-1b-visa-restrictions-india-russia-look-for-cooperation-in-it-sector/articleshow/58450544.cms>.

been an attractive tourist destination for Russians yet in recent years the number of Russians visiting there has declined owing to safety and security concerns. That about 40,000 Russians cancelled their travel to Goa in 2015 testify this claim.<sup>287</sup> On the other hand, in case of Russia the strict visa regulations act as a bottleneck in attracting Indians there. Particularly for businessmen going to Russia he or she has to prove that he or she has been invited either by the Ministry of Home Affairs of Russia or by the Russian Chambers of Commerce and Industry or the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs or the Russian Public Organization of Small and Medium Enterprises. Again, the lack of knowledge among Indians about Russian culture and travel also fail to make Russia a popular destination for the Indians.<sup>288</sup>

Hence, to give a boost to tourism industry both the governments must frame policies and enhance awareness among the people by promoting aggressive marketing strategies and organizing campaigns in each other's countries. Though initiatives have been taken in this respect, the most recent example of which includes the 'India friendly policy',<sup>289</sup> yet more vigorous efforts need to be undertaken in order to open up the tourism market of India and Russia to each other.

## **INVESTMENT LINKAGES:**

In contrast to the trading sector, both the nations have succeeded in reaching the bilateral investment target of US\$ 30bn in 2017 and has now set an aim of reaching a new target of US\$ 50bn by 2025. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian

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<sup>287</sup> RIR, "Goa Sees Significant Decline in Russian Tourist Arrivals," Russia Beyond, January 14, 2015, accessed May 6, 2020, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/2015/01/14/goa\\_sees\\_significant\\_decline\\_in\\_russian\\_tourist\\_arrivals\\_40807](https://www.rbth.com/economics/2015/01/14/goa_sees_significant_decline_in_russian_tourist_arrivals_40807).

<sup>288</sup> Katherine Foshko Tsan, "Re-energizing the Indian-Russian Relationship: Opportunities and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2012): 173.

<sup>289</sup> This is a part of the multilateral agreement signed at St. Petersburg in 2016 in order to promote Russia as a popular tourist destination among Indians.

investments in Russia are estimated to be about US\$13 billion which include Vankorneft and Taas –Yuryakh Taas fields; Imperial Energy Tomsk; Sakhalin-I; Volzhsky Abrasive Works Volgograd and Commercial Indo bank. Similarly, Russian investments in India amount to nearly US\$16 billion which includes the acquisition of the ESSAR group, Kamaz Vectra in Hosur, Shyam Sistema Telecom Ltd., Sberbank and VTB.<sup>290</sup>

### **SCENARIO OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) IN INDIA:**

India's rapid economic growth, huge market, policy regime, lower wages, etc. have helped in stimulating flow of foreign capital into the country. In India FDI up to 100 percent is allowed through the automatic route in most of the sectors. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) plays the most important role in liberalising and facilitating FDI flows into the country. The *Economic Survey Report 2017-18* published by the Ministry of Finance shows that in 2016-17 total FDI inflows into India grew by eight percent to US\$60.08 billion in comparison to US\$55.56 billion the previous year<sup>291</sup> thereby indicating the success of the government's efforts to improve the business climate by easing FDI regulations across the country. According to latest reports, the year 2018-19 saw the highest ever FDI inflows into country amounting to US\$ 62bn. And when one compares the total FDI figures in 2000-2001 with that of 2016-17, one finds that there has been a fifteen-fold increase in FDI inflows over the period (Table 10 and Figure 4). The rate of FDI inflows steadily picked up after 2014 with policy initiatives like 'Make in India' programme which opened the Indian economy for big ticket investments. In terms of FDI equity inflows (Apr 2000-

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<sup>290</sup> "India-Russia Relations," Ministry of External Affairs, accessed May 16, 2020, [www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India\\_Russia\\_May.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_Russia_May.pdf).

<sup>291</sup> Government of India, Department of Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey 2017-18, Vol. II* (New Delhi: Ministry of Finance, 2018), 124.

Dec 2016) Mauritius, Singapore, Japan, U.K. and U.S are the top five countries having a share of 33.5 percent, 16.3 percent, 7.8 percent, 7.5 percent and 6.1 percent respectively (as shown in Figure 5).<sup>292</sup>

**Table 10 Financial year wise India's FDI inflow data.**

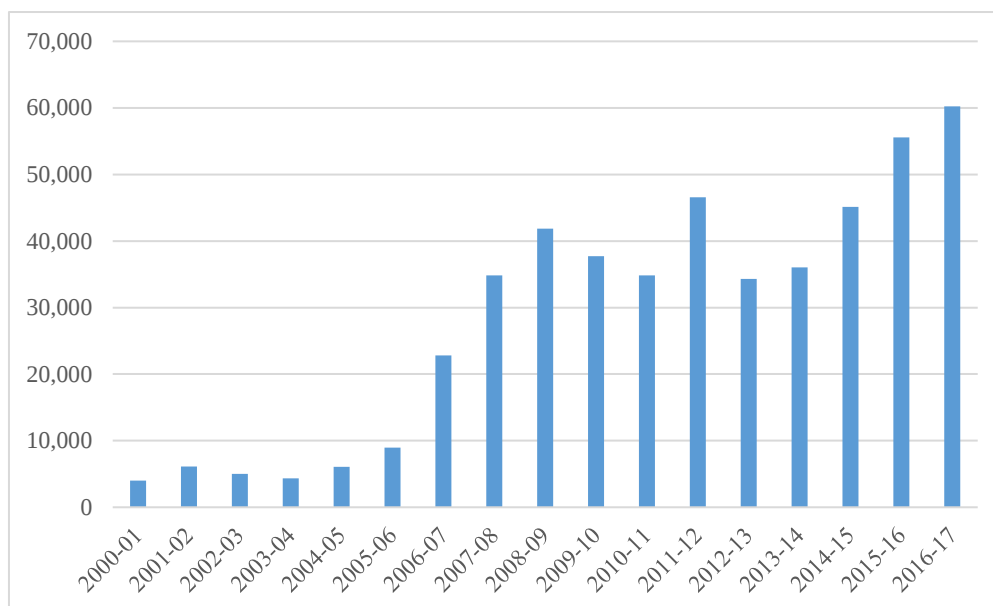
| <b>Year</b> | <b>FDI Inflows (in US\$ million)</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2000-01     | 4,029                                |
| 2001-02     | 6,130                                |
| 2002-03     | 5,035                                |
| 2003-04     | 4,322                                |
| 2004-05     | 6,051                                |
| 2005-06     | 8,961                                |
| 2006-07     | 22,826                               |
| 2007-08     | 34,843                               |
| 2008-09     | 41,873                               |
| 2009-10     | 37,745                               |
| 2010-11     | 34,847                               |
| 2011-12     | 46,556                               |
| 2012-13     | 34,298                               |
| 2013-14     | 36,046                               |
| 2014-15     | 45,148                               |
| 2015-16     | 55,559                               |
| 2016-17     | 60,220                               |

Source: FDI Factsheet, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, GoI (dpiit.gov.in).

Note: FDI inflows includes equity inflows as well as reinvested earnings and other capital.  
<https://dpiit.gov.in/publications/fdi-statistics>.

<sup>292</sup> Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, *Fact Sheet on FDI from April 2000-December 2016* (New Delhi: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade).

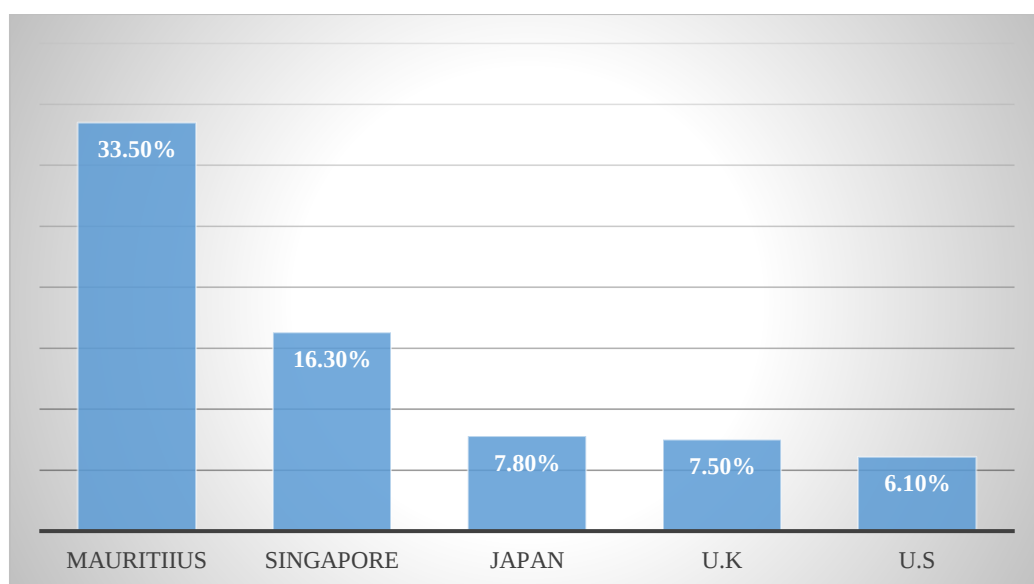
**Figure 4 Graphical representation of table 10**



Source: FDI Factsheet, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, GoI ([dpiit.gov.in](http://dpiit.gov.in)).

Note: FDI inflows includes equity inflows as well as reinvested earnings and other capital.  
<https://dpiit.gov.in/publications/fdi-statistics>

**Figure 5 Share of top 5 countries in FDI Equity inflows, i.e. inflows received through FIPB/SIA + RBI Automatic Route + acquisition of existing shares only (April 2000-December 2016).**



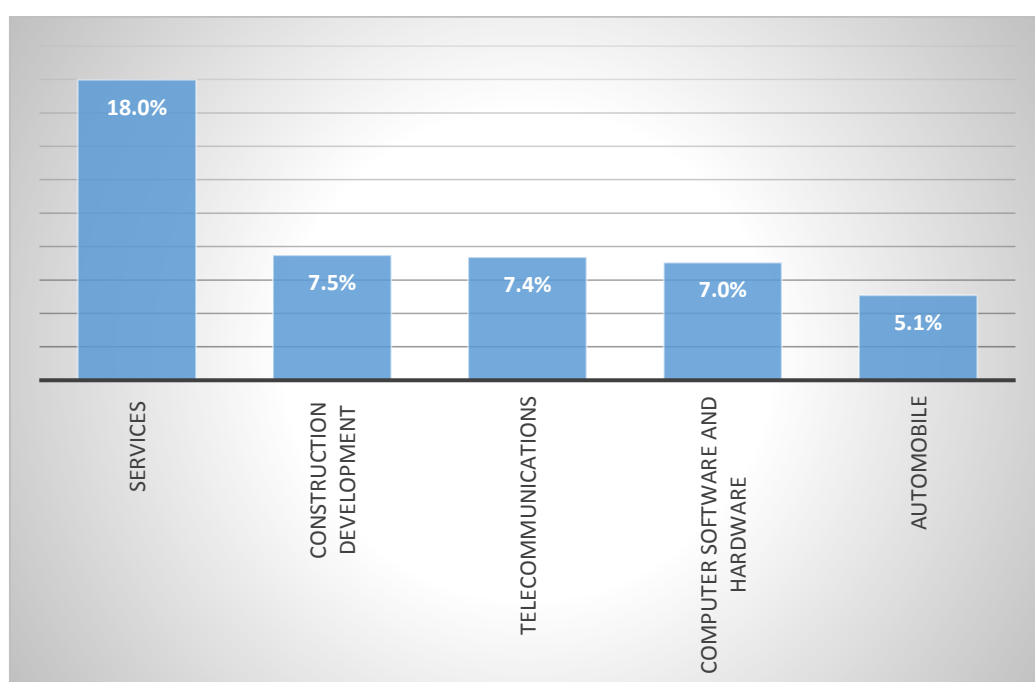
Source: DPIIT.

[http://dpiit.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI\\_FactSheet\\_OctoberNovemberDecember2016.pdf](http://dpiit.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI_FactSheet_OctoberNovemberDecember2016.pdf)

Coming to the sector-wise inflows, services sector including financial, banking, insurance, non-financial/business outsourcing, Research & Development (R&D), etc.

attracted the maximum amount of FDI equity inflows (April 2000-December 2016) amounting to US\$ 58.3 billion that comprised about 18 percent of the total FDI equity inflows.<sup>293</sup> This was followed by construction development (townships, housing, built-up infrastructure and construction-development projects), telecommunication, computer hardware and software and automobile industry. The share of the various sectors is given in the figure below:

**Figure 6 Sectors attracting highest FDI Equity inflows, i.e. inflows received through FIPB/SIA + RBI Automatic Route + acquisition of existing shares only, from April 2000-December 2016.**



Source: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, GoI ([dpiit.gov.in](http://dpiit.gov.in)).  
[http://dpiit.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI\\_FactSheet\\_OctoberNovemberDecember2016.pdf](http://dpiit.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI_FactSheet_OctoberNovemberDecember2016.pdf).

Moreover, one point that is to be noted here is that, though the ‘Make in India’ initiative, which was formulated in 2014, sought to boost the manufacturing sector<sup>294</sup>, yet it did

<sup>293</sup> Calculated on the basis of FDI Statistics available in the website of Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Government of India.

[http://dipp.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI\\_FactSheet\\_OctoberNovemberDecember2016.pdf](http://dipp.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI_FactSheet_OctoberNovemberDecember2016.pdf).

<sup>294</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, *Annual Report 2015-16* (New Delhi: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, n.d.).

not yield the desired results. As could be derived from Figure 3, the largest share of the FDI inflows over the years have been cornered by the service sector whereas the share in the manufacturing sector is on the wane. For example, in 2017-18, FDI in manufacturing sector was just above US\$ 7bn, as against \$9.6 bn in 2014-15.<sup>295</sup> Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that the coronavirus pandemic that has led many countries to decide upon pulling away their businesses from China, might open up a new opportunity for India to attract investments particularly in the manufacturing sector<sup>296</sup>. How far India can utilise this opportunity, however, remains to be seen.

### **RUSSIAN INVESTMENTS IN INDIA:**

For the period between 2000 and 2018, Russian investments in India stood at US\$ 1.2 billion with the telecom sector attracting the maximum investment having a share of 68 percent.<sup>297</sup> In 2008 India's telecom sector witnessed, for the first time, private investment from Russia when a Russian private conglomerate Sistema JSFC acquired 73 percent stake in Shyam Telelink. Later Sistema entered into a partnership with the Russian Government and Shyam Group of India to create Sistema Shyam Teleservices Limited (SSTL) in which it invested more than US\$4 billion. Nevertheless, in the wake of the 2G spectrum scam in India, this venture ran into severe problems when the Supreme Court, in 2012, ordered the cancellation of Sistema's pan-India 2G licences. In 2017 Sistema JSFC sold SSTL to Reliance Communications in return for 10 percent

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<sup>295</sup> Christopher Jaffrelot & Vihang Jumble, "There is a Contradiction in Trying to Attract Foreign Investors Before Reforming Labour, Land Acquisition Laws," The Indian Express, October 17, 2019, accessed May 25, 2020, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/five-years-of-make-in-india-narendra-modi-6072422/>.

<sup>296</sup> Pravakar Sahoo, "A post-Covid Business Opportunity," The Indian Express, May 14, 2020, accessed May 25, 2020, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/post-coronavirus-pandemic-india-6408650/>.

Ashwin Johar, "Geo-economic Shift Post Pandemic Can Favour India, But It Needs To Work Its Way Up," Outlook, May 5, 2020, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/opinion-geo-economic-shift-post-pandemic-can-favour-india-but-it-needs-to-work-its-way-up/352124>.

<sup>297</sup> More details are available at Invest India, accessed May 12, 2019, <https://www.investindia.gov.in/country/russia-plus>.

stake but then again due to further complications it has gradually sold away its entire stake in the company<sup>298</sup> to zero and is now looking for strengthening investments in start-ups.

Besides telecom, Russia is also eyeing for investments in the energy sector. Since Russia is an energy-surplus country whereas India is an energy-deficient country, it is but natural for them to strengthen investment cooperation in this area. It is a well-known fact that Russia has invested considerably in the Indian nuclear energy sector with the Russian firm Rosatom State Atomic Energy joining hands with the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) for the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP) Project. Starting in 2002, while units I and II have already been operational, construction work is underway for units III and IV and a general framework agreement for units V and VI has been signed in 2017. This cooperation was further strengthened in October 2018 when both the countries signed an agreement whereby Russia agreed to provide India with six new ‘third generation’ pressurized water or VVER reactors for a new site which is supposed to generate more energy for a longer period of time. All reactors are supplied by Atomstroyexport which is a unit of Atomenergoprom, a holding company under Russian state owned Rosatom.<sup>299</sup> Apart from that, quite recently Rosatom has also expressed its interest to invest in India’s renewable energy sector which assumes importance in the context of India’s drive for a green economy. The biggest investment for Russia in India, in recent past, has been the acquisition of ESSAR oil, renamed Nayara Energy, in 2017 by Russia’s state-owned Rosneft-led consortium for US\$12.9 bn. This also marked the biggest foreign acquisition in India

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<sup>298</sup> Kalyan Parbat, “Sistema Sells its 10 percent Stake to Exit Reliance Communications,” The Economic Times, June 21, 2018, accessed May 17, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/sistema-sells-its-10-per-cent-stake-to-exit-reliance-communications/articleshow/64674969.cms?from=mdr>.

<sup>299</sup> Kanak Gokarn, “Stepping on the Gas: Indo-Russian Energy Cooperation,” Observer Research Foundation, February 26, 2018, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/stepping-on-the-gas-indo-russian-energy-cooperation/>

and also the largest flow of fund from Russia. This deal was a win-win situation for both the sides because for India it was a salvation for the debt-ridden Essar oil which was on the verge of bankruptcy and for Russia it opened up the highly competitive market of India to an entity which has been facing sanctions in the wake of the Crimean fiasco.

In addition to these important investments Russia can also invest in agriculture, diamond industry, infrastructure and the like which provides great scope for collaboration and cooperation. Besides, Russia can also invest in various start-up projects that will be of immense benefit to both the countries. And most importantly, as recommended by the India-Russia JSG, the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) that are present in India might be a good option for Russia as it is a duty-free enclave and provides great opportunity to carry out business in areas of interest for both the nations like IT, metallurgy, jewellery, diamond processing, etc.<sup>300</sup> To facilitate investment cooperation, an agreement was signed between Invest India and Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) in 2019 while the later also noted the possibility of an agreement with India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) for joint investments in ports and logistics.<sup>301</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section, India's manufacturing sector, though being an important driver of economic growth, is still lagging behind in terms of FDI inflows. Given the fact that Russia supports the 'Make in India' initiative and is well aware of the size and the competitive nature of the Indian market<sup>302</sup>, the former can probably

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<sup>300</sup> Report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group, Moscow-Delhi, 2007, 108.

<sup>301</sup> "Russia's RDIF Plans Indian Infrastructure Investment," Russia Business Today, October 3, 2018, accessed May 26, 2020, <http://russiabusinesstoday.com/economy/russias-rdif-plans-indian-infrastructure-investment/>.

<sup>302</sup> Alexandra Katz, " 'Make in India' Quite Well Known in Russia," Russia Beyond, June 15, 2015, accessed May 26, 2020, [http://rbth.com/economics/2015/06/15/make\\_in\\_india\\_quite\\_well\\_known\\_in\\_russia\\_43653](http://rbth.com/economics/2015/06/15/make_in_india_quite_well_known_in_russia_43653).

chip in for boosting the latter's manufacturing sector. Particularly in the field of defence, Russia can jointly participate with India in the joint manufacture of various spare parts and components that can modernize India's defence industry<sup>303</sup>. As per latest reports steps in this direction have already been taken through the conclusion of fourteen MoUs aimed at setting up joint ventures for the manufacture of spare parts and components.<sup>304</sup> Heavy engineering industry, which constitute an important pillar of Indian manufacturing sector, also offers immense opportunities for Russian investments. Indo-Russian cooperation in the field of engineering dates back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when the Indian steel plants of Bhilai and Bokaro were set up with Russian assistance. In addition, Russia also contributed in the establishment of a mining plant in Durgapur, a thermal power station in Neyveli, an electromagnetic enterprise in Korba, antibiotics plant in Rishikesh and a pharmaceutical plant in Hyderabad. In fact, Russia is known for its wealth of advanced technical know-how and this can come in handy for Indian (heavy) engineering sector. Russia can invest in the development of forward-looking technologies having the potential to improve production techniques thereby increasing competitiveness of the products in the international market.

## **SCENARIO OF FDI IN RUSSIA:**

The fall of USSR in 1991 brought unprecedented changes in the Russian society and the economy. The collapse of the communist system imparted a new character to the economy by injecting elements of privatization, entrepreneurship and openness. It exposed the Russian economy to foreign markets and gradually paved the way for

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<sup>303</sup> An Inter-Governmental Agreement, dealing with the joint manufacture of spares, components and other materials for Soviet or Russian origin arms and armaments, has been signed between India and Russia on January 4, 2019.

<sup>304</sup> Dinakar Peri, "14 MoUs for Military Spares and Support Signed with Russian Firms," The Hindu, February 17, 2020, accessed May 26, 2020, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/14-mous-for-military-spares-and-support-signed-with-russian-firms/article30836127.ece/amp/>.

foreign investors to enter the Russian space. This development, however, was gradual. Immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, though the newly formed Russia adopted a model of market economy, yet the uncertainties that engulfed the nascent state at that point of time failed to attract reasonable foreign investments. The fact that in the 1990s foreign investments in Russia was quite low amounting to about US\$2.32 bn (1992-99) in comparison to the 2000s when the same amounted to nearly US\$24.9 bn (2000-2010) is a testimony to the claim.<sup>305</sup> Some of the major reasons accounting for low FDI in the 1990s included political instability in the Yeltsin period; a capricious, changing and exorbitant tax regime; lack of coordination in government policies; rampant corruption; lack of proper infrastructure; constant changes in legislation affecting foreign investors; inability of foreigners to own land and the like.<sup>306</sup> Nonetheless, the macroeconomic and political stabilization and the fast rate of growth of the economy following the crisis of 1998 brought about a change in the situation in Russia and bolstered its image as an attractive investment destination.<sup>307</sup> World Investment Prospects Survey (2009-11) of United National Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)<sup>308</sup> placed Russia among the top five countries, attracting FDI during 2009-11, the others being China, US, India and Brazil. However, since 2013 Russia witnessed a steady decline of inward FDI flows and subsequently lost its position among the top five FDI destinations in the UNCTAD Survey Report of 2014-16.<sup>309</sup> This might be due to the uncertainties and political risks related with the sanctions regime that began in the wake of the Crimean

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<sup>305</sup> Inferred from data available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/>

<sup>306</sup> Arun Mohanty, "Some Highlights of Russian Economy," In *India-Russia: Trade and Economic Relations*, ed. Arun Mohanty (Moscow: 2003), 146.

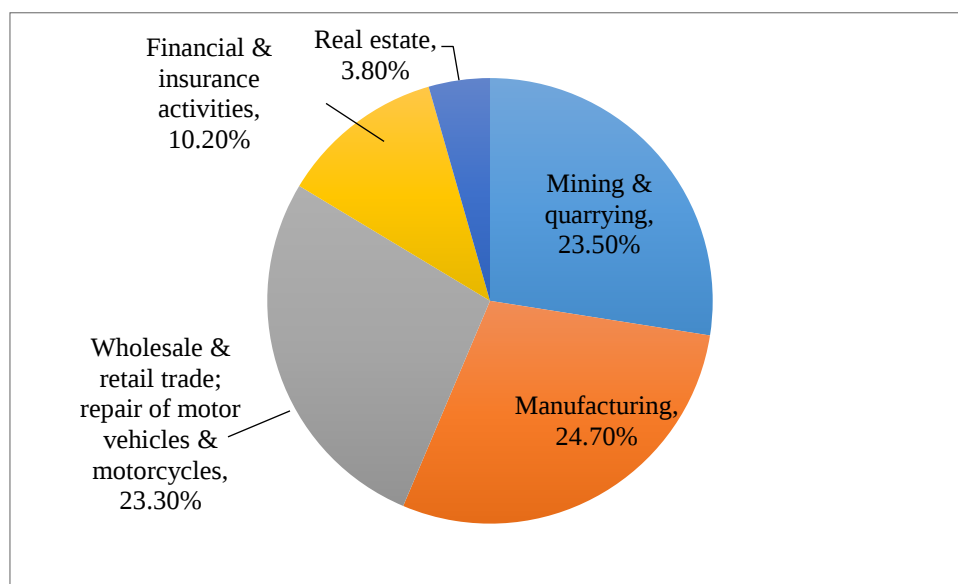
<sup>307</sup> Oleg Mariev, Igor Drapkin, Kristina Chukavina, "Is Russia Successful in Attracting Foreign Direct Investment? Evidence Based on Gravity Model Estimation" *Review of Economic Perspectives* 16, no. 3(2016): 259, accessed May 20, 2019, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/revecp-2016-0015>.

<sup>308</sup> UNCTAD, *World Investment Prospects Survey 2009-2011* (New York & Geneva, 2009), accessed May 20, 2019, [https://unctad.org/en/Docs/diaeia20098\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/Docs/diaeia20098_en.pdf).

<sup>309</sup> UNCTAD, *World Investment Prospects Survey 2014-2016* (New York & Geneva, 2014), accessed May 20, 2019, [https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/webdiaeia2015d4\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/webdiaeia2015d4_en.pdf).

crisis of 2014. In addition, problems of corruption, administrative complications and risks associated with regional instability also create uncertainty among investors leading to loss of confidence regarding sustainability of long-term investments in Russia. Nevertheless, the main sectors attracting investments in Russia (*according to 2016 data of Central Bank of Russia*)<sup>310</sup> are manufacturing, mining and quarrying, wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, financial and insurance activities and real estate. The share of the various sectors is given in figure 7:

**Figure 7 Share of sectors attracting highest FDI in Russia in 2016**



Source: The Central Bank of the Russian Federation Statistics.  
<https://www.cbr.ru/Eng/statistics/?Prtd=svs>.

## INDIAN INVESTMENTS IN RUSSIA:

Indian investments in Russia has been much higher in comparison to Russian investments in India. As of December 2016, Indian investments in Russia amounted to US\$ 13 bn<sup>311</sup> most of which has been concentrated in the energy sector. As pointed out

<sup>310</sup> The Central Bank of the Russian Federation Statistics, accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.cbr.ru/Eng/statistics/?Prtd=svs>.

<sup>311</sup> "India-Russia Trade and Investment Relations," Confederation of Indian Industry, May 28, 2017, accessed June 18, 2018, <https://www.ciiblog.in/india-russia-trade-and-investment-relations-2/>

earlier that India being an energy-deficient country, it has to look for energy sources in order to fulfil its energy appetite. In this context Russia being an energy surplus country serves as a viable option for India. India has been investing heavily in this sector beginning from the early 2000s when ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL, an overseas arm of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation-ONGC, of India) started to actively participate in the development of the Sakhalin oilfields along with Exxon Mobil Corp, Japanese consortium Sakhalin Oil and Gas Development Co. and Rosneft. Later in 2009, it bought Imperial Energy, that operated several oilfields in the Tomsk region, to secure deposits in the Siberian region and also negotiated with Bashneft for a 20-25 percent stake in the company, with Gazprom for jointly developing the Kirinsky gas field and with Rosneft for equity-based participation in tapping the Yurubchenko-Tokhomskoye gas deposits and a stake in one of Rosneft's three Arctic joint multinational consortiums.<sup>312</sup> To give a further boost to investments, in 2016, OVL increased its stake to 26 percent in the Vankorneft oil fields along with a consortium of three Indian state-run oil companies namely Oil India, Indian Oil and Bharat Petroleum which acquired an additional 23.9 percent stake for \$2.02 bn. Besides the Indian consortium also purchased 29.9 percent stake in LLC-Taas Yuryakh for \$1.24 bn<sup>313</sup> (as shown in Table 11) and all these initiatives have further strengthened India's presence in the oil and gas exploration projects in Russia.

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<sup>312</sup> Rajan Menon, "India and Russia: The Anatomy and Evolution of a Relationship," In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan & Srinath Raghavan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 520.

<sup>313</sup> "Indian companies invest \$5 bln in Vankorneft, TAAS-Yuryakh Neftegazodobycha," TASS, October 12, 2016, accessed May 6, 2019, [https://tass.com/economy/905972?utm\\_source=google.co.in&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=google.co.in&utm\\_referrer=google.co.in](https://tass.com/economy/905972?utm_source=google.co.in&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.co.in&utm_referrer=google.co.in).

**Table 11 Indian Investments in Russian Oil and Gas Sector**

| <b>Project</b> | <b>Investor</b>    | <b>Percentage Share</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Sakhalin I     | OVL                | 20%                     |
| Vankorneft     | OVL, OIL-IOC, BPCL | 49.9%                   |
| Taas-Yaryukh   | OIL-IOC, BPCL      | 29.9%                   |

Source:

[https://tass.com/economy/905972?utm\\_source=google.co.in&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=google.co.in&utm\\_referrer=google.co.in](https://tass.com/economy/905972?utm_source=google.co.in&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.co.in&utm_referrer=google.co.in).

## **CHALLENGES & POTENTIALS:**

As stated earlier, both the countries have, time and again, taken various measures to improve the weak economic ties between them. Various institutional mechanisms are in place in order to facilitate regular interactions at the highest levels on issues of economic cooperation between the two sides. Yet, these have not yielded the desired results and the level of cooperation between the two countries remain far below potential. The following section identifies several impediments as well as indicates certain potentials that must be explored to create long-term economic linkages between the two sides:

- ❖ An important hindrance in case of expanding India-Russia economic relations is the issue of poor connectivity. The geographical distance between the two makes import-export activities a time-consuming process. For instance, Indian goods take almost around fifty days to reach Russian market whereas Chinese and European products take hardly one or two weeks and unless another shorter and faster route is unlocked, the quantum of trade is bound to suffer. In this context the effort of both the countries to operationalise the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) deserves special mention. The INSTC is the shortest multi-modal transport network linking Indian Ocean and the Persian

Gulf with the Caspian Sea via Iran and then to Russia and Europe. This route is of great strategic significance to India due to the fact that envisages movement of goods from India to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, from there to Bandar-e-Anzali, from Bandar-e-Anzali to the Russian port of Astrakhan by ship and then finally to other parts of Europe by rail. To test the feasibility of the trade route, a dry run was conducted in 2014 wherein a test container was sent from Iranian port of Bandar Abbas to Baku of Azerbaijan and then onwards to the Russian port of Astrakhan. Another route that was tested was from the Iranian port of Bandar Amirabad to Astrakhan. Following this, an Indian delegation visited Iran in 2015 to assess the progress made after the dry run and was satisfied with the same.<sup>314</sup>

**Image 1 INSTC Route vs the old route.**



Source: <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/11411/North-South-Transport-Corridor-May-Be-Transferred-to-Azerbaijan>.

<sup>314</sup> Ajay Patnaik. *Central Asia: Geopolitics, security and stability* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

It has been reported that, in contrast to the long and expensive sea route via Rotterdam and St. Petersburg, this transit route is stipulated to reduce time and cost of container delivery from India to Russia by about 30-40%.<sup>315</sup> Not only that, but it shall also enable India to bypass Pakistan, its most important adversary in the South Asian continent, to transport goods to Russia as well as Central Asia. In order to fast-track this multi-modal transport route, both India and Russia concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for providing logistical support to the INSTC. The MoU envisages joint workshop to improve Indo-Russian logistics cooperation, develop joint projects in the field of container transportation between countries and develop high quality logistics services aimed at increasing the efficiency of the INSTC.<sup>316</sup> However since 2002, when the agreement for INSTC had been ratified, till 2019, very little real progress has been made with respect to the INSTC. Various constraining factors account for the slow progress of the INSTC like the scarcity of cargo movements due to lack of banking services and Indian freight forwarders in Iran, low levels of investment, wagon shortage and load restrictions for transit traffic in Iran and the like. Most importantly, due to some technical difficulties, there has not been much of container transport along this route as a result of which, while, filled up containers are transported from one

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<sup>315</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "INSTC to be Operationalised Mid-Jan 2018; Game Changer for India's Eurasia Policy," The Economic Times, December 5, 2017, accessed May 22, 2019. [https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/m.economictimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/institc-to-be-operationalised-mid-jan-2018-game-changer-for-indias-eurasia-policy/amp\\_articleshow/61926321.cms](https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/m.economictimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/institc-to-be-operationalised-mid-jan-2018-game-changer-for-indias-eurasia-policy/amp_articleshow/61926321.cms).

The route is estimated to save \$2500 for every 15 tonnes of cargo. David Rogers, "Iran's Railway Revolution," Global Construction Review, December 14, 2015, accessed May 28, 2020, <http://globalconstructionreview.com/markets/how-islamic-set-become-land-br8i8d8ge/>.

<sup>316</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India Signs MoU with Russia to Fast-Track North-South Corridor," The Economic Times, February 5, 2019, accessed May 23, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-signs-mou-with-russia-to-fast-track-north-south-corridor/articleshow67845357.cms?from=mdr>.

end, these containers return empty from the other end. This creates a serious problem because there is no point of paying costs for bringing back empty containers. So here there is an issue which needs an in-depth study and until both the governments conduct a detailed research on this the future of INSTC does not seem to be too bright.<sup>317</sup> In this respect there is a need on part of Russia and Iran to revise transport tariff and port handling charges and to offer some attractive discounts at the initial phases so as to make the route cost competitive, as identified by the Department of Commerce in its Annual Report (2017-18).<sup>318</sup> Further, as Meena Singh Roy points out, both India and Russia must, inter alia, prioritise and identify projects that might help in enhancing their trade and commercial ties and establish JSGs along with Iran to identify the main problem areas and devise means to address them.<sup>319</sup>

- ❖ Government-imposed barriers and bureaucratic delays also create bottlenecks in expanding trading ties between the two sides. The bureaucratic machineries of both the countries, often lacking knowledge of each other's interests, create hurdles in the way of approval of important projects and initiatives. Sometimes the process of decision-making becomes very time-consuming as it has to pass through various stages and face various bureaucratic hurdles before getting the final stamp of approval. The financial losses involved in such lengthy procedures often lead to loss of interest in the projects which ultimately might lead to its cancellation.

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<sup>317</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan (distinguished scholar) in discussion with the author, May 13, 2018.

<sup>318</sup> Department of Commerce, *Annual Report (2017-18)* (New Delhi: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, 2018), 81.

<sup>319</sup> Meena Singh Roy, "Strategic Contours of Connectivity between India and Russia," in *A New Era: India-Russia Ties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2015), 99.

Besides, in Russia India also faces restrictions in relation to market access of its exports. For instance, high tariff rates are imposed on certain category of products like textiles, automobiles, packaged tea, gold jewellery and the like which makes it difficult for India to access Russian markets. In addition, Indian products entering Russian markets also face non-tariff barriers like stringent sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards on bovine meat, egg products, oil seeds, non-basmati rice and even pharmaceutical products.<sup>320</sup> The Russian side has also been complaining about the problem of consulting separate tariff and excise tax schedules for determining the current rates of taxes and tariffs. The Indian side has, however, countered this claim by pointing out that the Indian website ([www.cbec.gov.in](http://www.cbec.gov.in)) provides a comprehensive information of the customs and central excise duty rates, tariffs, concessions and other such related issues that are being implemented from time to time.<sup>321</sup> To rationalize the tariff system and to improve the trade facilitation infrastructure both sides are putting in a lot of effort and the 'Green corridor' project is a noteworthy step in this respect. By means of this initiative goods transported by entrepreneurs are not required to undergo customs inspection and examination while crossing borders which helps in saving considerable amount of time by simplifying customs operations. Once in place, this system is expected to boost bilateral trade between India and Russia.

- ❖ Another important area where India can make its presence felt is the Russian Far East (RFE). Considered to be Russia's 'near abroad' this area is rich in natural resources, albeit, suffers from underdevelopment. While Russia is eager

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<sup>320</sup> Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, *Foreign Trade Policy Statement* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2017), 37.

<sup>321</sup> Report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group, 2007, 31-32.

to develop this region, it is handicapped by the lack of infrastructure and manpower. Since the level of investment cooperation between the two sides is considerably low, it is quite feasible for India to capitalise on this situation and enhance its economic presence in the RFE region. Though India has already invested in the rich hydrocarbon sector of the region and its presence is also found in the Irkutsk region, yet the engagements are limited in nature and needs to be further expanded. According to Indian officials there are also other potential areas where cooperation can be enhanced, agriculture, infrastructure development, diamond processing being few of them. However, the main problem Russia faces is the lack of sufficient labour and in this respect, India can be of much importance due to the availability of cheap and surplus labour force in the latter. Russia can very well consider the option of importing Indian labour and the most important advantage of the latter is that it will never settle down in Russia. It is basically seasonal in nature, i.e. they will go for the sowing or harvesting season and then will return and hence the possibility of settlement does not arise.<sup>322</sup> Thus, Indian labour force seems to be an attractive option for the development of the RFE particularly when compared to the case of Chinese migration which raises the spectre of eventual demographic changes in the region.

- ❖ The banking sectors of both the countries have long been contemplating the use of national currencies as means of transactions which has recently gained traction given the US sanctions against Russia under Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). This act, which aims at curtailing flow of revenue to Russia, envisages sanctions against any country

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<sup>322</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan (distinguished scholar) in discussion with the author, May 13, 2019.

engaged in ‘significant transactions’ with the latter. Since India is an important defence importer of Russia and since the US administration has recently dismissed any extension of waiver from sanctions, hence it becomes a serious matter of concern for both the countries. It is in this context that both sides have been considering the rupee-rouble route in order to ‘insulate the countries from volatility against the dollar’<sup>323</sup> that has the potential of restricting the trade between the two sides.

- ❖ Lack of proper insurance facilities is another area which needs attention. A proper insurance cover is absolutely necessary for boosting a country’s exports. However, in case of India, the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC), has placed Russia in the category of risky countries (particularly in the wake of the sanctions placed on it following the Crimean crisis) and provides only 60-80 percent insurance cover for items shipped to Russia. This practice should be done away with and Russia should also offer some ‘security guarantee schemes’ in order to boost confidence in such business deals.
- ❖ There have not been adequate efforts on part of both the countries to explore each other’s markets. It is absolutely necessary to master the conditions of economic operations in each country<sup>324</sup> otherwise there won’t be significant commercial ties between the two nations. Unless one knows about the market conditions in its partner country, one would not be willing to participate in any large-scale economic projects or enter into any kind of economic partnership. This lack of information between India and Russia, in effect, derails business-to-business contacts thereby adversely affecting bilateral economic relations.

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<sup>323</sup> “Russia Pitches for Return to Rupee-Rouble Trade,” The Telegraph, October 6, 2018, accessed May 31, 2019, <https://m.telegraphindia.com/business/russia-pitches-for-return-to-rupee-rouble-trade/cid/1671103>.

<sup>324</sup> Amb. P.S. Raghavan (former diplomat) in discussion with the author, May 18, 2018.

For example, in recent times Russia has been importing considerable amount of goods from China. India can, if sincere efforts are made in that direction, replace some of these goods. Though the process might be a bit difficult given the price competitiveness of Chinese goods in the global market, yet it doesn't seem to be absolutely impossible. Unfortunately, not much study has been conducted to identify these areas in which India can enter into Russian markets, barring the conventional items which it has been exporting to Russia over the years. Similarly, Russia also needs to study the changing needs of the Indian consumers and the varying patterns of the Indian market to locate the areas where it could have the competitive advantage. As Gleb Ivashentsov, a former Russian diplomat, pointed out that unlike during the Soviet times, today there are little or no big Indian industrial exhibitions in Russia as a result of which Russians remain oblivious to Indian market opportunities.<sup>325</sup> Moreover, as suggested by the JSG, both sides should exchange information on a 'regular basis about projects having potential in priority areas of cooperation and set up information channels to circulate on a continuous basis, information about business opportunities in Russia and India.'<sup>326</sup> Added to this is the problem of language which makes it difficult for Indian businessmen to conduct business in Russia as most of the meetings are conducted in Russian language. To overcome this barrier, Indian government should actively promote the learning of Russian language among Indians by establishing institutions dedicated to imparting foreign language courses in India.

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<sup>325</sup> Ksenia Zubacheva, "Moscow Hosts Academic Conference on Russia-India Relations," *Russia Beyond*, February 21, 2017, accessed May 28, 2020, [http://rbth.com/politics/2017/02/21/moscow-hosts-academic-conference-on-russia-india-relations\\_706828](http://rbth.com/politics/2017/02/21/moscow-hosts-academic-conference-on-russia-india-relations_706828).

<sup>326</sup> Report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group, 2007, 29.

## **CONCLUSION**

The time-tested relationship between India and Russia reached new heights when, in 2010, the two sides elevated their strategic partnership to the status of 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'. However, in order for a strategic partnership to be strong there should be meaningful cooperation in all aspects of relationship, particularly the economic one. In fact, it is the economic content that gives a real strategic character to a relationship. But in case of India and Russia, the economic ties do not reflect the potential underlying the otherwise strong partnership. Though the governments of both sides have committed themselves to improve this deplorable situation and have signed various agreements and declarations to that effect, the results are yet to be seen. Moreover, it can be said without any doubt that in order for India-Russia relations to reach new heights, the economic component of the relationship needs to be worked upon quite vigorously and all the necessary steps to remove the bottlenecks must be implemented at the earliest.

## **CHAPTER VI – INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS: BEYOND THE FRAMEWORK OF BILATERAL COOPERATION**

The various aspects of bilateral partnership show that the two sides have been enjoying a relationship marked by a sense of mutual trust, respect and complementarity of interests which has been a legacy of the Soviet era, though with certain variations. These variations have, in fact, been the result of the new geo-political realities that have characterized the international system ever since the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The end of the bipolar standoff between the two superpowers has given rise to a new terrain of international relations which has restructured interaction among nations at the global level. It has not only thrown up ample opportunities of cooperation among nations but has also posed various challenges, the solution of which can be worked out not unilaterally, but on the basis of a coordinated approach. In this situation and given their changing foreign policy priorities, India and Russia have clearly felt the need to clearly define their goals and objectives and move beyond bilateral interactions to engage more vigorously at various regional and international fora.

### **POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE**

The end of Cold War has brought about some very fundamental changes in the international system, particularly with regard to international peace and security. Whereas the security landscape during the Cold War years defined itself mainly in terms of ‘dangerous nuclear confrontation between two hostile, ideologically driven systems,’<sup>327</sup> the post-Cold War security environment has become rather more

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<sup>327</sup> Leonid Kistersky, “New Dimensions of the International Security System After the Cold War,” Centre for International Security and Arms Control, 1996, accessed November 29, 2019, <https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/kistersky.pdf>.

complicated. The paranoia about nuclear destruction of the Cold War years has been replaced by new challenges of unprecedented nature that continue to threaten the security of mankind. These include, inter alia, the threat of terrorism, extremism, various forms of ethnic struggles, organized crime networks, human and drug trafficking, cyber-crime and environmental degradation. Their accentuation in the aftermath of the Cold War can be attributed to the phenomenon of globalization which has become a buzzword since the 1990s. On one hand, while globalization has led to growing interconnectedness among nation states thereby increasing the prospects of prosperity and cooperation among them; on the other hand, it has also unleashed some negative forces that have made the world more vulnerable. And most importantly, these vulnerabilities expand beyond national boundaries and traverse around the globe which pose a threat to the 'social, political, and legal order of nations, and adversely impact the quality of life of population of nations.'<sup>328</sup> It is this transnational character of the threats that lie at the root of the security threats facing contemporary international system<sup>329</sup> and which call for coordinated response from nations for their solutions.

It is in this context that we should analyse the role that both India and Russia have undertaken for themselves in the international scenario and the way it has influenced their relations vis-à-vis each other. The most important aspiration that binds them together is the urge to create a multipolar world order and the common desire to be recognized as major poles in such a system. Pursuant to this they have constantly sought to maintain an autonomous stature in global affairs while simultaneously exploring ways in which they can attain their goals and objectives in cooperation with various nations. As discussed in the previous chapters, India-Russia bilateral ties are marked by

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<sup>328</sup> Marie-Helen Maras, *Transnational Security* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2015), 15.

<sup>329</sup> Lynn E. Davis, "Globalization's Security Implications," RAND, 2003, accessed November 29, 2019, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/issue\\_papers/2005/IP245.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/issue_papers/2005/IP245.pdf).

strategic congruity of views which they have sought to implement and materialise actively under the framework of 'Privileged Strategic Partnership'. This chapter, however, would focus on the way they have tried to meet their mutual concerns and objectives by going beyond the bilateral framework of interaction.

## **THE ISSUE OF GLOBAL SECURITY: TRADITIONAL vs NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY**

The phenomenon of global security has emerged as the most important challenge facing nation states in the post-Cold War era. But what kind of security issues are plaguing nation states? The term security is a quite complex concept lacking any unanimous definition. Some writers, like W. B. Gallie<sup>330</sup>, Buzan<sup>331</sup>, Booth<sup>332</sup> and the like even designate security as a 'contested concept', though Baldwin prefers to call it as a 'confused or inadequately explicated'<sup>333</sup> concept rather than a contested concept. The idea of security is not a new one and its emergence can be traced back to the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which is often associated with the formation of sovereign state system. Sovereignty entails an independent and autonomous status of the state thereby recognizing the power of the state to protect itself from external attacks as well as internal aggression.<sup>334</sup> In course of maintaining an independent and autonomous status in the international system, each state would try to protect and further its own interests which is likely to result in conflict of interests between the community of states. In

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<sup>330</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983), 6.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ken Booth, "Security and Emancipation," *Review of International Studies* 17, no.4 (1991).

<sup>333</sup> David A. Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (January, 1997): 12, accessed November 29, 2019, [https://scholar.princeton.edu/dbaldwin/selected%20articles/Baldwin%20\(1997\)%20The%20Concept%20of%20Security.pdf](https://scholar.princeton.edu/dbaldwin/selected%20articles/Baldwin%20(1997)%20The%20Concept%20of%20Security.pdf).

<sup>334</sup> Saša Mijalković & Dušan Blagojević, "The Basis of National Security in International Law," accessed April 25, 2022, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/300347851.pdf>.

order to secure for itself a rightful place in the international order each state shall try to augment its power and capabilities in relation to other states and hence the idea of sovereign nation states, ever since its inception, has been associated with the idea of security. This is what the realists call a situation of 'security dilemma'<sup>335</sup> which results from what Hedley Bull calls the 'anarchical society'. This concept of 'anarchical society' gives rise to what is known as the idea of 'national security' where independent, sovereign nation states direct their resources towards maintaining a strong defence force capable of aggressively defending its borders from attacks by other states. Such a state-centric view was propagated by scholars like E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau (realists), Kenneth Waltz, J. Mearsheimer (neo-realists) and the like who saw the entire international system as a function of power struggle between nation-states. According to this perspective 'the state is and should be about security, with the emphasis on military and political security.'<sup>336</sup> In that sense whatever endangers the very existence of the state may be designated as a security threat. Interestingly, Buzan has observed that such an explanation can partly be attributed to the interchangeable use of the terms- 'power' and 'security'. Since the realists viewed national interests in terms of power and since states seek to address their security concerns by acting in certain predictable ways (namely competing for more power), so security here mostly becomes a 'derivative of power.'<sup>337</sup> The focus of this view, being primarily on military deterrence and balance of power, it became too popular during the Cold War era where

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<sup>335</sup> This concept was introduced by John Herz in 1950 to indicate a situation where attempts by a state to protect its own security interests create insecurity for other states as the latter views the efforts of the former to be potentially threatening.

<sup>336</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 37.

<sup>337</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983), 7.

the two superpowers, locked in a military confrontation, saw military might as the major means of achieving security.<sup>338</sup>

Yet, when the Cold war was nearing to its end, there was the emergence of various other issues that called for a wider understanding of the idea of security rather than keeping it within the narrow confines of the state. Nevertheless, this is not tantamount to saying that all these phenomena were new, but that they were brought to the forefront once the Cold War came to an end.<sup>339</sup> An important factor behind this has been the accelerated pace of globalisation thereby leading to the formation of a global community. The rise of global culture, global economy, global society has resulted in deep interconnections among various parts of the world. Today anything that happens in one part of the world is bound to have global consequences and this idea has been aptly captured in Guehenno's assertion that the phenomenon of globalization has not only resulted in interconnections but also interpenetration of ideas and people.<sup>340</sup> The process of globalization has necessitated a widening of the perspective on security. Yet, as Cha<sup>341</sup> observes, the security effects of globalisation has been hard to conceptualize and measure. It has in fact, made the security agenda quite complicated (this view is also shared by scholars like Clark<sup>342</sup> and Guehenno). Contrary to the traditional standpoint, states today are no longer considered to be the sole agents of threat. Today various subnational as well as transnational actors have emerged which can prove to be

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<sup>338</sup> Leo S. F. Lin, "State-Centric Security and its Limitations: The Case of Transnational Organized Crime," *Research Institute for European and American Studies*, no. 156 (2011), accessed December 24, 2019, <https://files.ethz.ch/isn/134368/rieas156.pdf>.

<sup>339</sup> Niklas Swanström, "Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats in Central Asia: Connecting the New and the Old," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (August, 2010): 40.

<sup>340</sup> Jean Marie Guehenno, "The Impact of Globalization on Strategy," *Survival* 40, no. 4 (December, 2010): 7, accessed December 24, 2019, doi: 10.1080/713660009.

<sup>341</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Globalization and the Study of International Security," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 3 (May, 2000): 393.

<sup>342</sup> Ian Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

potential sources as well as referent objects<sup>343</sup> of threat. For instance, different ethnic groups, racial communities, religious groups, terrorist organizations—all these entities are not confined within state boundaries and the acts that they commit have repercussions on a global scale. That is not to say, that the idea of security has been dissociated with the formal institution called ‘state’. The state may still be a guarantor of security, yet it has to act in an environment ‘whose spectrum ranges from nonstate to sub-state to trans-state arrangements.’<sup>344</sup> Or as Hameiri and Jones have put it, that the increasing role of such non-state actors has ‘permitted their governance to be shifted beyond the national political arena...into the hands of actors...who are not politically and popularly accountable.’<sup>345</sup> Hence Buzan observes that while during the Cold War, international security environment was primarily dominated by military confrontation between the two superpowers (US & USSR), the post-Cold War period has seen the emergence of new issues that are ‘pushing their way into the top ranks of the international security agenda’<sup>346</sup> This has called for expansion of the concept of security to include numerous political, economic, societal and environmental elements which may be termed as ‘non-traditional’<sup>347</sup> security issues. As discussed, such non-traditional security issues are those which are transnational in nature and requires an expansive

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<sup>343</sup> “Referent objects: Things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival.” Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 36.

<sup>344</sup> Victor D. Cha, “Globalization and the Study of International Security,” *Journal of Peace Research*: 394.

<sup>345</sup> Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones, “The Politics and Governance of Non-Traditional Security,” *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (September, 2013): 463.

<sup>346</sup> Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Affairs* 67, 3 (July, 1991): 433, accessed December 20, 2019, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2621945>.

<sup>347</sup> Mely Caballero defines non-traditional security threats as “challenges to the survival and well-being of peoples and states that arise primarily out of non-military sources, such as climate change, cross-border environmental degradation and resource depletion, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking, and other forms of transnational crime.” Saurabh Chaudhuri, “Defining Non-Traditional Security Threats,” Global India Foundation, accessed December 26, 2019. <http://globalindiafoundation.org/nontraditionalsecurity.html>.

and comprehensive understanding that goes beyond mere short-term military and political designs.

Given the importance of such non-traditional security issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these have found their way in policy making processes of both India and Russia. The following section would deal with the various non-traditional security issues that have been a major source of concern for both Indian and Russian policy makers and the way both the nations are tackling these problems in cooperation with each other as well as the wider global comity of nations.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

The problem of climate change, resulting from environmental degradation, constitutes the toughest problem facing contemporary societies. It is a potential threat to the individual as well as social well-being of innumerable people living in various social and ecological settings.<sup>348</sup> However, the fact that environmental degradation and its resultant climate change needs to be treated as a security issue was clearly highlighted in the 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission where it stated that: “There are environmental trends that threaten to radically alter the planet, that threaten the lives of many species upon it, including the human species.”<sup>349</sup> It has also drawn upon the examples of parts of Latin America, Asia, Middle East and Africa to focus on how environmental degradation has led to unrest and tensions thereby endangering national security. Climate change has, indeed, complicated the entire security agenda, it brings with itself far-reaching consequences which pose a grave threat to humanity: poverty, hunger, diseases and famine resulting in the problem of forced displacement and

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<sup>348</sup> Jon Barnett, “Security and Climate Change,” *Global Environmental Change* 13, no. 1 (2003), 7.

<sup>349</sup> Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, United Nations, accessed December 27, 2019, <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>.

migration, shortages in food, water and energy leading to intense competition for resources and economic disruption.<sup>350</sup> In this respect climate change is best understood as a ‘threat multiplier’<sup>351</sup> by many politicians, think tanks and international organizations<sup>352</sup>. Managing the impacts of climate change will require cooperation and collaboration among countries across the globe. Yet quite contrarily what has emerged out of the situation is a deep divide between the global North and the global South with regard to setting standards for environmental protection and identifying the main culprit for environmental degradation.<sup>353</sup> In this context, India and Russia, both being developing countries, it is important to study the extent to which these two countries are being threatened by this ‘threat multiplier’ and ways and means they have adopted to manage the security risks of climate change.

India is the second most populated country in the world with a population of 1,373,047,968 which constitutes almost 17.71 percent of the total world population.<sup>354</sup> This excessive pressure of population is a major source of concern for India as it leads to increased consumption and large-scale depletion of natural resources thereby

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<sup>350</sup> Emyr Jones Parry, “The Greatest Threat to Global Security: Climate Change is Not Merely an Environmental Problem,” United Nations, December 27, 2019, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/greatest-threat-global-security-climate-change-not-merely-environmental-problem>.

<sup>351</sup> As a threat multiplier, climate change interacts with various other stressors such as social conflicts, economic inequality, large-scale migration and competition for resources, and further exacerbates these issues leading to social conflicts and tensions. “How Does Climate Change Impact Global Peace and Security?” OUPblog, June 11, 2017, accessed March 16, 2020, <http://blog.oup.com/2017/06/climate-change-global-peace-security/>.

<sup>352</sup> “Sherry Goodman talks “Threat Multiplier” on Yale Climate Connections,” The Centre for Climate & Security, December 27, 2019, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://climateandsecurity.org/2019/06/sherri-goodman-talks-threat-multiplier-on-yale-climate-connections/>.  
 “National Security and the Threat of Climate Change,” CNA Corporation, accessed December 27, 2019, [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/national%20security%20and%20the%20threat%20of%20climate%20change.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/national%20security%20and%20the%20threat%20of%20climate%20change.pdf).

<sup>353</sup> Md. Kamal Uddin, “Climate Change and Global Environmental Politics: North-South Divide,” *Environmental Policy and Law* 47, no. 3/4 (2017): 106, Accessed December 27, 2019, doi: 10.3233/EPL-170022.

<sup>354</sup> Worldometer, accessed December 27, 2019, <https://worldometers.info/world-population/india-population/>.

destroying the ecological balance and adversely affecting the quality of life of individuals. Besides, various studies have shown that economic growth, industrialization, deforestation, water shortages, waste production and rampant pollution have contributed to the degradation of the ecosystem.<sup>355</sup> However, the most important problem facing India is that of balancing economic growth with sustainable development<sup>356</sup>. If we compare India's growth rate at the time of the end of Cold War with what it is today, then we will find that India has recorded significant growth rates over the past few years.<sup>357</sup> Most of the developing countries view economic growth as an essential pre-condition for development as it, *inter alia*, removes economic and social disparities among various sections of the population and improves standards of living of the populace. India is also no exception to that. But too much emphasis on economic growth often leads to the negligence of the question of environmental sustainability. Large scale industrialization and urbanization, two of the most important aspects of economic growth, leads to the degradation of the quality of the environment which, in turn, adversely impacts the quality of life of the people dependent on the environment for the livelihood. A 2013 World Bank report pointed out that environmental damage worth INR 3.75 trillion was caused as a result of economic growth maintained for the past few years which is tantamount to 5.7 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 2009 prices. Also, empirical studies on

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<sup>355</sup> Barun Thakur, Himanshu Rout and Tamali Chakraborty, "Environmental Degradation, Sustainable Development and Human Well-Being: Evidence from India," *Manthan: Journal of Commerce and Management* (2014), accessed December 27, 2019, doi: 10.17492/manthan.v1i1.2436.

Rajiv Chopra, "Environmental Degradation in India: Causes and Consequences," *International Journal of Applied Environmental Sciences* 11, no. 6 (2016).

<sup>356</sup> As defined by the Brundtland Report of 1987, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, accessed December 27, 2019, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>.

<sup>357</sup> In 1991 India's annual GDP growth rate was 1.05% whereas in 2018 it reached around 6.81%. See *World Bank Development Indicators*. Calculated from the data available at [data.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org). Accessed December 27, 2019.

environmental damage has shown that social costs of environmental degradation have far exceeded the social benefits envisaged through higher rate of GDP<sup>358</sup>. So, it becomes quite clear that the urge to stimulate economic growth without considering the corresponding damages it may spawn for the environment, would be disastrous. To address this issue India has been recently moving towards promoting the use of renewable energy and in this context, in 2015, the government announced a plan of reaching a target of 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022. Till March 2019, the progress has been seemingly modest with India installing 78.31 GW capacity which constitutes 21.95 percent of the total capacity.<sup>359</sup> To boost up its renewable energy growth, India needs to attract sufficient amounts of funds and investments, both from domestic and foreign sources, deal with the issues of safeguard duty<sup>360</sup> and taxation and create an investor-friendly climate which has, so far, been lacking due to reluctance on part of distributing companies to meet payment deadlines to clean energy developers.

Climate change has also posed a significant threat for Russia. As per the *Second Roshydromet Assessment Report on Climate Change and its Consequences in Russian Federation*, since the mid-1970s, the mean average temperature of Russia has been increasing at an average rate of 0.43°C per decade, which is almost twofold increase

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<sup>358</sup> L. Venkatachalam, "Economic Growth: An Alternative View," *The Hindu*, October 24, 2017, accessed December 30, 2019, <https://thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/economic-growth-an-alternative-view/article19907390.ece>.

<sup>359</sup> "Annual Report 2018-19," Ministry of New and Renewable Energy New Delhi, accessed March 13, 2020, <http://mnre.gov.in/img/documents/uploads/0ce0bba7b9f24b32aed4d98265d6b067.pdf>.

<sup>360</sup> India imposed a safeguard duty in 2018, for two years, to stimulate domestic production. This was fixed at a rate of 25% for first year, 20% for the next six months and 15% for the final six-month phase. Yet in spite of this no significant development has taken place mainly due to the fact that this system does not benefit all developers equally. As per a policy brief entitled '*What is the Safeguard Duty Safeguarding: Analysis Impact on Solar Manufacturing and Deployment in India*' published by the Council of Energy, Environment and Water (CEET) in July 2019, in India module manufacturing capacity exceeds that of cell manufacturing capacity. And since the most of the modules consist of imported cells, the cost of production increases which could lead to higher tariffs. Arjun Dutt, Manu Aggarwal and Kanika Chawla, "What is the Safeguard Duty Safeguarding?" Council on Energy, Environment and Water, June 2019, accessed November 13, 2019, <https://www.ceew.in/publications/what-is-safeguard-duty-on-solar-cells-modules-manufacturing-india>.

than global average temperature and this has mainly been attributed to the changes in the concentration of greenhouse gases.<sup>361</sup> A report, published by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in 2018, places Russia in the fourth position among countries throughout the world in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions<sup>362</sup>, particularly carbon dioxide which is regarded as the main source of global warming. Russia is estimated to produce approximately 1.8 gigatons of carbon dioxide per year.<sup>363</sup> The energy and industrial sector has been the main contributor to GHG emissions in Russia and until and unless these two sectors are brought under stringent control policies, the amount of GHG emissions is unlikely to reduce. Russia is seriously affected by various environmental perils such as air pollution, water pollution, landfills which have taken a toll on public health as well. As reported in *The Moscow Times*, an opinion poll has revealed that such environmental issues have become a major source of concern for the Russians with majority of them expressing utter dissatisfaction with the environmental situation in their own regions.<sup>364</sup> That climate change has become a serious challenge for Russia has been officially recognized in the National Action Plan for the first stage of adaptation to climate change until 2022. This plan envisages various initiatives to be undertaken by the federal and regional executive bodies to protect the population and the economy from the potential risks of climate change. These include, among others, ‘national climate monitoring system, preparing

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<sup>361</sup> “Second Roshydromet Assessment Report on Climate Change and its Consequences in Russian Federation,” Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring (Roshydromet), 2014, Moscow, accessed March 13, 2020, [http://downloads.igce.ru/publications/OD\\_2\\_2014/v2014/pdf/resume\\_ob\\_eng.pdf](http://downloads.igce.ru/publications/OD_2_2014/v2014/pdf/resume_ob_eng.pdf).

<sup>362</sup> “Russian Ministry Warns of Coming Environmental Apocalypse Fuelled by Climate Change,” *The Moscow Times*, September 6, 2018, accessed December 31, 2019, <https://themoscowtimes.com/2018/09/06/russian-ministry-warns-of-coming-environmental-apocalypse-fueled-by-climate-change-a62804>.

<sup>363</sup> Ben Aris, “The Cost of Carbon in Russia,” *The Moscow Times*, September 30, 2019, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://themoscowtimes.com/2019/09/30/the-cost-of-carbon-in-russia-a67496>.

<sup>364</sup> “Moscow, St. Petersburg Named Russia’s Most Polluted Cities-Greenpeace,” *The Moscow Times*, July 18, 2019, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://themoscowtimes.com/2019/07/18/moscow-st-petersburg-named-russias-most-polluted-cities-greenpeace-a66475>.

assessments of the impacts of climate change and developing adaptation strategies for specific sectors like energy, transport and agricultural industries.’<sup>365</sup> In addition to this, the gradual thawing of the permafrost region has also become a significant issue for Russia. Rising temperatures has led to the gradual melting of the permafrost region setting in motion the process of release of GHGs in the atmosphere which will lead to more and more global warming.

India has ratified the Paris Agreement in October 2016 by which India has committed to generate 40 percent of its electricity via non-renewable sources, to reduce carbon emission to 35 percent by 2030 and to create additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes through additional forest and tree cover.<sup>366</sup> According to data available from the Climate Action Tracker (CAT)<sup>367</sup> ratings of countries, India falls within the range of the so-called ‘2°C compatible’ share of global effort which implies that its efforts are consistent with the Paris Agreement commitment of keeping temperatures at 2°C. However, it has also been pointed out that if India shelves out its plans of building coal plants, as envisaged in the National Energy Plan of 2018, then it might well come under the category of ‘1.5°C’ share of global effort.<sup>368</sup> India stands firmly committed to the basic principles of the Paris Accord and has urged developed countries to provide the necessary technological and financial support to the developing countries in order to meet the Paris goals. As for Russia, though it has formally adopted the Paris Accord in September 2019, yet the targets that it has set for itself hardly reflects any noteworthy

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<sup>365</sup> Pavel Devyatkin, “Russia Unveils Climate Change Adaptation Plan,” High North News, January 8, 2020, accessed March 3, 2020, <http://highnorthnews.com/en/russia-unveils-climate-change-adaptation-plan>.

<sup>366</sup> Urmi Goswami, “India Signals it is Ready to do More to Slow Down Climate Change,” The Economic Times, August 26, 2019, accessed March 17, 2020, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-says-it-will-do-more-to-slow-down-climate-change/articleshow/70813231.cms?from=mdr>.

<sup>367</sup> CAT is an independent assessment produced by a consortium consisting of the Climate Analytics, Ecofys, New Climate Institute and the Potsdam Institute of Climate Impact Research.

<sup>368</sup> Overview available at <http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/india/>.

efforts. Russia has committed to reduce its GHGs emissions, by 2030, to 25-30 percent less than what it had been during 1990. In 2017 it was seen that Russia's emission rates were 32 percent lower than that in 1990<sup>369</sup> which means that Russia can still increase its emissions while fulfilling its Paris pledges. Hence, the target the country has set for itself can in no way be regarded as ambitious enough in mitigating the effects of climate change. This has been resonated in the findings of the CAT which categorises Russia's efforts in this sphere as 'critically insufficient'<sup>370</sup>. And most importantly, the Russian economy, which is very much dependent on the extraction and sale of fossil fuels, contributes, to a large extent, to the degradation of the environment which can, in turn, wreak havoc on the Russian society and economy, as was evident from the recent wildfires (image 2 shows a post-wildfire situation which broke out in Russia's Serbia) and floods that engulfed huge portions of Russian Serbia in 2019 thereby destroying livelihoods and vast tracts of cultivable land. Therefore, it is a sort of a vicious cycle that can be addressed only if Russia takes proper steps to advance its environmental agenda which might include, *inter alia*, adoption and implementation of a low-carbon development strategy. Nevertheless, both Russia and India have been quite vocal on various international forums on climate change. As has been already mentioned that both the countries have acceded to the Paris Accord on Climate Change and have also been urging all countries to fully implement the principles of the agreement 'including the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and urged developed countries to provide financial, technological and capacity-building

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<sup>369</sup> Alec Luhn, "Russia Ratifies Paris Climate Accord-But Targets Are 'Critically Insufficient'," The Telegraph, September 23, 2019, accessed March 17, 2020, <https://telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/09/23/russia-ratifies-paris-climate-accord-targets-critically-insufficient>.

<sup>370</sup> Overview available at <http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/russian-federation>.

support to developing countries to enhance their capability in mitigation and adaptation.<sup>371</sup>

***Image 2 Image of post-wildfire situation that broke out in Russia's Siberia and which triggered environmental concerns among ecologists. According to the Greenpeace, this wildfire has emitted significant amount of carbon dioxide and has also reduced the capacity of forests to absorb the same from the atmosphere.***



Source: <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-unveils-plan-to-use-the-advantages-of-climate-change/a-51894830>.

Apart from the UN, another platform where both the nations have shown solidarity on the climate issue has been that of BRICS (a grouping consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The BRICS grouping has already started a campaign in the domain of climate change, although the leadership capacity of the grouping on this issue has been a matter of concern among various scholars<sup>372</sup> given the grouping's diverse interests that might stand in the way of forming a credible coalition. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>371</sup> "India-Russia Joint Statement during visit of President of Russia to India (October 5, 2018)," Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Prime Minister's Office, October 5, 2018, accessed March 19, 2020, <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=183982>.

<sup>372</sup> Christian Brüttsch & Mihaela Papa, "Deconstructing the BRICS: Bargaining Coalition, Imagined Community or Geopolitical Fad?" *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 6, no. 3 (2013).

fact that the BRICS is making sustained efforts to cooperate on this issue has been evident from their commitment to the Paris Agreement of 2015 as expressed on the margins of the G20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany (July 7, 2017).<sup>373</sup> Such sentiments were also reflected in the BRICS Summits of Xiamen (2017) and Johannesburg (2018) where they not only pledged to adopt decisive measures but also urged the developed countries to provide all kinds of necessary support to the developing countries to ‘enhance their mitigation and adaptation capabilities.’<sup>374</sup> Within the BRICS framework there is significant opportunity for India and Russia to cooperate with each other thereby harnessing each other’s potentialities. It is a well-known fact, that both the countries fall in the category of top ten GHG emitters in the world. Now if we look into the energy needs of both the countries, particularly that of India, it becomes evident that there are definite areas of cooperation that needs to be explored. For example, India is recently been focussing on adopting a development path focussed on the use of renewable energy. If we look at Russia, it has a huge potential in wind and solar energy resources which still remains untapped. In this respect India can not only help Russia in developing its renewable energy sources but the latter can also invest in India’s green energy development programme which might give a new dimension to their economic cooperation. However, recently there were reports that the Russian government was considering the banning of entry of foreign concerns in its renewable energy sector<sup>375</sup> which might actually defeat its purpose of embarking upon green energy plans. Russia

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<sup>373</sup> President of Russia. Press Communiqué of the BRICS Leaders’ Informal Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Hamburg Summit, Presidential Executive Office, July 7, 2017, accessed March 20, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5221>.

<sup>374</sup> “Full Text of BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, July 27, 2018, accessed March 20, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/201807/t20180727\\_679534.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/201807/t20180727_679534.html).

<sup>375</sup> “Russia Considers Banning Foreign Companies from Renewable Energy Projects,” The Moscow Times, October 6, 2019, accessed March 21, 2020, <http://themoscowtimes.com/2019/10/16/russia-considers-banning-foreign-companies-from-renewable-energy-projects-a67755>.

do not have the necessary know-how for creating a renewable infrastructure for which foreign support is an absolute necessity and, in this respect, Indian experience can be of much value to the Russians mainly due to the fact that the Indian renewable energy market has become quite established over the past few decades.

## **TERRORISM**

That terrorism poses the biggest and gravest threat to mankind has been expressed by both the nations in their respective official documents.<sup>376</sup> Both sides “confirmed that international terrorism, religious extremism, separatism and secessionism, transborder organized crime and illicit traffic in arms and drugs constitute a growing and serious threat to international peace and security...India and Russia firmly reject and condemn all types of terrorism, based on any ground-political, religious or ideological- and wherever it may exist.”<sup>377</sup> Both sides also “stressed the importance of strict implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on the fight against terrorism, in particular Resolution 1373...(and) advocated intensifying efforts to finalise in the UN the draft International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the draft Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism.”<sup>378</sup> The

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<sup>376</sup> The annual report (2018-19) of the Ministry of Defence of the Government of India states that ‘terrorism and radicalisation are the biggest threats to peace and security that the world is facing today’. “Annual Report 2018-19,” Government of India, Ministry of Defence, 2018-19, accessed March 21, 2020, <http://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/MoDAR2018.pdf>. Similarly, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2016) considers the growing threat of terrorism as ‘one of the most dangerous realities in today’s world.’ “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016),” The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, November 30, 2016, accessed March 21, 2022, [https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp\\_insight/](https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp_insight/).

<sup>377</sup> “India-Russia Joint Statement Issued on December 4, 2002,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, December 4, 2020, accessed March 21, 2020, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7674/India+Russia+Joint+Statement>.

<sup>378</sup> UN Resolution 1373 was adopted on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the US. It imposes various binding obligations on the states to deter terrorist activities including prevention of financing of terrorist acts, denial of safe havens to terrorists, installing effective border controls, enacting domestic legislations on countering terrorism and bringing to justice those committing terrorist acts. Entire resolution available at: [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/terrorism/res\\_1373\\_english.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/terrorism/res_1373_english.pdf).

convergence of views on this matter arises mainly due to the fact that both the countries have been victims of cross-border terrorism (Kashmir in case of India and Chechnya and Dagestan in case of Russia) in the name of right to self-determination. And the forces of extremism, religious fundamentalism and perverted nationalism that have raised their ugly heads in these regions have not only proved to be inimical to peace and stability but also an impediment for the overall growth and progress of Indian and Russian societies. While Russia has constantly empathized with India's concerns on cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, India has also supported Russian actions to maintain order and territorial integrity in the Chechnya region. That there is an interconnection between terrorist activities in Kashmir and Chechnya was evident from the statement of Igor Ivanov when he said: "Today ties between the terrorists operating in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kashmir, the Philippines and other parts of the world have become a generally accepted fact. It is well-known that they have undergone training in the same camps and are using similar crime tactics and methods."<sup>379</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by Alexander Kadakin, Russia's ambassador to India when he equated the 'liberation struggle' in Kashmir to 'international banditry.' By placing the onus on Pakistan, he stated that that the necessary pre-condition to resumption of peaceful dialogue between India and Pakistan rests on the fulfilment of obligations by Pakistan to end 'cross-border' terrorism and dismantling terror infrastructure on its soil.<sup>380</sup> The most important aspect of their interaction is that while dealing with the problem of cross-border terrorism in each other's territory they not only express sensitivity to each other's concerns, but also respect each other's sovereign rights thereby vehemently opposing any sort of foreign intervention.

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<sup>379</sup> Dhillon, Sunita. "Indo-Russian Relations in Post-Cold War Period." PhD Diss., Maharshi Dayanand University. Accessed March 21, 2020. Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/207808>.

<sup>380</sup> Wajahat Abdullah, "India and Russia As Strategic Partners in Post-Cold War Era: A Brief Overview," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 3, no. 3 (2016).

The Kashmir issue has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan since 1947 and the latter has resorted to all possible means to wrest the state from the former, the most important among them being that of fanning fundamentalist sentiments and adopting cross-border terror tactics. Hence, there is no denying the fact that ever since independence, India has been a persistent victim of cross-border terrorism. The terror tactics of Pakistan basically started from the 1980s, in line with Zia-ul-Haq's strategy to 'bleed India through thousand cuts', although Pakistan denied any form of involvement in these activities by terming them simply as 'freedom struggle' of the Kashmiri people. But this story was blown up once the Director General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) told the National Assembly that the ISI was behind sponsoring cross-border terrorist operations in India.<sup>381</sup> Pakistan has been providing all kinds of logistical support to various jihadi terror groups harbouring an anti-India agenda including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD). Over the last few decades, the number of cross-border terror attacks perpetrated by these various terror outfits in India has been enormous, according to data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs in response to a query under the Right to Information Act. According to the Ministry, a total number of 69,387 terrorist incidents took place in India from the 1990s till December 2015. The year 2013, however, saw 170 incidents, the lowest in the past 25 years.<sup>382</sup> Though Pakistan has, for decades, shrugged off its responsibility for perpetrating cross-border terrorism, yet, ironically, some Pakistani citizens themselves make claims to the contrary. For instance, Arif Ajakia, a Pakistani human rights activist, delivers a scathing attack to Pakistan when he says "Pakistan's

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<sup>381</sup> S. K. Sinha, "The Thousand Cuts," *Press Reader*, October 11, 2013, accessed March 22, 2020, <http://pressreader.com/india/deccan-chronicle/20131011/281685432567345>.

<sup>382</sup> Arteev Sharma, "Cross-Border Terrorism Continues to Bleed J&K: 69,000 Cases in 25 Years," *The Tribune*, January 16, 2016, accessed March 21, 2020, <http://tribuneindia.com/news/archive/features/cross-border-terrorism-continues-to-bleed-j-k-69-000-cases-in-25-yrs-183913>.

foreign policy has a cornerstone of terrorism and cross-border terrorism...in India, they don't promote but create terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Jaish-e-Mohammad, who commit terrorism in India."<sup>383</sup> This clearly explains how the various terrorist groups carry out their operations with impunity within the Pakistani soil and under the patronage of the Pakistani security establishment. However, the desire and insistence of Pakistan to be removed from the 'grey list' of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)<sup>384</sup> and with the latter giving Pakistan a deadline up to June 2020, to provide credible evidence regarding sincere progress to be made on specific parameters, might prompt Pakistan to shy away from explicitly supporting terror activities. Yet, the prospect of Pakistan covertly supporting such activities still lingers on and for that matter it is for India to approach the issue with much prudence to garner the support of the international community to bring Pakistan to the negotiating table.

For Russia, the main challenge to its national security has emanated from the restive North Caucasian<sup>385</sup> regions of Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkariya.

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<sup>383</sup> "India, Afghanistan Victims of Cross-Border Terrorism by Pakistan: Experts," ANI, March 9, 2020, accessed March 24, 2020, <http://aninews.in/news/world/europe/india-afghanistan-victims-of-cross-border-terrorism-by-pakistan-experts20200309194805/>.

<sup>384</sup> FATF is a global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog which holds countries accountable in case of non-compliance with its standards. Pakistan was placed in the body's 'grey list' in 2018 and was given an action plan to be fulfilled by 2019, barring which it would be blacklisted. In October 2019 FATF found that Pakistan could comply with only five of the 27 parameters and hence the possibility of blacklisting the country was looming large. However, to spare itself the embarrassment, Pakistan resorted to the technique of lobbying and ultimately secured the three necessary votes of China, Malaysia and Turkey to avoid blacklisting. Again, in the FATF plenary held in February 2020, Pakistan similarly succeeded in dodging the 'blacklist' label and has been granted a time period until June 2020 to prove its performance in the categories of anti-money laundering and countering of terrorist financing.

<sup>385</sup> North Caucasus region is situated in the south west part of Russia comprising of six nominally autonomous republics which are inhabited mostly by non-Russians-Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea. See Image 3.

**Image 3 Map of North Caucasus Region.**



Source: <http://worldview.stratfor.com/article/russias-lingering-north-caucasus-problem>.

This restive North Caucasus region has presented a formidable security challenge to Moscow ever since the break-up of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Particularly, the republic of Chechnya has been very vocal in its opposition to Russian rule and has also fought two bloody wars with Russia. Though initially there was a nationalist sentiment among the Chechen militants, yet the failure of their independent state-building project and the use of repressive measures by the Russian government added a jihadist overtone to their struggle. Besides, poor socio-economic conditions prevailing in the region in the aftermath of the two Chechen Wars also fuelled the growth of radical ideologies. The process was accentuated by ‘the atrocities committed by the Russian army during the Russian invasion in 1994...as they created the opportunity and location for foreign volunteers to meet, train, finance and influence local combatants who joined the ranks of the radicals.’<sup>386</sup> Though after the Second Chechen War (which ended in 2009) ‘counter-terrorist operations’ came to a halt, the situation in the region not only remains bleak and unstable but has also had a spill over effect to the remaining areas of North Caucasus, namely the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkariya.

<sup>386</sup> Chaim Shinar, “Chechens: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?” *European Review* 27, no. 1 (2018): 136.

These regions are now used as launchpads for terrorist assaults in various parts of Russia among which noteworthy are the 2002 hostage crisis in Dubrovka theatre in Moscow, alleged suicide bombing in a Moscow subway in 2004, the horrific school siege in Beslan, North Ossetia in the same year, the deadly suicide attack in a Moscow metro claimed to be perpetrated by a group named the ‘black widows’<sup>387</sup> in 2010 and the 2013 suicide bombing at the railway station at Volgograd.

**Table 12 List of recent terrorist attacks in Russia.**

| Year           | Incident                                                              | Casualties                                                                     |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 2002   | Dubrovka theatre siege                                                | 170 people died                                                                |
| February 2004  | Moscow subway bombings                                                | 41 people killed, more than 100 injured                                        |
| May 2004       | Suicide attack at a stadium at Grozny                                 | 24 people killed including Akhmad Kadyrov, the Moscow-backed Chechen President |
| September 2004 | Beslan school tragedy                                                 | More than 300 people killed                                                    |
| October 2005   | Militant attack in Nalchik, capital of Kabardino-Balkaria republic    | More than 100 people killed                                                    |
| November 2009  | Suicide bombing at high-speed rail link from Moscow to St. Petersburg | 28 people killed, 130 injured                                                  |
| March 2010     | Suicide bombing on Moscow subway                                      | More than 40 people killed                                                     |
| January 2011   | Suicide bombing at Moscow’s Domodedovo airport                        | 37 people killed, 172 injured                                                  |
| December 2013  | Twin bombings at a train station and trolley bus in Volgograd         | 34 people killed                                                               |
| April 2017     | St. Petersburg metro bombing                                          | 13 killed                                                                      |

Source: <http://washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/03/the-recent-history-of-terrorist-attacks-in-russia/>

<sup>387</sup> This term was used by the Western media to refer to the widows of the Chechen militants who sought to avenge the death of their husbands by adopting terror tactics.

The list of terrorist attacks (as show in Table 12) highlights the vulnerability of the Russian population and institutions to the threat of terrorism which has also been explicitly stated in the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (December 31, 2015) in Article 43 which lists the ‘activities of terrorist and extremist organizations’ as the second most important threat to ‘state and public security.’<sup>388</sup> Going by certain statistics there have, however, been reports that incidents of terrorism in the North Caucasus have declined over the past few years thereby predicting some amount of stability in the region.<sup>389</sup> This stability, however, has been mainly on account of the huge exodus of militants to Iraq and Syria to join the ranks of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) . Yet, given the gradual decline of IS’s influence in Iraq and Syria, the spectre of militancy has a potential of making a comeback in the North Caucasus region which was proved by the attack on a military unit of the National Guard in 2017.<sup>390</sup>

The brief description of the situation in both India and Russia clearly indicates that terrorism presents one of the most formidable security challenges confronted by the both the countries since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both of them have tried, in their individual capacities, to address this problem. At the bilateral level, Indo-Russia cooperation on terrorism has been carried out within the framework of the Joint Working Group on Combating Terrorism<sup>391</sup> which, till now, has held eleven meetings.

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<sup>388</sup> The full text translation of the Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015 is available at: <http://ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>.

<sup>389</sup> The detailed statistics (over the years) regarding armed conflicts and the resultant casualties in the North Caucasian region are available at <http://kavkaz-uzel.eu/rubric/1103?page=4>.

<sup>390</sup> A group of alleged ISIS-affiliated militants attacked a post of the Russian National Guard based in the village of Naurskaya, Chechnya on March 24, 2017. An investigative report of the attack is available at: <http://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2017/03/25/71904-kitayskiy-rasstrel-v-stanitse-naurskoy-18>.

<sup>391</sup> The India-Russia Joint Working Group on Combating International Terrorism was formed in 2002 as a result of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was signed between during the visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India.

The last meeting of the Joint Working Group which was held in New Delhi in October 2019 had, as its agenda, the issue of cross border terrorism in South Asia. Without making an explicit mention of Pakistan, both the countries stressed the need to eliminate ‘safe havens’ of terrorists in South Asia.<sup>392</sup> This assumes significance in the context of Balakot airstrikes which India has constantly sought to justify on the grounds that they were targeted at terror camps of JeM in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa state. At the multilateral level, both the nations have constantly urged for the widest possible cooperation among all countries within the framework of the UN and various other multilateral forums such as the BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), G20, FATF etc. in order to deal with this menace. In this respect it should be mentioned that both the nations urge for the early adoption of the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)<sup>393</sup> which seeks to bind all countries to deny funds and create safe havens for terror groups and also oppose all forms of cross border terrorism. This assumes particular significance for India as it has been a major victim of cross border terrorism and by virtue of this convention it can easily look forward to the UN in its fight against terrorism.

## **DRUG TRAFFICKING**

Related to the problem of international terrorism is the issue of drug trafficking which, to a great extent, helps in fuelling the former. The war on drugs is not a recent phenomenon and it has been prevalent for quite some time now. The international drug trade and the resultant drug abuse has been plaguing many societies in different parts

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<sup>392</sup> “Joint Press Statement: India-Russia High Level Consultations on Counter Terrorism,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, October 30, 2019, accessed March 6, 2020, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31986/Joint+Press+Statement+IndiaRussia+High+Level+Consultations+on+Counter+Terrorism>.

<sup>393</sup> The draft of CCIT was proposed by India in 1996. Yet the convention, till date, has not been implemented due to disagreement among member states regarding the definition of terrorism.

of the world. Both Indian and Russian societies have been victims of resurging drug trade which has had a destabilising impact on their respective societies. For Russia, the greatest threat comes from the former Soviet republics of Central Asia which borders Afghanistan<sup>394</sup>, the largest heroin and opium producer of the world. Afghan drug trade traverses through three routes: one is the ‘northern route’ through Central Asia, the ‘southern route’ through Pakistan and the ‘western route’ through Iran. As per the 2008 data available with UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 15 percent of all Afghan opiates<sup>395</sup> (21 percent of all Afghan heroin/morphine) travels through the northern route through Central Asia (which seizes a good amount of the opiates) into Russia.<sup>396</sup> Apart from that, since 2015, the Caucasus region has also emerged as an additional route, though to a lesser extent, of opiate trafficking to Russia<sup>397</sup>. The number of drug addicts in Russia has been on a rise and this leads to the creation of new incentives and profitable market for the drug dealers and traffickers. As per government reports at least 6 percent of the Russian population, i.e. about 8.5 million people, are drug addicts. And

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<sup>394</sup> Central Asia shares 2400 km long border with Afghanistan of which 1400km long border is shared with Tajikistan alone. Afghanistan is the top cultivator of poppy from which opium and heroin are produced. According to the data released by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in November 2017, the year 2017 saw opium production in Afghanistan increase by 87 percent to a record level of 9000 metric tons compared with 2016 levels.

More details available at: <http://unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2017/November/afghan-opium-production-jumps-to-record-level--up-87-per-cent-survey.html>.

<sup>395</sup> Opiates are a group of psychoactive substances derived from the poppy plant, that includes opium, morphine, codeine and some others. The term ‘opiate’ is also used for semi-synthetic drug heroin that is produced from poppy compounds. “Substitution Maintenance Therapy in the Management of Opioid Dependence and HIV/AIDS Prevention,” WHO/UNODC/UNAIDS Position Paper, 2004, accessed April 1, 2020,

[http://who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/en/PositionPaper-English.pdf](http://who.int/substance_abuse/publications/en/PositionPaper-English.pdf).

<sup>396</sup> “Illicit Drug Trends in Afghanistan,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, April 2008, accessed March 31, 2020,

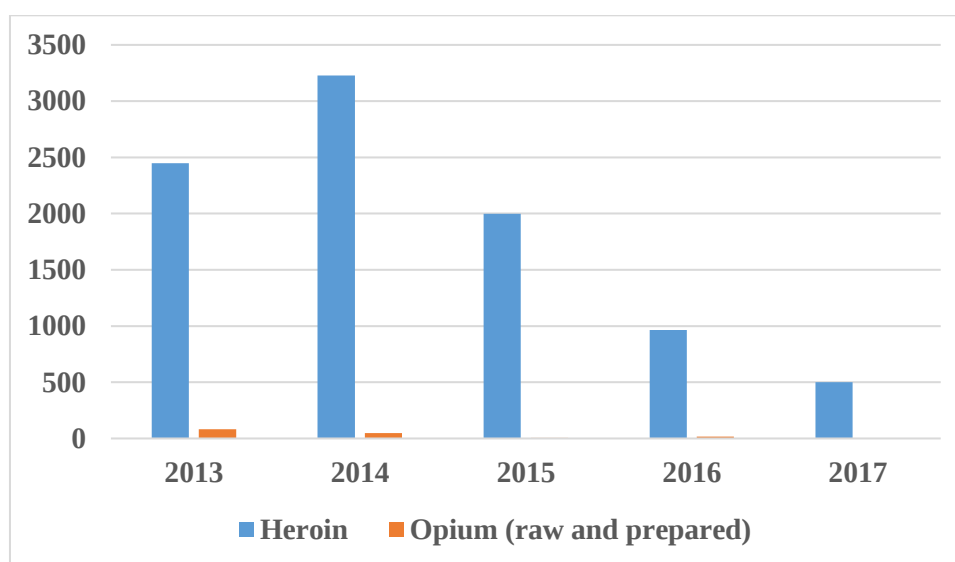
[http://ecoi.net/en/file/local/1333016/1228\\_1210754613\\_afghanistan-drug.pdf](http://ecoi.net/en/file/local/1333016/1228_1210754613_afghanistan-drug.pdf).

<sup>397</sup> Heroin from Afghanistan is trafficked through the northern and southern parts of the Caucasus and into the Balkans and into the northern routes to make its way into the markets of Europe and the Russian Federation. “Heroin seizures and opiate trafficking along the Caucasus route,” UNODC AOTP Update, Vol 2, 2019, accessed on March 31, 2020,

[http://unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/AOTP/AOTP\\_newsletter\\_caucasus-route\\_2019\\_web.pdf](http://unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/AOTP/AOTP_newsletter_caucasus-route_2019_web.pdf).

though 90 percent<sup>398</sup> of them are addicted to heroin, yet a deadly alternative drug called the krokodil is also making its way into the Russian society spelling disastrous consequences, particularly, for the poorer sections of the society<sup>399</sup>. The use of such synthetic drugs, which has been on the rise in Russia, has somewhat been responsible for the changing pattern of the Russian drug market. If one looks at the amounts of opioids (opium and heroin) that have been seized over the period 2013-2017 (as shown in figure 8), one will notice that there has been a considerable decline of the same. In addition, opioid-related deaths in Russia have also registered a fall from 9354 cases in 2006 to 5249 cases in 2016, the lowest in a decade.<sup>400</sup>

**Figure 8 Amount of heroin and opium seized in the Russian Federation between 2013 and 2017 (kg equivalent)**



Source: UNODC. <https://dataunodc.un.org>.

<sup>398</sup> “Over 8 Mln Russians Are Drug Addicts- Govt. Report,” Sputnik International, September 17, 2013, accessed March 31, 2020, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20130917183511725-Over-8-Mln-Russians-Are-Drug-Addicts--Govt-Report/>

<sup>399</sup> Some of the details are available at: *Homemade Drugs have Devastating Effects in Russia*, YouTube video, 2:18, posted by “Al Jazeera English,” July 17, 2011, accessed March 31, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxPXxos\\_BNw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxPXxos_BNw).

<sup>400</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2018, 2018, accessed April 4, 2020, [http://www.drugs.ie/resourcesfiles/ResearchDocs/Global/WDR18\\_Booklet\\_3\\_DRUG\\_MARKETS.pdf](http://www.drugs.ie/resourcesfiles/ResearchDocs/Global/WDR18_Booklet_3_DRUG_MARKETS.pdf).

Increasing use of drugs is directly proportional to mortality and most of the victims of this drug abuse have been the country's youth population. Besides, it also brings with it various blood-borne diseases like HIV and hepatitis, which results from injecting drugs through contaminated needles. Increased use of drugs also leads to the destruction of the social fabric as people take recourse to various forms of violence and criminal activities. For instance, an article in the Moscow Times reported that Russia accounted for the highest number of people per capita imprisoned for drug crimes in Europe.<sup>401</sup>

In case of India, its location between the two largest opium producers-the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent<sup>402</sup> (image 4)-has made India vulnerable to the threat of drug trafficking, particularly to the North Eastern state of Manipur. Besides, Nepal, a neighbour of India and renowned for its cannabis production, is also an important source of drug trafficking for states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar from where it travels to the national capital of Delhi and the city of Mumbai. Hence, the geographical location of India, along with the widespread poverty prevailing in the country and the 'breakdown of traditional social capital resulting, in part, from large scale rural-to-urban migration and its attendant modernization influences' have led to a spurt in incidents of drug abuse in India.<sup>403</sup> The smuggling of narcotics and psychotropic substances and of synthetic opioids such as tramadol has remained a persistent problem for India, according to the 2018 Annual Report of the International Narcotics Control

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<sup>401</sup> Piotr Sauer, "A Change in Russia's Draconian Drug Laws Could Be on the Horizon," The Moscow Times, July 14, 2019, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://themoscowtimes.com/2019/06/14/a-change-in-russias-draconian-drug-laws-could-be-on-the-horizon-a65911>.

<sup>402</sup> While the Golden Triangle stretches across the borders where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet, Golden Crescent of South Asia comprises of the three regions of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

<sup>403</sup> More details available at: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed April 2, 2020, [http://unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south\\_Asia\\_Regional\\_Profile\\_Sept\\_2005/10\\_india.pdf](http://unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south_Asia_Regional_Profile_Sept_2005/10_india.pdf).

Board (INCB). In addition, the report also notes the prevalence of the trend of selling drugs via Internet, specially, dark net trading platforms, using cryptocurrencies.

***Image 4 Map showing the location of India wedged between the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent.***



Source: <http://maritime-executive.com/features/mekong-nations-take-on-golden-triangle-narco-empire>.

This has been corroborated by a recent study of the global Internet-facilitated illicit drug trade which ‘identified more than 1000 drug listings from India published across 50 online crypto-market platforms.’<sup>404</sup> Recently, the Narcotics Control Board also reported to have arrested the country’s first darknet operative, alleged to have been smuggling large amounts of psychotropic drug parcels to countries like US, UK, Romania, Spain and several other European countries.<sup>405</sup> Besides, the amount of drugs reported to have been seized in India, by the UNODC, between 2013 and 2017 (as shown in Figure 9) shows that though there has been a somewhat declining trend in the smuggling of Hashish, the amount of heroin that has been smuggled into the country has been

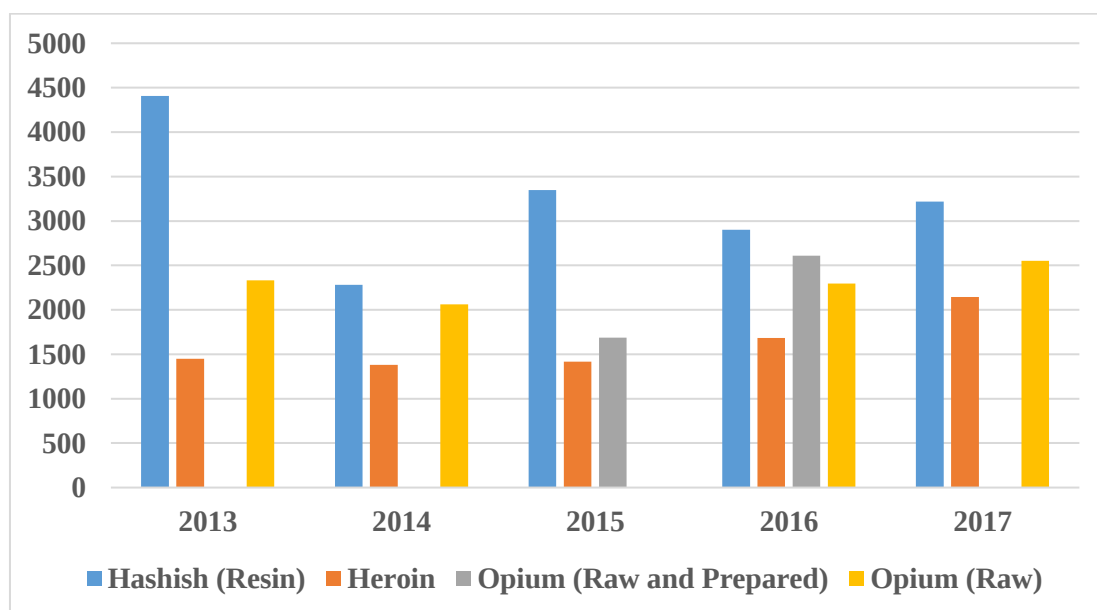
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<sup>404</sup> “Annual Report 2018,” United Nations, International Narcotics Control Board, 2019, accessed April 2, 2020, [http://incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/AR2018/Annual\\_Report/Annual\\_Report\\_2018\\_E\\_.pdf](http://incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/AR2018/Annual_Report/Annual_Report_2018_E_.pdf).

<sup>405</sup> “Narcotics Body Makes First Ever ‘Darkweb’ Drug Bust in India, 55,000 Tablets Seized,” The New Indian Express, February 10, 2020, accessed April 3, 2020, <http://newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2020/feb/10/narcotics-body-makes-first-ever-darkweb-drug-bust-in-india-55000-tablets-seized-2101362.html>.

increasing considerably. Although, according to revelations made by the Indian Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), there was a significant decline in the amount of heroin seized in 2018 (1258 kg), 2019 again saw a significant increase in the same (2448 kg).<sup>406</sup> Similarly, with regard to opium, though the rate of smuggling doesn't seem to have recorded any significant increase or decrease, except for the year 2016, when both raw as well as processed opium had been seized which amounted to a total of 4903 kgs, the year 2019 saw a steep rise with an amount of 7317 kgs being seized by the NCB.<sup>407</sup>

**Figure 9 Hashish (resin), heroin, opium seized in India between 2013 and 2017 (kg equivalent)**



Source: UNODC. <https://dataunodc.un.org>.

Drug abuse is a common phenomenon among the young people, particularly among age group ranging from 21-30 years. This not only affects their lives adversely at a quite young age, but also has a link with growing levels of unemployment. For example,

<sup>406</sup> “Drug Seizures in India Doubled: NCB,” India TV, February 15, 2020, accessed April 4, 2020, <http://indiatvnews.com/news/india/drugs-seizures-in-india-doubled-ncb-589229>.

<sup>407</sup> “Drug Seizures in India Doubled: NCB,” India TV, February 15, 2020, accessed April 4, 2020, <http://indiatvnews.com/news/india/drugs-seizures-in-india-doubled-ncb-589229>.

when a person becomes addicted to drugs he may end up with serious health problems which might hamper his productivity as a result of which he may either lose his job or may not succeed in getting a job at all. While unemployment has been a persistent problem in countries like India, the problem of drug abuse has the potential of further accentuating it. Apart from this, people taking drugs are more likely to commit various kinds of criminal activities thereby threatening the social security and stability of the country<sup>408</sup>.

Recognising the fact that the business of drug trafficking not only poses threat to social stability but also helps in financing terrorist activities, both the countries have pledged to fight against this menace not only bilaterally but also through multilateral forums. In this case, SCO can be a major platform whereby India and Russia can carry on their struggle against this menace. It is a well-known fact that most of the countries of this organization have been the victims of drug trade, emanating mainly from Afghanistan. This drug trade again helps in fuelling various forms of separatist and terrorist activities, all of which have relevance to the SCO member states. So, this can serve as a veritable arena wherefrom India and Russia can advance their struggle against drug trafficking through strengthening the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).<sup>409</sup> In addition, India and Russia also called for the creation of a security belt around Afghanistan so as to control the flow of narcotics and monitor various other criminal activities associated with it. Besides, both the countries are also parties to the Paris Pact

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<sup>408</sup> A report on how drug related crimes are on a rise in the Indian state of Kerala is available at: <https://ndtv.com/kerala-news/with-78-hikein-drug-related-crimes-kerala-cracks-down-on-narcotics-1442786>, accessed April 5, 2020.

<sup>409</sup> Such a plan was put forward by both the countries in the Joint Statement following the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit, September 4, 2019, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5438>.

Initiative (PPI) which was initiated in 2003 to combat illicit trafficking of opiates from Afghanistan.<sup>410</sup>

## **OTHER NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS**

Apart from the aforementioned threats to security, various other issues like food security, human trafficking, arms smuggling and the like continue to confront both Indian and Russian society. Particularly, in the sphere of food security, India faces a major challenge in spite of achieving impressive growth rates over the past few years. India's GDP at factor cost, for instance, increased by 16.7 percent from 2010-11 to 2013-14.<sup>411</sup> Yet correspondingly, the percentage of undernourished population saw an extremely meagre decline by just 0.6 percent from 2010-12 to 2012-14. And though the government can boast of achieving declining rates of undernourishment even today, yet the rate of decline has still been quite slow.<sup>412</sup> The not-so-optimistic picture gets reflected when one looks at India's rankings in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) which has been falling over the years. For instance, while India's rank in the GHI, 2018 was 97 out of 118 countries<sup>413</sup>, in 2019 it has fallen five places to 102 among 117 countries<sup>414</sup>. Apart from this, the growing population and the resultant resource crisis might further aggravate the dilemma. Though the government has taken steps in this direction (e.g. the formulation of the National Food Security Act in 2013), yet the results are far from expected. In case of Russia, it has achieved a lot in this respect ever

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<sup>410</sup> The details of the PPI are available at: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/paris-pact-initiative.html>.

<sup>411</sup> Figures are available at RBI website, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://rbi.org.in/Scripts/PublicationsView.aspx?id=16443>.

<sup>412</sup> Figures available at the website of United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://fao.org/faostat/en/#country/100>

<sup>413</sup> Hannah Ritchie, David Reay, Peter Higgins, "Sustainable Food Security in India-Domestic Production And Macronutrient Availability," *PLoS One* 13, no. 3 (2018), accessed April 7, 2020, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0193766.

<sup>414</sup> GHI 2019 country-wise ranking available at: <https://globalhungerindex.org/results.html> (accessed April 7, 2020).

since the 2000s. Initially, the downfall of Soviet Union created a chaotic situation as a result of which the country had to face various forms of insecurities, food including one of them. A major portion of the population did not have access to food, let alone healthy food, at that point of time. But once the economy began to recover, there was a gradual decline in the number of food insecure people in the country and this trend has continued without any interruption. This becomes evident from the fact that while the percentage of undernourished people in 1999-2001 was 5.1 percent, in 2003-2005 it came down to 2.3 percent and as per data available with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in 2016-18, there is no such 'undernourished' section in the Russian population at present.<sup>415</sup> However, when it comes to the issue of human trafficking, Russia really does not have much to brag about. Human trafficking has been a serious problem for the Russian society and according to the report of the UNODC, prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, in 2015 there were 285 detected victims of trafficking which included victims of trafficking in persons and slave labour and children trafficking and various forms of sexual exploitation.<sup>416</sup> The main type of trafficking is sex trafficking, though labour trafficking has also become quite popular more recently. Most of the labourers are trafficked from various Central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and even from countries like China and North Korea. The most important reason as to why this issue continues to pose serious threats to the Russian security apparatus is the lack of sincerity on part of the law enforcement agencies in dealing with the issue. It is true that Russia records a number of cases that are registered every year, yet all cases

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<sup>415</sup> Figures available at Global Hunger Index, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://fao.org/faostat/en/#country/185>.

<sup>416</sup> "Eastern Europe and Central Asia," UNODC, n.d. (accessed April 7, 2020) [https://unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Glotip16\\_Country\\_profile\\_E\\_EuropeCentral\\_Asia.pdf](https://unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Glotip16_Country_profile_E_EuropeCentral_Asia.pdf).

are not opened for investigation. As Lauren McCarthy points out in an article that though in 2006 125 cases were registered, only 47 of them were opened for investigation.<sup>417</sup> Similarly, mere opening of a case does not warrant its full investigation and hence all cases do not reach their final conclusion. Such a lackadaisical approach on part of the agencies can be attributed to various factors including corruption, nature of the institutional structure, lack of proper understanding and the like.<sup>418</sup> In India, the scenario is similarly bleak. In India trafficking in persons mainly occur for the purpose of bonded labour, forced marriage and most importantly sexual exploitation. Since women and children constitute the most vulnerable sections of the society, hence it becomes easy for the traffickers to force them to enter the sex industry. These victims not only include women and girls from India, but also from neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and even Central Asian republics. If one looks at the statistics, one will find that 40 percent of sexual trafficking cases are from India. Though various acts like the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA, 1978), the Bonded Labour Abolition Act (1976), Child Labour Prohibition Act (1986), etc. are in force, yet the results are not very noteworthy due to poor implementation strategies. The US Government's Report on Trafficking in Persons (2016) places India in the list of Tier-2<sup>419</sup> countries and also holds the Government of India responsible for not fulfilling the minimum standards for elimination of trafficking. The rate of convictions is also low owing to lack of political will and inadequate coordination among various government departments.

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<sup>417</sup> Lauren McCarthy, "Beyond Corruption: An Assessment of Russian Law Enforcement's Fight Against Human Trafficking," *Demokratizatsiya* 18 (2010): 9, accessed April 8, 2020. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1462842.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> It includes those countries that fail to meet the standards of the US's Trafficking Victims Protect Act of 2000, but are making efforts to do so. See, United States of America Department of States, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2016, Washington DC, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/258876.pdf>.

The UNODC Report on Human Trafficking places India in the higher ranks among countries falling in both categories, i.e. countries of high origin as well as high destination countries. It argued that ‘India has the largest labour trafficking problems with hundreds of sex trafficking victims and millions of bonded labourers including forced child labourers.’<sup>420</sup> That the rate of human trafficking has also recorded an increase over the years has also been brought out by a report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which states that between 2011 and 2015, there has been a rise in the incidents of human trafficking at a rate of over 95 percent (from 3517 cases in 2011, it rose to 6877 cases in 2015).<sup>421</sup>

## **INDO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORA**

The preceding discussion has clearly demonstrated some of the toughest challenges that India and Russia have been facing in recent times. Yet, as it is a well-known fact that, these issues are not only unique to these two nations alone but the world at large. In addition, the international architecture has also undergone a huge transformation, in terms of shifting power calculations, due mainly to the relative decline of the predominant hegemony of the US and the emergence of various other players, particularly, China, India and Russia. Today the world is moving towards multipolarity,<sup>422</sup> yet with contradictions. The US is trying to retain its predominant

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<sup>420</sup> Biswajit Ghosh, “Trafficking in Women and Children in India: Nature, Dimensions and Strategies for Prevention,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 5 (2009): 720, accessed April 27, 2020, DOI: 10.1080/13642980802533109.

<sup>421</sup> NCRB, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Crime in India, 2015*, New Delhi, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-india-year-2015>.

<sup>422</sup> This view has been supported by various policy makers and analysts including former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who, at an address at Stanford University in 2013, said that the we are moving “increasingly and irreversibly towards a multipolar world.” “Remarks at Stanford University,” United Nations Secretary General, January 17, 2013, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2013-01-17/remarks-stanford-university>.

position, China is seeking to create a Sino-centric world order, Russia is always keen on seeking recognition as a major power and India is looking to embrace for itself the role of a leading power and a 'responsible stakeholder' in the current international system. The varying ambitions of these important players lead to increasing competition for power and influence thereby giving rise to mutual tensions. While US sees China's rise with scepticism, Russia has moved increasingly towards China due to the deterioration of its relations with the West following the Crimean debacle and Russia's military adventurism in Syria. On the other hand, while India seeks to balance its relations with Russia and the US, it harbours deep suspicions regarding Chinese designs, particularly in the Asian continent. In order to stave off such an environment of mutual suspicions, nations are now espousing the cause of multilateralism with the belief that 'multilateral institutions and norms can help stabilize the international consequences of rapid changes and help overcome distrust.'<sup>423</sup>

## **MULTILATERALISM: THE CONCEPT**

Multilateralism as a concept in international relations, though used quite frequently, lacks a unanimous definition. Various scholars have defined the term from different perspectives. For Keohane, multilateralism involves a process of coordination of national policies among three or more states through 'ad-hoc arrangements or by means of institutions.'<sup>424</sup> So, Keohane limits the phenomenon of multilateralism to the

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Again, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in 2016 said that "international relations have entered into a conceptually new historical stage that consists in the emergence of a multipolar world." "Is the World Ready for Cooperative Multipolarity?" *Globus*, December 2019, accessed April 22, 2022, (<https://globus.uio.no/publications/globus-research-papers/2019/2019-06-globus-research-paper-patriota.pdf>)

<sup>423</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan & Uma Purushothaman, "Indian Approaches to Multilateral Cooperation and Institutions in Eurasia," *Russia in Global Affairs*, January 30, 2019, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/indian-approaches-to-multilateral-cooperation-and-institutions-in-eurasia/>

<sup>424</sup> Robert Keohane, "Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research," *International Journal* 45 (1990): 731, accessed June 10, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40202705>.

‘arrangements involving states’<sup>425</sup> which conducts the process by means of, mainly, institutions (emphasis on multilateral institutions). For Ruggie, however, this is a ‘nominal’<sup>426</sup> definition as it neglects the qualitative aspects of multilateralism, i.e. the principles on the basis of which coordination takes place among states. Hence, Ruggie defines the phenomenon as an ‘institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct.’<sup>427</sup> But such institutional form is mostly ‘generic’ and must be distinguished from formal organizational structure which is of ‘relatively recent arrival and still of only relatively modest importance.’<sup>428</sup> Moreover, for Ruggie, ‘multilateral’ is an adjective that qualifies the noun institution<sup>429</sup> that takes three different forms in international relations: international orders, international regimes and international organizations. Each of these can assume multilateral form<sup>430</sup> given the fact that they share three important components: indivisibility, generalised principles of conduct and diffuse reciprocity.<sup>431</sup>

Though the history of multilateralism can be traced as far back as the ‘Concert of Europe’ yet the concept itself has received very scant attention in the theory of international relations.<sup>432</sup> This has been attributed to various causes ranging from the fact that many a times problems have been viewed through the lens of bilateralism thereby demanding bilateral solutions to the simple explanation that not much

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid. 732.

<sup>426</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: the Anatomy of an Institution,” *International Organization* 46 (1992):571, accessed June 10, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706989>.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. 575.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. 567.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. 574.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> James A. Caporaso, “International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations,” *International Organization* 46, No. 3 (1992): 601, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027843>.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid. 600.

multilateralism had been in actual practice.<sup>433</sup> Yet this trend witnessed a change during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly during the latter phase of the Cold War. During this period a number of issues came to the forefront, the solution of which proved to be beyond the capacity of a single nation-state. In other words, these transnational global problems called for greater coordinated approach for their solution. This spurred renewed interest in the practice of multilateralism which has also attracted much of scholarly attention.

Nevertheless, the multilateralism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been more or less organized around the US and its West European allies. The US sought to promote the multilateral project in areas like security, politics and economy through organizations like the UN, WTO, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the like which came into being through US leadership. The US, for most part, dominated the functioning and decision-making processes of these organizations and structured them according to its own preferred ‘generalized principles of conduct’<sup>434</sup>. It was through such institutions that the US sought to create, what Ikenberry has called, a ‘liberal hegemonic order’ which was supposed to be an open, loosely-based, stable order.<sup>435</sup> Such a world order existed during the Cold War and became the defining feature of the international system particularly after the end of the Cold War. The only difference is that during the Cold War it was embedded inside the larger bipolar structure which eventually became the outside order following the end of the Cold War.<sup>436</sup> The post-Cold War era saw the expansion of such multilateral arrangements under the stewardship of the US which created a vision of a liberal internationalist order thereby attracting more and more

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid. 600.

<sup>434</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism.”

<sup>435</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>436</sup> Ibid. 161.

countries to participate in its political project. This period was marked by a brief lull in geopolitical rivalry and an inclination for cooperation among nations. This has been mainly attributed to the ‘absence of balancing against the US’. This didn’t mean that the world was free of conflicts-disagreements and conflicts were there but they never assumed a form threatening the stability of the international order.<sup>437</sup> In short, the multilateral order that took shape in the aftermath of the Cold War was mostly dominated by the US and its West European allies.

Nevertheless, with the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the optimism about the post-Cold War era multilateralism has been dealt a severe blow.<sup>438</sup> There has been a huge change in the structure of the international system which has not been, simultaneously, reflected in the practice of multilateralism<sup>439</sup>, thereby leading to its ‘serious dysfunction.’ The gradual decline of US dominance, emergence of new centres of power, the unfortunate resurgence of geopolitical tensions, blatant disregard for international codes of conduct have all, in some way or the other, pushed multilateralism into a phase of crisis. And what more, the failure of the World Health Organization (WHO) in tackling the current Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of coordinated response on part of the international community has further brought to surface the cracks in the existing multilateral order. Under such circumstances many experts see the viability of minilateralism or ‘project-

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<sup>437</sup> Thomas J. Wright, *All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the Twenty-First Century and the Future of American Power* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2017): 2-3.

<sup>438</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*.  
 Will Moreland, “The Purpose of Multilateralism: A Framework for Democracies in A Geopolitically Competitive World,” *Brookings*, September 2019, accessed June 30, 2021, <http://brookings.edu/research/the-purpose-of-multilateralism>.  
 Jutta Brunnée, “Multilateralism in Crisis,” *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting* 112 (2018), accessed July 28, 2021, doi:10.1017/amp.2019.35.  
 Amitabh Mattoo and Amrita Narlikar, “Resuscitating Multilateralism with India’s Help,” *The Hindu*, May 7, 2020, accessed June 30, 2021, <http://thehindu.com/opinion/lead/resuscitating-multilateralism-withindias-help/article31521059.ece>.

<sup>439</sup> The efficiency of the practice of multilateralism is mostly reflected in the multilateral institutions bearing the responsibility of materializing the ideal in practice. Hence, here the crisis of multilateralism would largely refer to the ineffectiveness and failure of international institutions in attaining their objectives.

based' groupings to get around the inadequacies of multilateralism.<sup>440</sup> Such minilaterals are usually issue-based coalitions devoid of the inclusivity characterising multilateral platforms and are seemingly more efficient in coming up with concrete solutions for critical problems. However, it must also be noted, with caution, that minilaterals do not provide permanent solutions to the problem. Rather, these provide ad-hoc platforms for cooperative endeavours which, in the foreseeable future, might help in 'operationalization of multilateral-level dialogue.'<sup>441</sup>

Both India and Russia see multilateralism as a centre piece of their respective foreign policy approaches. Both use multilateralism as a mechanism of managing their respective international affairs and as a means of consolidating their status in the international system. But while for Russia multilateralism can aid in its efforts to return as a great power and minimize the risk and pain of standing in the shadow of others<sup>442</sup>, India's tryst with multilateralism started as a means of preserving her hard-earned sovereignty<sup>443</sup> and as a tool for making her voice heard across the table. Apart from that, both the sides also view multilateralism as an 'instrument to work towards the objective of a multipolar world'<sup>444</sup> so that the global governance can be reformed and

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- <sup>440</sup> *The Big Picture: Multilateral Institutions-Need for Reforms*, YouTube video, 24:55, posted by "Rajya Sabha TV," June 2, 2021, accessed November 8, 2021, [http://youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_2yKsKhQgY](http://youtube.com/watch?v=3_2yKsKhQgY).  
Andrey Kortunov, "Multilateralism Needs Reinventing, Not Resurrecting," Russian International Affairs Council, December 9, 2020, accessed August 28, 2021 <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/multilateralism-needs-reinventing-not-resurrecting/>.
- <sup>441</sup> Sarah Teo, "Could Minilateralism Be Multilateralism's Best Hope in the Asia Pacific?" *The Diplomat*, December 15, 2018, accessed August 24, 2021, <http://thediplomat.com/2018/12/could-minilateralism-be-multilateralisms-best-hope-in-the-asia-pacific/>.
- <sup>442</sup> Robert Legvold, "The role of multilateralism in Russian foreign policy," In *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21.
- <sup>443</sup> Arndt Michael, "India and Multilateralism: Concepts, New Trajectories and Theorizing," In *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis*, ed. Harsh V. Pant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- <sup>444</sup> Joint Declaration by the Russian Federation and the Republic of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, December 3, 2004, accessed January 14, 2022, [http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7511Joint Declaration by The Russian Federation and The Republic of India](http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7511Joint%20Declaration%20by%20The%20Russian%20Federation%20and%20The%20Republic%20of%20India).

democratized.<sup>445</sup> Stressing the need for multipolarity, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar pointed out that in such a world multilateralism is an utmost necessity in order to bring about greater stability.<sup>446</sup> Nevertheless, the multilateralism as we see today is under severe crisis, a view subscribed to by both the nations. For India, new centres of power have emerged, there has been a clear political rebalancing, yet the regimes and institutions do not reflect this emerging reality. In addition, forces of nationalism have also started to exert their influence that has made it more and more difficult to sustain the idea of multilateralism. And most importantly, the gap between the western rhetoric and the west's practice of multilateralism became so wide that, in course of time, the rules became weakened and multilateralism came under severe stress.<sup>447</sup> Russia, on the other hand, believes that the west's attempt to roll back the importance of international law in favour of a rules-based world order has put a brake on the progress of multilateralism. For Russia, multilateralism should be based on the centrality of the UN while also recognizing the emergence of new centres of power like India, China, Brazil and the like.<sup>448</sup> Here the views of Russia corresponds to the views of India. But as Maxim Samorukov, a Russian foreign policy expert at Carnegie Moscow Centre, pointed out that, in spite of all the positive rhetoric, Russian understanding of multilateralism is a narrow one encompassing either the concept of great power oligarchy (UNSC) where no one can impose its will on her or some kind of regional dominance (like Eurasian Economic Union or the EAEU) where she can

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<sup>445</sup> Mr. Roman Babushkin (Deputy Envoy to the Russian Mission to India) in a discussion with the author, August 25, 2021.

<sup>446</sup> *World more nationalistic; UN far less credible today: S. Jaishankar on weaker multilateralism*, YouTube video, 7:52, posted by "The Economic Times," February 15, 2020, accessed January 14, 2022, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=Jn7ErQEg570>.

<sup>447</sup> *World more nationalistic; UN far less credible today: S. Jaishankar on weaker multilateralism*, YouTube video, 7:52, posted by "The Economic Times," February 15, 2020, accessed January 14, 2022, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=Jn7ErQEg570>.

<sup>448</sup> Mr. Roman Babushkin (Deputy Envoy to the Russian Mission to India) in a discussion with the author, August 25, 2021.

impose her will on others.<sup>449</sup> And while Kremlin vouches for adherence to international law as embodied in the UN Charter, it sometimes unhesitatingly tweaks international law in areas where its interest are at stake as was exemplified in the event of annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, for Kremlin, the multilateralism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in crisis begotten by persistent US dominance in the world. Russia would prefer to see an international setting governed by the principles of the UN Charter failing which, according to Alexander Gabuev, it would prefer an arrangement similar to that of the nineteenth century ‘Concert of Nations’ in Europe whereby a handful of great powers would come together to discuss various issues of global governance and take collective action wherever their interests coincide and they would also refrain from interfering in each other’s affairs.<sup>450</sup> Acknowledging India’s rise as a preeminent power in the international setting and the fact that the interests of both the nations coincide on a host of issues of international relations, both India and Russia participate in various multilateral frameworks in order to advance their common viewpoints internationally, expand their engagement and to strengthen their fight against global problems. The following section would deal with the various multilateral forums, of which India and Russia are members.

## UNITED NATIONS

Both sides believe in establishing a multipolar world order based on respect for principles of international law and the central importance of the UN. They oppose ‘unilateral use or threat of use of force in violation of the UN Charter and intervention

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<sup>449</sup> FIIA Seminar: *The Return of Global Russia: Moscow’s Approach to Multilateral Institutions* 03/12/2019, YouTube video, 49:30, posted by “The Finnish Institute of International Affairs,” May 27, 2020, accessed January 14, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuJGzQIUqIc>.

<sup>450</sup> Alexander Gabuev and Elena Chernenko, “What Russia Thinks About Multilateralism,” Carnegie Moscow Centre, August 20, 2019, accessed January 17, 2022 <http://carnegiemoscow.org/2019/08/20/what-russia-thinks-about-multilateralism-pub-79709>.

in the internal affairs of other states, including under the plea of humanitarian intervention.<sup>451</sup> Most importantly, they stress the central role of UNSC in maintaining global peace and security and in this context also advocate the expansion of the same for reflecting contemporary realities and coping up with the various emerging global threats and challenges. Russia has also constantly pitched for India's permanent membership in the UNSC given India's rising economic profile and political influence. Such an ethos was reflected in Sergey Lavrov's statement when he backed India's bid for a permanent candidature in the UNSC: "...the overriding trend of the global development is the objective process of the formation of new centres of economic might, financial power and political influence and India is obviously one of them."<sup>452</sup> However, in this case China has proved to be a major stumbling block citing lack of consensus among the P5 members in spite of the fact that the others have shown their support for the same.

Besides, Indo-Russian participation in the UN which is governed by their mutual respect towards principles of international law, sovereign equality of all nations and the primary importance of the UN in international affairs, has played out in a number of cases. One of the earliest instances, include their criticism of NATO intervention in Yugoslavia's civil war in 1999 bypassing the UNSC. Such an outlandish attitude on part of the NATO was regarded by both sides as a blatant violation of Article 2(7) of the UN Charter which precludes internal conflicts from the purview of external intervention.<sup>453</sup> Also familiar is India's opposition to regime change through foreign

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<sup>451</sup> "India Russia aim at multipolar world," *The Statesman*, October 5, 2000.

<sup>452</sup> "Major Differences Among UN Members Over India's Permanent Membership in UNSC: China," *The Economic Times*, January 16, 2020, accessed April 11, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/major-differences-among-un-members-over-indias-permanent-membership-in-uns-c-china/articleshow/73304888.cms>.

<sup>453</sup> Gaurav Kampani, "India's Kosovo Conundrum," 1999, accessed April 11, 2020, <https://m.rediff.com/news/1999/apr/24nato.htm>.

intervention as is reflected by its abstention from most of the UNSC resolutions on Syria which can be, partly<sup>454</sup>, attributed to India's respect for principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity and opposition to any form of interference in a nation's internal affairs. In dealing with the Syrian crisis, India has consistently supported the Russian line of action. For example, when the Western media criticised Russia's 2015 military intervention in Syria, India threw its weight behind the latter stating that 'it was to halt the advances of the Islamic State.'<sup>455</sup> India has also backed Russia's position in the Crimean crisis by officially opposing western-backed sanctions on Russia and by claiming that Russia had 'legitimate interests in Ukraine.'<sup>456</sup> Apart from such international conflicts, the congruent perspectives of both the nations have also been expressed in their common approaches to the emerging global challenges like climate change, terrorism and nuclear proliferation among others. With regard to terrorism both sides stress on the importance of the principles of international law and of the UN Charter while adopting a Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and urge for the early adoption of the CCIT.<sup>457</sup> Similarly, both sides emphasize the salience of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for addressing threats related to climate change. In this respect both nations have become parties to the Paris Agreement under the framework of the UNFCCC which requires all Parties to put

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<sup>454</sup> The term 'partly' has been used here to indicate that India's stance towards the Syrian conflict has been influenced by several other factors. Firstly, India feared that in the event of regime change in Syria, the latter might collapse into utter chaos as was the case with Libya. And an unstable Syria would be a breeding ground for more ISIS activity and would also be detrimental to the pursuit of various developmental projects by India in the region. Secondly, President Assad has always been a supporter of the Indian narrative on Kashmir and so to alienate Syria would not be in the best interest of India.

<sup>455</sup> Ankit Panda, "Here's What India Thinks About Russian Air Strikes in Syria," *The Diplomat*, October 12, 2015, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/heres-what-india-thinks-about-russian-air-strikes-in-syria/>

<sup>456</sup> Srinivas Mazumdar, "India's Balancing Act in Crimea Crisis," *DW*, April 1, 2014, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://dw.com/en/indias-balancing-act-in-crimea-crisis/a-17534847>.

<sup>457</sup> "India, China, Russia Reaffirms Strong Opposition to Terrorism," *Business Standard*, February 27, 2019, accessed April 12, 2020, [https://business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-china-russia-affirms-strong-opposition-to-terrorism-119022700352\\_1.html](https://business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-china-russia-affirms-strong-opposition-to-terrorism-119022700352_1.html).

forward their best efforts through nationally determined contributions to combat climate change.<sup>458</sup> At the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) in 2017, both sides noted the importance of using natural gas as a means of reducing GHG emissions that would help in fulfilling the provisions of the Paris Agreement and achieving sustainable economic growth.<sup>459</sup>

## BRICS

The most important arena for India-Russia cooperation for reshaping the global architecture has been the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) grouping of countries. BRICS grouping consists of those countries which are supposed to be the most attractive investment destinations of the world. The term was coined in 2001 by Jim O' Neill, the Chairman of the Goldman Sachs Asset Management to denote countries whose rapid pace of economic growth would be fundamental in the transformation of the global economy.<sup>460</sup> In 2003, it was further predicted that in the next fifty years, the BRIC economies would become major economic forces and by 2050 the BRIC economies taken together might overtake that of G6 in US dollar terms.<sup>461</sup> BRICS represents 40 percent of the world population, a third of its landmass and 23 percent of global GDP.<sup>462</sup> In addition to being an engine of economic growth,

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<sup>458</sup> "The Paris Agreement," United Nations Climate Change, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

<sup>459</sup> "Narendra Modi Meets Vladimir Putin: Full Text of the India-Russia Joint Statement," First Post, June 1, 2017, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://firstpost.com/india/narendra-modi-meets-vladimir-putin-full-text-of-the-india-russia-joint-statement-3507551.html>.

<sup>460</sup> In 2001 the grouping was known as BRIC as South Africa was not there at that time. But with the inclusion of South Africa in 2011, BRIC became BRICS covering a greater geographical area.

<sup>461</sup> The G6 was created in 1975 consisting of the six-richest industrialized countries: France, Germany, US, UK, Italy and Japan. It later became G7 with the inclusion of Canada in 1976 and subsequently became G8 with the inclusion of Russia in 1997. However, the 6 major economies referred to are US, UK, Japan, Germany, France and Italy. Dominic Wilson & Roopa Purushothaman, "Dreaming with BRICS: The Path to 2050," Goldman Sachs, October 1, 2003, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/archive-pdfs/brics-dream.pdf>.

<sup>462</sup> John Goodrich, "Decoding BRICS: How do BRICS and the G7 match up?", CGTN, July 23, 2018, accessed April 13, 2020, [https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674d3367544f78457a6333566d54/share\\_p.html](https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674d3367544f78457a6333566d54/share_p.html).

the grouping also has its presence in various multilateral institutions. Most importantly, the grouping's two members, i.e. China and Russia occupy permanent seats in the UNSC which gives them a unique position to express their views on behalf of the BRICS member states. They have consistently vouched for bringing about necessary reforms in the UNSC as well as various other multilateral organizations like WTO, IMF so as to make them more representative of the needs of developing countries. According to Jorge Chediek, UN's top envoy for South-South cooperation, the main purpose of BRICS' existence is to give a prominent role to the developing countries in the process of global governance.<sup>463</sup>

As stated earlier, India and Russia both support the creation of a multipolar world order where different poles of power would have a say in shaping the global governance system. If one looks at the composition of the BRICS, one will find that these developing economies also represent some of the major 'poles' eager to voice their concerns and interests on the global stage. The BRICS nations urge for a reformation in the current world order which is characterised by the presence of various multilateral institutions predominantly reflecting the interests of the Western powers. As Andrej Krickovic puts it that the BRICS platform serves to develop "a powerful and compelling critique of the current world order that resonates with people outside of the West, a critique coupled with fresh ideas for a new system of global economic and political governance."<sup>464</sup> Looked from this perspective, BRICS definitely gives India and Russia a major platform whereby they can cooperate and coordinate their positions

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<sup>463</sup> "UN Envoy: BRICS Can Take Lead on Development," *United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation*, November 14, 2019, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://unsouthsouth.org/2019/11/14/un-envoy-brics-can-take-lead-on-development/>

<sup>464</sup> Anrej Krickovic & Adrian Pabst, "BRIC Offers an Alternative World Order," *The Moscow Times*, April 19, 2010, accessed October 5, 2015, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/bric-offers-an-alternative-world-order/404154.html>.

to increase their bargaining power in the international system. The various issues on which both the nations seek to strengthen their positions within the BRICS framework include, *inter alia*, climate change, international trading and financial system and ensuring equal opportunity, along with the established powers, in framing rules of global governance. An important step in this direction has been the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) in 2015 with the aim of funding infrastructure and development projects in BRICS and other developing countries, complementing the efforts of other multilateral and regional financial institutions towards global growth.<sup>465</sup> In 2017 the bank approved loans worth USD 400 million for two infrastructure and development projects in India and Russia- one was for the rehabilitation of the Indira Gandhi canal system and the other was for constructing a toll transport corridor connecting the Ufa city centre to the M5 federal highway in Russia.<sup>466</sup> Again in 2019, at the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors of the NDB at Shanghai, India and Russia received loans amounting to USD 646 million and USD 300 million respectively<sup>467</sup>. The loan granted to Russia stands out more significantly as it aims at developing Russia's renewable energy generation capacity in line with the country's efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

An important point to note here is that, Russia considers BRICS as a central institution in advancing its project of establishing a post-American world order.<sup>468</sup> It has constantly

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<sup>465</sup> New Development Bank, accessed April 14, 2020, <https://ndb.int/about-us/essence/our-work/>

<sup>466</sup> PTI, "BRICS Bank Approves \$400 mn Loans for India, Russia," Business Standard, November 21, 2017, accessed April 13, 2020, [https://business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/brics-bank-approves-400-mn-loans-for-india-russia-117112101135\\_1.html](https://business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/brics-bank-approves-400-mn-loans-for-india-russia-117112101135_1.html).

<sup>467</sup> "NDB Board of Directors convenes its 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in Shanghai, approves projects with loans aggregating to USD 1.4 bln," New Development Bank, September 16, 2019, accessed April 14, 2020, [https://ndb.int/press\\_release/ndb-board-of-directors-convenes-21st-meeting-in-shanghai-approves-projects-with-loans-aggregating-usd-1-4-bln/](https://ndb.int/press_release/ndb-board-of-directors-convenes-21st-meeting-in-shanghai-approves-projects-with-loans-aggregating-usd-1-4-bln/).

<sup>468</sup> Bobo Lo, "The Illusion of Convergence- Russia, China and the BRICS," *Russie.Nei.Visions* No. 92, March 2016, accessed April 15, 2020, [https://ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri\\_mv\\_92\\_bobo\\_lo\\_brics-eng\\_march\\_2016\\_0.pdf](https://ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri_mv_92_bobo_lo_brics-eng_march_2016_0.pdf).

sought to use cooperation among BRICS member states as a means of establishing itself as an influential power willing to play a decisive role in an otherwise multipolar international structure. Moscow, in fact, got an opportunity to use BRICS as a leverage against the West, particularly the US, in the wake of the Ukraine crisis of 2014 when the BRICS refused to participate in the West-sponsored sanctions to isolate Russia on the international front. The bloc even went to the extent of criticising Australia's suggestion to keep Russia out of the G20 summit that was held in Brisbane in 2014. That the West could not force the BRICS to toe its line on every matter of international importance, was further reinforced by the abstention of India, China, Brazil and South Africa from voting a UNGA resolution condemning Russian actions in Crimea. However, among all the BRICS nations, the most pro-Russian stance was found in India's attitude, the most privileged and strategic partner of Russia. India was very clear in its defiance of any kind of unilateral actions against Russia thereby emphasizing the 'legitimate interests'<sup>469</sup> of the latter in the situation and also expressing scepticism regarding the West's habit of imposing sanctions as a form of retribution on those considered to be a threat in its own perception.

However, unlike Russia, India doesn't seek to use BRICS totally as an anti-Western forum. India's approach is rather subtle in nature. On one hand while it definitely seeks to create a platform whereby developing countries would have their voices heard on matters of international importance, on the other hand it also takes a cautious stand so as not to cause any rupture in its relations with the West. India has vital stakes in the global economy and for that matter it can hardly alienate itself from the West. So, while India has obstructed the West's, particularly the US's, design to corner Russia on the international front, it has also further deepened its engagement with the US on a number

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<sup>469</sup> Mazumdaru, "India's balancing act in Crimea crisis," April 1, 2014.

of issues, the most important being that of defence and strategic security. This tendency has become particularly pronounced under the leadership of Narendra Modi, who has taken every effort to develop ties with the US in the hope of advancing India's national interests and enhancing its standing in global affairs.

On the other hand, in order to ward off the devastating consequences that the sanctions would have resulted for Russian economy, it was quick to accept the Chinese succour in the form of a \$400bn gas deal and a \$24.5bn currency swap agreement which was opened between the Central Bank of Russia and People's Bank of China (the success of these initiatives, though, is a matter of debate)<sup>470</sup>. Thereafter, China-Russia cooperation expanded to include various other avenues like defence, connectivity, technology, etc.<sup>471</sup> The growing closeness between Russia and China<sup>472</sup>, however, has become a matter of concern for India as it feels that it might fail to secure Russia's support in the event of any discord with China in BRICS or any other such forums in which all the three countries participate.<sup>473</sup> Though such concerns are not to be dismissed outrightly, yet it must also be remembered that Russia-China relations also have their own inherent problems. Though China is cooperating with Russia yet it is more likely for the former to treat the latter as its junior partner. And for a country like Russia, who had once enjoyed a superpower status and is seeking to revive its prestigious place in contemporary international politics, such a position is far from

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<sup>470</sup> See Radityo Dharmaputra, "Russia's pivot to the East: Between China, the US and the Other Asia," RKK ICDS, October 24, 2019, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://icds.ee/russias-pivot-to-the-east-between-china-the-us-and-the-other-asia/>

<sup>471</sup> Russia has agreed to provide China with various sophisticated weapons including the surface-to-air S-400 missiles and Su-35 fighter jets. With regard to connectivity projects Russia has actively participated in the promotion of the Chinese-inspired Belt Road Initiative (BRI) programme and also favours its coordination with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

<sup>472</sup> The process of deepening ties with China predates Ukraine crisis. What the Ukraine crisis did was that it stimulated the pace of this cooperation by providing a suitable geopolitical environment.

<sup>473</sup> Nandan Unnikrishnan & Uma Purushothaman, "Trends in Russia-China Relations: Implications for India," Observer Research Foundation, 2015, accessed April 17, 2020, [https://orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ORF\\_Monograph\\_Nandan\\_Unnikrishnan.pdf](https://orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ORF_Monograph_Nandan_Unnikrishnan.pdf).

acceptable. But when we look into India-Russia partnership, both view each other with equal respect and deference, and hence it is highly unlikely that either of them would forfeit their decade long trusted partnership. In fact, an optimistic tone can also be added to the analysis of the situation by stating that far from leaving India's side, Russia may be able to act as a mediator in reducing India-China tensions through such multilateral forums. As Prof. Rajan Kumar has pointed out that Russia' goodwill with both the nations might act as catalyst in reducing tensions between them.<sup>474</sup>

## **RIC**

Such kind of a triangular mechanism between Russia, India and China was first conceived by then Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov in 1998 and thus RIC may be somewhat considered to be a precursor of the BRICS. Instead of some sort of alliance, it is mainly perceived as a type of mechanism for enhancing South-South cooperation in global politics for the purpose of reforming global institutions.<sup>475</sup> One might think that in contrast to BRICS and the SCO, RIC has not been able to come up with coherent cooperative endeavours and has not achieved too much success in institution building process<sup>476</sup>. This, however, does not belittle the importance of the grouping in the sense that it presents a model of cooperation among powers that, in some way or the other, are considered to be notable players of global politics. Besides, the changing geo-political dynamics resulting from a shift of power from the West to

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<sup>474</sup> Rajan Kumar, "Growing Concern: Russia-China Partnership Throws Up Formidable Challenges for India," Financial Express, July 31, 2019, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://financialexpress.com/defence/grwoung-concern-russia-china-partnership-throws-up-formidable-challenges-for-india/1662113/>.

<sup>475</sup> Jagannath P. Panda, *India-China Relations: Politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 146.

<sup>476</sup> Most of the meetings of the RIC format take place on the sidelines of meetings of other multilateral forums which started off with the meeting of foreign ministers in 2002 on the sidelines of the UNGA session. However, since 2007 such meetings have become regular and till 2019, 16 foreign ministerial meetings have been held mostly in the member countries' territories. The heads of states level meeting of the grouping was instituted for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in 2006 in St. Petersburg after which the next meeting was held after a gap of 12 years in 2018 in Argentina.

the East has become an irreversible trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which makes the importance of the grouping all the more apparent. Though always in a mode of denial<sup>477</sup>, the West particularly the US, must soon accept its fading capability to direct the course of events of international politics. And in this context, the RIC being a forum of the three most important non-Western powers has a responsibility of bringing upon itself the task of rewriting the rules of global governance.

The feasibility and the enduring capacity of the RIC construct has often been a matter of debate among experts<sup>478</sup> who have questioned its relevance on grounds of sense of mutual distrust among member nations, particularly India and China, asymmetries in their respective strengths and capabilities and most importantly the manner in which each of the countries engages with the US. These arguments cannot be dismissed out of hands. Let us take the example of India and China. The nearly six-decades long border dispute has been a sore point in their relationship and there have been various instances of border incursions by the Chinese troops in recent times.<sup>479</sup> Though none of these have been escalated to the height of a major conflict yet these are on the rise and are unlikely to go away in the near future.<sup>480</sup> Besides, China has also been scuttling India's entry into various organizations like the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and

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<sup>477</sup> For example, Mitt Romney, the US Presidential candidate declared the 21<sup>st</sup> century "must be an American century." Likewise, former US President Barack Obama in his State of the Union address stated that "anyone who tells you that America is in decline" doesn't "know what they're talking about." In Charles A. Kupchan, "America's Place in the New World," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2012, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://nytimes.com/2012/04/08/opinion/sunday/americas-place-in-the-new-worl.html>.

<sup>478</sup> Such doubts have been expressed by leading scholars like Harsh V. Pant in "Feasibility of the Russia-India-China "Strategic Triangle": An Assessment of Theoretical and Empirical Issues," *International Studies* 43, no. 1 (2006) and Bobo Lo in "New World for Old Triangles? The Russia-China-India Matrix," *Russie.Nei.Visions 100*, April 2017, accessed April 19, 2020, [https://ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/lo\\_russia\\_china\\_india\\_triangle\\_2017.pdf](https://ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/lo_russia_china_india_triangle_2017.pdf).

<sup>479</sup> In 2013 there were reports of Chinese troops putting up tents in Depsang Valley of the eastern Ladakh region ahead of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to India in May of the same year. The next year saw two more standoffs between the Indian army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army forces in Demchok and Chumar Valley. And in 2017 there was the Doklam standoff which continued for more than 2 months.

<sup>480</sup> "Why Border Stand-Offs Between India and China are Increasing," BBC News, September 26, 2014, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-29373304>.

the latter's permanent membership in the UNSC. China has also been turning a deaf ear to India's objections to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is a part of its grand Belt Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>481</sup> So, while both the countries talk about a fair system of global governance where each nation's national sovereignty and territorial integrity would be respected, Chinese actions, somehow, point a tendency on part of China to have an upper hand on all matters. The same applies in case of Russia-China relations. Though Moscow is 'remarkably comfortable with the current state of Russo-Chinese relationship' (since the former's focus is exclusively on countering the US power), yet Moscow is aware of the fact that in case of an alliance between the two, Moscow would be relegated to a subservient role.<sup>482</sup> Under such circumstances it is, but, viable for India and Russia to closely cooperate and coordinate their positions so as to prevent the RIC from becoming a China-controlled forum. Former Indian Ambassador to Russia, Shri Ajai Malhotra, has identified certain areas in which the forum has conducted dialogues and fostered cooperation thereby successfully handling regional dimensions of global issues. These issues are also of utmost importance to India and Russia and include, *inter alia*, need for prevention of illicit drug trafficking, countering international terrorism and extremist ideologies, maintaining a stable environment in Central Asia, development of a stable security architecture for Asia,

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<sup>481</sup> The CPEC Agreement, which involves a collection of infrastructural projects, was signed between China and Pakistan in 2015 which seeks to connect China's Xinjiang province with the Gwadar Port in Balochistan. Though the initial cost was pegged at US\$46 bn but later it rose to US \$62bn. After 5 years of its launch, the project failed to realise its grand ambitions due to various problems. Details to be found in Sheridan Prasso, "CPEC- China's most ambitious project in Pakistan has become a corridor to nowhere," *The Print*, March 3, 2020, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://theprint.in/world/cpec-chinas-most-ambitious-project-in-pakistan-has-become-a-corridor-to-nowhere/374430>.

<sup>482</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "True Partners? How Russia and China see each other," Centre for European Reforms, February 2012, accessed April 19, 2020, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Trenin\\_CER\\_Eng.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Trenin_CER_Eng.pdf).

etc.<sup>483</sup> The cooperation between Russia and India becomes all the more relevant when the situations in Central Asia and the Asian region are taken into consideration, both of which hold immense geostrategic importance for each of them. While Russia considers Central Asia as its traditional sphere of influence<sup>484</sup>, it has, in recent times, surprisingly acquiesced to China's growing presence, particularly in the economic sphere (which is being consolidated by means of the BRI Project), in the Central Asian region. On the other hand, India is also keen on tapping the economic potential of the region and is trying to improve its connectivity to the area through the Connect Central Asia policy. As far as Asia is concerned, as pointed out earlier, the geopolitical crisis of 2014, made Russia turn towards the East, with major focus on China. This has been a major concern for India which in turn has turned towards the US to counter China's assertiveness in the region. Hence, while both the countries are aware of their closeness to each other's adversaries, yet they must diplomatically navigate the situation so as to 'prevent third countries from exerting significant influence on their bilateral ties.'<sup>485</sup> The RIC forum presents the best possible opportunity to calibrate their responses to rising Chinese assertiveness and India sees the presence of Russia 'as a significant strategic counter-balance to China and the best possible hope of breaking the China-Pakistan axis through shared goals.'<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Ajai Malhotra, *India-Russia-China: Is There a Case for Strategic Partnership?* (New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2015). These views were also discussed by the Ambassador in a discussion with the author, June 7, 2018.

<sup>484</sup> Meena Singh Roy and Rajorshi Roy, "India and the SCO: A Vision for Expanding New Delhi's Engagement," Russian International Affairs Council, December 4, 2019, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/india-and-the-sco-a-vision-for-expanding-new-delhi-s-engagement/>.

<sup>485</sup> "70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Russia-India Relations: New Horizons of Privileged Partnership," *Joint Report of Russian International Affairs Council and Vivekananda India Foundation*, 2017: 36, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://vifindia.org/sites/default/files/VIF-RIAC-Joint-Pape-70th-anniversary-of-russia-indi-relations-new-horizons-of-privileged-partnership.pdf>.

<sup>486</sup> Samir Saran, "India's Contemporary Plurilateralism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 631-632.

## SCO

The SCO, formed in 2001, constitutes a major forum in the Eurasian geostrategic space. Though originally it sought to address border management issues, enhance cross-border cooperation, and promote confidence building measures<sup>487</sup>, yet the changing geopolitical environment has expanded the mandate of the organization to include various political and economic aspects, besides security. It has established the RATS to counter the menace of terrorism, extremism and separatism; has conducted various anti-terror operations (though SCO's role in countering terrorist threats emanating from the Af-Pak region has been quite limited), focussed on Afghanistan's stability, emphasized the need to build various connectivity projects thereby giving a boost to economic cooperation and advocated the need for increasing cultural cooperation and people-to-people contact.<sup>488</sup> India joined as a permanent member of the SCO in 2017 and this has been mainly possible due to the insistence of Russia upon upgrading the status of India from an observer nation to a full-fledged member. Central Asia holds an important place in India's economic and geostrategic calculations. India has been keen to expand its outreach in this region and this was partly reflected by the invitation of the President of Kyrgyzstan (2018-19 Chairman of the SCO), Sooronbay Jeenbekov, along with other leaders of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) grouping of nations and Mauritius, to the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2019. Though India considers Central Asia as its 'extended neighbourhood'<sup>489</sup>, the period immediately after the fall of Soviet Union saw a declining relevance of Central Asia in India's

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<sup>487</sup> Eugene B. Rumer, "China, Russia and the Balance of Power in Central Asia," *Strategic Forum*, no. 223 (2006): 1, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://files.ethz.ch/isn/46312/SF223.pdf>.

<sup>488</sup> Meena Singh Roy and Rajorshi Roy, "India and the SCO: A Vision for Expanding New Delhi's Engagement," December 4, 2019.

<sup>489</sup> Amb. (Retd.) Yogendra Kumar, "India's Policy Towards Extended Neighbourhood and the Larger Context of National Foreign Policy Challenges," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, May 13, 2016, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures--detail.htm?524>.

foreign policy priorities. Renewed interest was, however, developed in 2012 when India articulated the ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy to deepen its engagement with the region. India’s interest in Central Asia mainly revolves around economics and security. Over the past few years, India has achieved an average annual growth rate of 7 percent (2012-2018).<sup>490</sup> Growing economy implies rise in energy needs to meet the requirements of economic growth. According to the IEA Global Energy and CO2 Status Report 2019, India’s primary energy demand amounted to 4 percent or over 35 million tonnes of equivalent oil compared to 2.3 percent global growth. Growth in India was led by coal and oil, the two topmost contributors to energy demand growth.<sup>491</sup> Besides, India’s gas demand is also expected to rise and as per energy consultancy firm Wood Mackenzie, India’s gas demand is expected to double to 75 billion cubic meters by 2030<sup>492</sup>. Indian government is also trying to increase the share of natural gas<sup>493</sup> in the country’s energy profile so as to confirm to the principles of sustainable economic growth. Against this background it can be said that Central Asia, being a resource-rich region, proves to be of immense value for a booming economy like India in the sphere of oil and energy. Nevertheless, India’s poor connectivity with the region stands as an important barrier in the way of developing favourable economic ties between the two and pursuing the policy of pipeline diplomacy. This can be attributed to the lack of shared borders and the presence of hostile Pakistan and instable Afghanistan as transit countries. An

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<sup>490</sup> Data derived from World Bank website, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKT.KD.ZG?end=2018&locations=IN&start=1961&view=chart>

<sup>491</sup> “Global Energy and CO2 Status Report 2019,” IEA, March 2019, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://iea.org/reports/global-energy-co2-status-report-2019>.

<sup>492</sup> Nidhi Verma & Promit Mukherjee, “Global Oil Majors See Surge in Indian Demand for Natural Gas,” Reuters, October 14, 2019, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://reuters.com/article/us-energy-india-gas/global-oil-majors-see-surge-in-indian-demand-for-natural-gas-idUSKBN1WT1QI>.

<sup>493</sup> Indian Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan claimed that the government is increasingly investing for expansion of the gas infrastructure in the country so as to increase the consumption of natural gas by more than three-folds in the next ten years. “Natural Gas Consumption to Rise 3-folds in 10 yrs for 15% Target: Pradhan,” The Economic Times, December 5, 2019, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/natural-gas-consumption-to-rise-3-folds-in-10-yrs-for-15-target-pradhan/articleshow/72382676.cms?from=mdr>.

important example in this case is the much-hyped TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) Pipeline project, the future of which seems to be uncertain.<sup>494</sup> As a result of this India has been searching for alternative options for increasing its connectivity to Central Asia as evident from the Chabahar Port projects and the INSTC project. Though plans for development of the project were tabled in 2003, but a major push was received in the second half of 2014 resulting in the signing of a MoU between the two countries, in this respect, in 2015.<sup>495</sup> The port will provide India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia via Iran and bypassing Pakistan. Similarly, the INSTC agreement which was signed between India, Russia and Iran in 2000 not only seeks to reduce goods transportation time and establish viable transportation links between India and Russia, but also between India and Central Asia. India's accession to the Ashgabat Agreement<sup>496</sup> in 2018 is also another step forward in connecting India to Central Asia through Iran. Further, this is also expected to synchronize with the efforts to implement the INSTC for enhanced connectivity<sup>497</sup> and will facilitate India's future access to Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). India is also mulling over the establishment of an air corridor, similar to that with Afghanistan, for trade with Central Asian countries in

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<sup>494</sup> The project's agreement signed in 2015, is designed to transport Turkmen gas to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan and is stipulated to bear benefits for energy-deficient countries like India and Pakistan. The gas pipeline will start from the Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan connecting with Afghanistan's Herat-Kandahar highway, then via Quetta and Multan in Pakistan up to Fazilka, India's town bordering Pakistan. (Neelapu Shanti, "Yesterday's Vision Today's Reality: TAPI Hopes to Create Economic Viability," *The Economic Times*, February 18, 2018, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-commentary/yesterdays-vision-todays-reality-tapi-hopes-to-create-economic-viability/> ). Yet in spite of having such potentials, the project has run into various hurdles with regard to logistics and transit fees and hence the original estimates of the completion of the project in 2020 could not be fulfilled.

<sup>495</sup> "India Takes Over Operations of Part of Chabahar Port in Iran," Ministry of Shipping, Government of India, January 7, 2019, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1558896>.

<sup>496</sup> The Ashgabat Agreement which establishes a transport and transit corridor between the Persian Gulf and Central Asia was concluded in on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 between Turkmenistan, Oman, Iran, Qatar and Uzbekistan. Qatar, however, withdrew from the agreement in 2013 and later Kazakhstan and Pakistan joined the agreement in 2016. Though India expressed its intention to join this arrangement in 2016, yet it was granted accession in 2018.

<sup>497</sup> "India to Accede to Ashgabat Agreement," Government of India Cabinet, March 23, 2016, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=138309>.

perishable goods as reflected in External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's statement at the inaugural of the 'India Central Asia Business Council' in Delhi in 2020. Yet, apart from economic linkages, India also has stakes in maintaining stability in the region considering the proximity of the region to Afghanistan. If the Afghan region remains volatile then this might have a spill over effect on Central Asia. And against the backdrop of recent drawdown of the US forces from Afghanistan, Central Asia seems to be gearing up more and more for this new reality. The main challenge for them is the al-Qaeda linked Central Asian Salafi-jihadi groups and the remnants of the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) operating in Afghanistan, whose aim is to build an Islamic Emirate in the Ferghana Valley of Central Asia.<sup>498</sup> Also threats from groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) and most of all the IS also cannot be dismissed. Once these groups start planning and coordinating terrorist operation that will not only destabilize Central Asia, but will also pose a serious threat for India and also for Russia. India, itself being a victim of terrorist onslaughts, has, over time, developed various mechanisms for tackling this menace at the regional as well as global levels<sup>499</sup> and in the process has gained considerable experience which can be used by the region to formulate solutions to their problems. This threat of terrorism also provides a security challenge for Russia and for that matter SCO provides a platform whereby both India and Russia can cooperate and coordinate in developing common approaches by facilitating dialogue and developing new mechanisms for combating this evil. Recognising the fact that the security and stability of Afghanistan

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<sup>498</sup> Uran Botobekov, "Why Central Asian Jihadists are Inspired by the US-Taliban Agreement?" *Modern Diplomacy*, April 8, 2020, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/04/08/why-central-asian-jihadists-are-inspired-by-the-us-taliban-agreement/>

<sup>499</sup> A detailed discussion on the various policy initiatives taken by India to tackle terrorism has been dealt by Arpita Anant in "India and International Terrorism," in *Handbook of India's International Relations*, ed. David Scott (London: Routledge, 2011).

is intricately linked with the security in the SCO region<sup>500</sup> the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group was created in 2005 for promoting regional as well as international cooperation for achieving peace and stability in the region. This platform may be used by both India and Russia for establishing contacts with various elements of the Afghan society for establishing a framework of security which might help in establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan.<sup>501</sup> In this connection, it might be noted that the most serious terrorist threats facing India over the past several decades have emanated mainly from Pakistan, which has also become a permanent member of the organization along with India at the Astana Summit of 2017. But the efforts of India to rein in Pakistan has always been met with resistance from China and this trend is likely to continue in the near future as well. It is in this context that Russia's role might come as handy for India as it can use diplomatic means to influence China into taking a neutral stance on the issue. It can also persuade both India and Pakistan to practise mutual restraint and engage in dialogue within the SCO framework so that they can co-exist in an environment devoid of hard-core antagonism vis-à-vis each other. And such a proposition will also be attractive to China in the sense that would not like to see the unity of this organization

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<sup>500</sup> "Joint Statement by Foreign Ministers of SCO Member States on the results of the meeting in the format of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, July 17, 2021, <http://mfa.gov.af/news/3263-joint-statement-by-foreign-ministers-of-sco-member-states-on-the-results-of-the-meeting-in-the-format-of-the-sco-afghanistan-contact-group.html> (accessed August 26, 2021).

<sup>501</sup> In an online discussion held on 25.08.2021 by the author of Mr. Roman Babushkin, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Chief of the Mission to India, Russian Embassy, he clearly stated that Russia was in favour of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan and all solutions to the problem must be inter-Afghan. Russia was quite sceptical of the Indian idea of Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled solution as it was centred mostly around Ashraf Ghani-led government in Kabul. In order to make it more inclusive, channels of communication should also be opened with other ethnic groups of the Afghan society. According to Mr. Babushkin, Taliban is a part of the Afghan reality, whether one likes it or not and this explains why Russia favours opening a dialogue process with the Taliban. For Russia, India is also an important partner in shaping up regional consensus on the future of Afghanistan but for that matter, Russia believes that India should have a broad-based approach to the issue and should not limit itself only to governmental forces (though recently India has engaged itself with back channel communication with the Taliban). In doing so, as Mr. Babushkin noted, India can also become an eligible partner in the 'extended troika' format.

being endangered by outbreak of hostilities between these two rival South Asian neighbours.

Finally, in the economic sphere it is quite evident that China is increasingly seeking to heighten its economic influence in the region, particularly through the BRI initiative and given China's growing economic might and its ambitious designs, there is hardly anything that Russia can do in this respect. And this is bound to make Russia quite uncomfortable given the fact that China is now encroaching on what Russia once considered it to be its 'sphere of influence.' Previously the Central Asian states looked to Russia for export of their goods and natural resources to international market which resulted in Russian control over the region. But the entry of China has altered the situation with Central Asia-China pipelines, for which construction began in 2007.<sup>502</sup> Viewed from this perspective, it may be argued that Russia's strong support in favour of India's membership in SCO was an attempt to dilute China's increasing power in the bloc as well as in the region as a whole. Besides India's soft power diplomacy also places India in a position to develop strong connections with the Central Asian region and this might help India in gaining leverage over China. Nevertheless, SCO has the potential to serve as a foundation for a Greater Eurasian international order free of any hegemonic control as the presence of formidable players like India and Russia weakens US influence in the region neutralising at the same time any kind of Chinese dominance.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Paul Stronski and Nicole NG, "Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 28, 2018, accessed April 26, 2020,

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/28/cooperation-and-competition-russia-and-china-in-central-asia-russian-far-east-and-the-arctic-pub-75673>.

<sup>503</sup> Dmitry V. Suslov, "Non-Western multilateralism: BRICS and the SCO in the post-Covid world," Observer Research Foundation, July 29, 2020, accessed June 17, 2021, <http://orfonline.org/expert-speak/non-western-multilateralism-brics-sco-post-covid-world/>

## EAEU

The Eurasian Economic Union was formed in 2015 by Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, as an international organization aimed at fostering economic cooperation among states in the post-Soviet space. The main aim of the organization is to develop a single market for the member states to ‘ensure free movement of goods, services, capital and labour within its borders, as well as coordinated, agreed or common policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty of Eurasian Economic Union.’<sup>504</sup> The vast resources of oil, natural gas and minerals presents EAEU as a huge market that remains to be explored. Having a population of 182 million people and Russia and Kazakhstan, being the largest economies, the Union boasts of a combined GDP of nearly US\$2 trillion.<sup>505</sup> Given the size of the market, many countries outside the post-Soviet region<sup>506</sup> has shown interest in signing FTAs with the organization which, inter alia, includes India. Negotiations for signing an FTA between India and the EAEU started in 2020 which is expected to give a fillip to India’s trade relations with the countries of the Central Asian region and particularly with Russia. This is in consonance with India’s Connect Central Asia Policy (CCAP) by virtue of which India seeks to strengthen political, economic, strategic cooperation with the Central Asian Region (CARs) by providing infrastructural support (in the form of setting up universities, hospitals, information technology and the like) as well as by improving connectivity links. In terms of connectivity India has been an ardent advocate of various projects like TAPI and INSTC which, in spite of witnessing slow growth, is supposed to reap economic benefits for India. The CAR being a rich repository of oil and natural gas resources has

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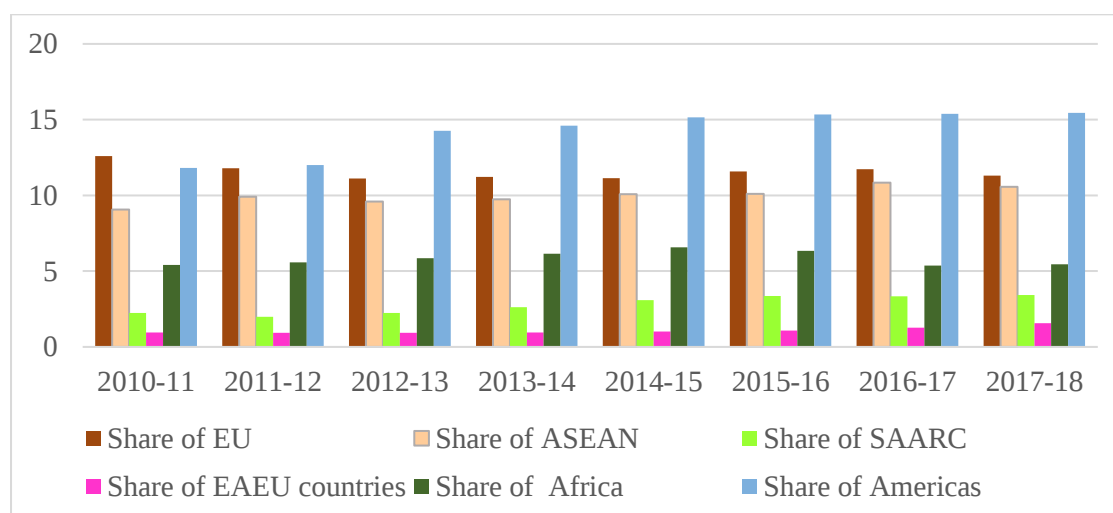
<sup>504</sup> Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://eaeunion.org/?lang=en#info>.

<sup>505</sup> Evgeny Vinokurov, “Eurasian Economic Union: Current state and preliminary results,” *Russian Journal of Economics* 3, no. 1 (2017): 58.

<sup>506</sup> China and Vietnam already have functioning FTAs with EAEU while negotiations are on for such an agreement with Egypt, Israel and India.

an immense potential of addressing the energy woes of India. Nevertheless, an FTA with the EAEU would also open opportunities for India to develop its relations with the entire Eurasian region, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. This assumes more importance in view of the weak trade linkages that India has with these areas. Over the years (2010-11 to 2017-18), if one looks at the trade figures (as shown in Figure 10), one will observe that in comparison to rest of the regions, India's trade figures with the EAEU countries has been quite low. While other regions (except for SAARC countries) have had a share of, at least, around 5 percent and above of India's total trade, the corresponding figures for the Eurasian countries have remained below 2 percent. This is in spite of the fact that bilateral trade between the two sides increased from USD 5.8 billion in 2010-11 to USD 12 billion in 2017-18. Within the EAEU, Russia is the main trading partner of India accounting for 78.7 percent share of EAEU's total trade with India followed by Kazakhstan having a corresponding share of 19 percent (2019-20).<sup>507</sup>

**Figure 10 Region-wise share in India's total trade (values in percentage)**



Source: Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, Government of India, <https://tradedat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp>.

<sup>507</sup> Inferred from data available at: Export Import Bank, Department of Commerce, Government of India, <https://tradedat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp>.

This Russia-centric trading policy of India should be diversified to include other members of EAEU as well. Particularly with regard to Armenia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan trade figures have been very low amounting to a meagre USD 0.04 bn, USD 0.03 bn and USD 0.20 bn respectively (2019-20)<sup>508</sup>. Connectivity being the main predicament, there are also other issues which need to be addressed including financial issues and market access conditions like import duties and custom barriers<sup>509</sup> which an FTA can possibly resolve. A JSG formed in 2016 for assessing the feasibility of the FTA between India and the EAEU observed that the FTA has the potential of enhancing bilateral trade in goods additionally up to USD 37-62 billion. This can be made possible by the elimination of tariffs which may increase EAEU member states' exports to India in different product categories including agricultural products like vegetables, crops, vegetable oils, industrial products like fertilizers, machineries and equipment, motor vehicles, etc. On the other hand, there may also be an increase in India's exports to EAEU of agricultural products like crops, tea, miscellaneous edible preparations and industrial products like pharmaceuticals, textiles, clothing, chemicals, etc.<sup>510</sup> Particularly, with regard to pharmaceuticals, the launch of a common medicines market of the EAEU in 2017 is supposed to benefit India which plays a dominant role in the global pharma business. The credibility of the Indian pharma industry has attracted the attention of the EAEU countries and given the possibility of an increasing demand for

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<sup>508</sup> Inferred from data available at: Export Import Bank, Department of Commerce, Government of India, <https://tradedstat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/default.asp>.

<sup>509</sup> In a survey conducted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) on India-EAEU FTA, 60% of the respondents regarded financial issues as a major impediment to trade and investment between the two regions. Other than that, 24% of the respondents pointed to logistics/connectivity issues, 22% emphasized problems related to market access whereas 9% focused on the need to promote 'Brand India' image in the Eurasian region. 'India-EAEU FTA Survey Report', FICCI, 2016, accessed May 16, 2018, <https://ficci.in/spdocument/20978/India-EAEU-FTA-Survey-Report-revised.pdf>.

<sup>510</sup> "Joint Feasibility Study Report on the Free Trade Agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union and its Member States, of the one Part, and the Republic of India, of the other Part, Moscow, 2016," IBA Secretariat, 2016, accessed May 16, 2018, <http://www.ibasecretariat.org/final-jfsg-report-27-december-2016.pdf>.

pharma products in these countries, an FTA would help in tapping the growing potential of the Indian pharmaceutical industry.<sup>511</sup> Besides, economic benefits the FTA also has certain geopolitical implications. An FTA would lead to an increased presence of India in the Eurasian region which would be used as a counter strategy, particularly by Russia, to limit increasing Chinese influence in the region. If one looks at Central Asian region, China has already established itself as a principal economic actor over there. Russian experts had earlier expressed reservations with regard to conclusion of FTA with China as it has the potential of weakening Russian domestic industries in the face of stiff competition from China.<sup>512</sup> Similar apprehensions were also echoed by Indian experts when India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP).<sup>513</sup> But such concerns have not been reflected by either side in case of an India-EAEU FTA as neither Russia nor India and not even the EAEU countries fear the loss of their domestic markets in doing business among themselves. Hence, apart from economic gains, such an FTA would prove to be strategically beneficial for both the sides. Whereas for India it will help in strengthening its presence in the Eurasian region, for the EAEU member states, as correctly pointed out by Prof. Lukin, the signing of an FTA with an emerging economic power like India would elevate the bloc's status in the international arena<sup>514</sup> and would also act as a significant counterweight to Chinese economic presence in the region.

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<sup>511</sup> Richa Sekhani, "What does the FTA with EEU has in Store for India?" Financial Express, June 26, 2015, accessed April 3, 2020, <http://financialexpress.com/opinion/what-does-the-fta-with-eeu-has-in-store-for-india/90167/>.

<sup>512</sup> Dimitri Simes, "Russia Woos India to Sign Trade Pact with Eurasian Economic Union," Nikkei Asia, January 15, 2020, accessed June 16, 2021, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Russia-woos-India-to-sign-trade-pact-with-Eurasian-Economic-Union>.

<sup>513</sup> RCEP is a trade bloc consisting of the ASEAN countries and China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. In November 2019, India decided to pull out of the RCEP on grounds of protecting Indian domestic industries from other competitors, particularly China.

<sup>514</sup> Dimitri Simes, "Russia woos India to sign trade pact with Eurasian Economic Union."

## CONCLUSION

The end of Cold War and the accelerating pace of globalization have resulted in a number of changes in the geopolitical landscape and have given rise to various issues, the solution of which requires coordinated efforts among countries. India and Russia, considered to be two of the major actors of the international system, have numerous stakes in the current international order. The indisputable rise of India as a potential power pole and Russia's incessant efforts to design a thorough and effective campaign to expand its global influence makes it quite difficult to forge sustainable solutions to global problems without taking these two powers on board. Apart from interactions at the bilateral level, these two countries seek to strengthen their relations by engaging in various multilateral frameworks, as discussed in this chapter. By engaging in these multilateral forums, they seek to articulate their positions on various challenges encountered by the international system thereby attempting to re-shape the norms of global governance hitherto dominated by the Western powers. This will not only help in strengthening their international stature but will also help in deepening their bilateral engagement depending on how successfully both the nations navigate their relationships within the complex geopolitical environment.

## CHAPTER VII – CONCLUSION

The ‘time-tested’ relations of India and Russia, though may sound cliché, has significant implications in contemporary international system. Though the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed notable differences in the nature of bilateral interactions when compared to the Soviet days, one can hardly deny the synergies that act as cohesive forces between them. This research has attempted to analyse the various aspects of Indo-Russia bilateral relations and the way they are playing out in the post-Cold War geopolitical environment.

India-Russia relations that we see today have their roots in the Soviet era. Even before India became independent, connection with Soviet Union was sought to be established through the efforts of Jawaharlal Nehru who, being enthused by the success of the Soviet socialist experiment, wanted to adopt a socialist path of action and establish close ties with the USSR. Accordingly, diplomatic relations were established between the two sides on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, two days before India attained independence. The initial sobriety of ties under Stalin soon saw a paradigm shift with the coming to power of Nikita Khrushchev thereby paving the way for the establishment of relations that would soon grow to become one, unparalleled in the history of international relations. Since then there has been a pattern of continuity in relations with both the countries adopting a coordinated approach on a host of international issues.

The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, however, interrupted the hitherto smooth flow of ties between the two countries and this could be attributed to the changes that were brought about in Russian foreign policy orientation. Losing its prestige in the international scene and inheriting an economy which was in tatters, the new Russia under President Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev shed off all inhibitions

of the past and propagated a pro-Western approach thereby placing relations with India or for that matter other developing countries, in the backburner. Russia tended to view itself more as a Euro-Atlantic power and hoped to get much financial assistance from the West that would place Russia on a path to economic recovery. However, not only were the hopes of Russia of getting financial aid from the West dashed but its inclination towards the West further struck a huge blow to its international prestige. This new foreign policy disposition also led to a slackening of Russia's relations with India and this raised many questions about the future prospects of the hitherto strong partnership. In fact, it is mostly for this reason that the fall of Soviet Union is said to have dealt a major blow to India more than any other nation in the world. Nevertheless, in response to this, some efforts were taken to renew old ties with developing countries particularly India. Though the visit of President Yeltsin to India in 1993 brought back some semblance of normality to the relationship, yet it was not until President Putin came to power that sincere efforts were made to bring back Indo-Russia relations to its original vigour, in keeping with the changed geopolitical realities. The Declaration of Strategic Partnership that was concluded in the year 2000 on the occasion of President Putin's visit to India, infused a new momentum in relations that were further taken to a higher qualitative level in the year 2010 when the strategic relations were also dubbed as 'special and privileged' ones.

In general, the term 'strategy' or 'strategic' is often believed to have military or security connotations but once one looks into the various strategic partnerships that have been established by various players at the regional as well as the global level over time, it clearly transcends the narrow boundary of defence and security issues to encompass relationships across a wide range of political, economic, social and even cultural issues. Moreover, when we talk of strategic partnerships, the concept itself is very dynamic,

i.e. they are not based on certain timeless principles but on changing realities. In a very general sense, these are goal-driven partnerships where countries seek to fulfil their national interests by cooperating with other countries having more or less similar strategic goals. In case of India and Russia, the mutuality of strategic goals is evident, most importantly, from the fact that both want the creation of a just, equitable and a multipolar world order based on respect for international law. Besides, there is also substantial amount of good faith and trust between the two countries that can hardly be found in the history of international relations. This view was echoed in the statement of the Indian Ambassador to Russia D. B. Venkatesh Verma when he said, “we rejoice in each other’s strength and that has been a tradition for several decades now and that is also explainable by the fact that there is great geopolitical compatibility that is very rare to find in international relations.”<sup>515</sup> Such an ethos brings the two countries together for a promising long-term strategic partnership.

The defence cooperation constitutes the most important pillar of India-Russia strategic partnership. Majority of India’s defence arsenal consists of weapons of Soviet/Russian-origin. Such strong defence relations were built during the Soviet years and continues to persist even today. Yet in the recent past concerns have been raised regarding the gradual decline of Russian share in the Indian market. This has mainly been attributed to the following three factors:

- Diversification of India’s import
- Increasing focus on the development of India’s indigenous defence industry

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<sup>515</sup> *India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Ready for an Upgrade?* YouTube video, 1:52:29, posted by Carnegie Live, June 26, 2020, accessed August 10, 2020 <http://youtube.com/watch?v=1YxSzCtv5ys> .

- India's economic growth resulting in the declining importance of price factor and more emphasis on quality and combat effectiveness of weapons procured.

Whereas these factors cannot be dismissed out of hand, Russia still plays an important role in the Indian defence market simply because of the fact that no country has or, probably in the near future, will be willing to share the level of technologies that Russia has provided India. For example, which other country has agreed to lease a nuclear submarine to India or who has even been assisting India in developing its indigenous strategic capability with such spontaneity as shown by Russia? None and this explains as to why Russia would continue to occupy a pre-eminent position in India's defence sector. Nevertheless, India has also been diversifying its sources and has entered into important defence transactions with the US, France and Israel. The resultant decrease in Russia's share in Indian arms market has raised concerns about the declining relevance of Russian arms to India, yet these are a bit exaggerated. Yes, India is diversifying its import alternatives and this is absolutely in keeping with India's larger geopolitical interests. As stated earlier, India is now looking for more modern, sophisticated and combat effective weapons and hence it is approaching those countries having competitive advantage over Russia in this respect. As former Ambassador P.S. Raghavan has pointed out that this also, in a way, helps in strengthening Indo-Russia ties as this makes Russia more sensitive to Indian concerns and complaints thereby boosting the former to take steps to retain its position in the Indian market.<sup>516</sup> Apart from that, going by the SIPRI Fact Sheet on International Arms Transfer, 2020, though Russian arms exports to India saw a drop by 53 percent yet, during the period 2016-20, Russia still occupied a dominant position in Indian arms market with a share of 49 percent of India's total arms imports. Besides, since 2018, both the countries entered

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<sup>516</sup> Amb. P.S.Raghavan (former diplomat) in discussion with the author, May 18, 2018.

into some mega defence deals taking the value of such deals to \$15 bn which is quite noteworthy achievement given a matter of just three years.<sup>517</sup> And the most important among them has been the deal for the purchase of S-400 missiles which was taken forward by India even in the face of US sanctions under CAATSA. Besides, in order to give a fillip to the strategic partnership both sides agreed to establish the ‘2+2 ministerial dialogue’ between the defence and foreign ministers. This makes Russia the only country outside the Quad with which India has such a mechanism.

Such strong relations, however, is not to be seen in the economic sphere, which is purported to be one of the significant pillars of a strong and sustainable strategic partnership. It is quite evident that the strong economic ties that existed during the Cold War period has faltered to a significant degree for the past couple of decades. Though both sides have envisioned a bilateral trade target of US\$ 30 billion by 2025, the current situation does not seem to have the potential to fulfil that expectation. Neither of the two countries figure in the top ten trading partners of each other. The bilateral trade of both the nations is less than 2 percent of their global annual trade which hardly leaves any room for doubt regarding the seriousness of the problem. The leaders of both the countries regularly meet in annual summits, make big declarations, set high targets, seek to explore new vistas of economic engagement, but when it comes to materialization one can hardly point to any awe-inspiring achievement. Various infrastructural constraints like distance and lack of proper connectivity, poor banking and insurance facilities and bureaucratic delays that throttle the possibility of harnessing the economic potentials that exist between the two countries. In addition, there is also lack of knowledge about each other’s markets. Sufficient information about a partner

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<sup>517</sup> Dinakar Peri, “India-Russia Defence Trade Worth \$15 Billion in Three Years: Russian Official,” The Hindu, August 24, 2021, accessed August 31, 2021, <http://thehindu.com/news/national/india-russia-defence-trade-worth-15bn-in-3-years-russian-official/article36087445.ece>.

country's market conditions encourages participation in any large-scale economic projects or enter into any kind of meaningful economic partnership with the same. In case of India-Russia relations, if this issue is not addressed properly, tangible results in the economic sphere will be a distant dream. Having said that it should also be pointed out that both the nations have, in the recent past, undertaken certain significant steps to ramp up their fragile economic ties. An important example in this respect is the decision taken by India, to invest in the RFE region, at the Vladivostok summit held in the year 2019. In addition, a proposal was also put forward for establishing a direct sea route between Chennai and Vladivostok which, if translated into reality, would cut the time and cost of transportation of goods from India to the RFE and hence would prove to be a noteworthy solution in addressing the connectivity issue. Apart from that increasing its presence in the resource-rich Far Eastern region can also help in straightening out the problems related to India's economic interaction with Russia. This is mainly due to the fact that in order to meet its energy requirements India will have to depend on import of oil and gas and make investments in the hydrocarbon sector. And given its strategy for diversifying oil supplies from non-OPEC countries, no other source seems to be better than the RFE region.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought about profound transformations in the geopolitical landscape. The bloc politics of the Cold War era is a thing of the past. Today, instead of blocs, we see various 'poles' or centres of power interacting with each other and at the same time pursuing foreign policies independently and on the basis of their respective national interests. Against this background certain discernible changes are being witnessed in the foreign policies of India and Russia which have given rise to a narrative on the 'gradual weakening of ties' between the two. On the Russian side this has been inspired by the dynamics of India's interaction with the US. Whereas for India,

Russia's increasing cooperation with China and Pakistan has been a matter of grave concern. It is true that Russia's engagement with China has expanded in scope to include all aspects of cooperation-economic, military, diplomatic as well as political. But this has its roots in the period immediately after the collapse of Soviet Union. What is new is that this relationship gathered a new momentum immediately after the 2014 Crimean fiasco when Western sanctions pushed Russia more into the lap of China. Yet given the chequered history of Russia-China relations it would be a mistake to assume that Russia would abandon its time-tested relations with India in favour of China. Russia's push for inclusion of India in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), its neutral stance on the Galwan valley incident of 2020 and its decision to accelerate the supply of S400 missiles to India, on the latter's request, in the wake of border clashes with China show the important place India occupies in Russia's geostrategic calculation.

With regard to Pakistan, Russia's growing relationship should be understood in the regional context. It started mostly after the US announcement of troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, though certain high-level visits started since 2011. An instable Afghanistan would threaten the security and stability of Central Asia which, in turn, would have spill over effects on Russia and this fact has been recognized even in the Foreign Policy Concept of Russia, 2016. In such a situation and given the strategic location of Pakistan and its influence on the Taliban, Russia decided to secure its interests by developing relations with the former. This became particularly discernible in the defence sector when Russia decided to lift its long-term arms embargo on Pakistan beginning with the sale of Mi-35 helicopters to the latter. In late 2014 the two sides also concluded an agreement for expansion of defence and security ties. The two sides have also been holding joint military exercises ever since 2016, the latest being

the 'Friendship-2020' exercise in Pakistan. Both sides have even signed a Security Training Agreement that provides for the training of Pakistani military officers in Russia. Against this background concerns have been raised in India that if Russia aggressively pursues such defence relations with Pakistan that might cast an adverse impact on the Indo-Russia ties. Though the concern might be justified but most of the times it is a bit overstated. In international politics no relation between two countries must be viewed in a vacuum. The same goes for Pakistan and Russia. The geo-strategic environment (with special reference to Afghanistan) has compelled Russia to develop ties with Pakistan. Besides, the increasing confrontation with the West in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and the growing fault lines in relations between Islamabad and Washington have given further push to the ties between Russia and Pakistan. However, one should not lose sight of the special relationship that Moscow shares with New Delhi and which it can ill-afford to let go of. Till now there has not been a single instance where Moscow has put India's security concerns at stake. This was evident during the 2016 Russo-Pak joint military drills that were supposed to take place in the Gilgit Baltistan region but was later shifted to Cherat due to Indian objections. It is true that arms sales have been there but Pakistan comes nowhere close to India in terms of the size of its market. The volume and the types of military equipment that Russia sells to Pakistan is not even a match to what it sells to India. One can hardly find instances of sale of fighter aircrafts, submarines and the like to Pakistan. Besides, Russia is fully aware of the fact that Pakistan simply lacks the financial clout required to purchase massive quantities of high-ended weapons. Moreover, the level of trust Russia shares with India is a very unique one and can hardly be replaced with that of Pakistan with whom Russia has had not so warm past. Also, unlike India, Russia and Pakistan do not have annual bilateral summits and till now President Putin has not, for once, visited

Pakistan. This, in some respect, might be taken as an indication of the fact that Russia will never sacrifice its special relation with India at the cost of any other country.

An important area of consternation between the two countries in the recent past has been the issue of Indo-Pacific and the Quad. While Russia maintains that the Indo-Pacific and the Quad are US strategies to contain China as well as Russia, India sees Indo-Pacific as an inclusive grouping focussed on the centrality of ASEAN and not directed against any country. India also refuses to see Quad as an 'Asian NATO', a term ascribed to it by Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Sergey Lavrov. An interesting point to note here is that though Russia opposes the Indo-Pacific construct as a US design yet it was comfortable with its predecessor the 'Asia Pacific' which was also constructed by the US. However, though the Russian government officials and policy makers have still not been able to come around to the concept, Russian academics and experts have started to gradually engage with the concept and some of them are also of the view that Russia being an Indo-Pacific power shall, in course of time, change its current perception which is mostly influenced by the Chinese rhetoric. India's terming of the Indo-Pacific as 'open, free and inclusive' region also indicates India's desire to rope in Russia as an active participant in the region, free from Chinese shadow. In this respect the 'Act Far East' policy launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Vladivostok Summit of 2019 deserves special mention where he said that the 'Far East will become a confluence of the Eurasian Union on one side and open, free and inclusive Indo-Pacific on the other.'<sup>518</sup> An important reason behind Russia's wariness to the Indo-Pacific geopolitical construct is the deteriorating relations with the West and the

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<sup>518</sup> "Translation of Prime Minister's Speech in Plenary Session of 5<sup>th</sup> eastern Economic Forum," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, September 5, 2019, accessed September 27, 2021, [https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/31798/Translation\\_of\\_Prime\\_Ministers\\_speech\\_in\\_Plenary\\_Session\\_of\\_5th\\_Eastern\\_Economic\\_Forum\\_September\\_05\\_2019](https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/31798/Translation_of_Prime_Ministers_speech_in_Plenary_Session_of_5th_Eastern_Economic_Forum_September_05_2019).

consequent alignment towards China. In order to safeguard its own interests, Moscow, for the time being, finds it convenient to ride on the Chinese rhetoric and is hence failing to become an active participant in the region. Yet quite interestingly though Russia, officially, at present has been constantly opposing the concept, it has also in some form or the other stepped up its engagement in the region through its pivot to the East policy. Russia is well aware of the fact that the centre of geopolitical and geo-economic gravity has shifted from the west to the east and under such circumstances it can ill-afford to keep itself completely aloof from this strategically important area. Besides Russian Maritime Doctrine of 2015 enlists Indian Ocean region as one of the priority areas in the maritime sphere along with the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans. Apart from that Russia's increasing naval activities in the recent past also is a testimony to its increasing appetite for carving out a niche for itself in this part of the world. And most importantly, the success of the 'Greater Eurasian Partnership' vision as propounded by Moscow also depends to a great extent on Russia's participation in the Indo-Pacific. Nevertheless, how far Moscow will be ready to come to terms with the idea and how far it can bridge the gaps in its understanding of the region with that of its special and privileged strategic partner India is yet to be seen.

Finally, it may be pointed out that in spite of these differences the most important element that binds the two strategic partners is the level of mutual trust and faith hardly discernible in the history of bilateral ties. The uniqueness of the partnership lies in the fact that among all the great powers of the world, India and Russia are the only two countries that never had any serious clash of interests so as to impede their strategic partnership. Both the countries are equally sensitive to each other's concerns and have backed each other on critical issues at various international fora. Russia, like the Soviet Union, has been an ardent supporter of India's position on Kashmir at the UN and has

always avoided meddling in India's bilateral disputes, be it with China or Pakistan or for that matter any other country. Similarly, India was among the very few countries that stopped short of criticizing Russia on Ukraine. In fact, on one occasion India even voted against an UN-sponsored resolution criticizing human rights situation in Crimea, thereby reaffirming its support for Russia. Russia has also been an enthusiastic supporter of India's permanent membership at the UNSC as well as India's membership of the NSG. Both the countries vouch for the creation of an equitable multipolar world order based on respect for international law, territorial integrity and sovereign equality of all nations. They continue to cooperate in various international forums like BRICS, RIC and the SCO in order to coordinate their viewpoints on various international issues of critical significance. So, while the shared interests of the two nations remain the same, there has been a change in the content, though, which can be attributed to the geopolitical churn that has taken place in international politics. Yet, the fact that they have been able to survive the treacherous currents of international politics and maintain a stable partnership is quite a commendable achievement. Hence, the India-Russia bilateral ties may be regarded as an instance of 'old wine in a new bottle' which has a relatively bright future given the proper management of the anxieties and concerns of both sides.

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