

India ready for Russian N-aid

6/12 11:41 Russia

Reactors for Kudankulam

YASHWANT Raj
Moscow, December 5

INDIA has expressed its willingness to allow Russia to build additional reactors for the Kudankulam nuclear facility. This was conveyed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the Russian energy and trade minister Viktor Khristenko on Monday.

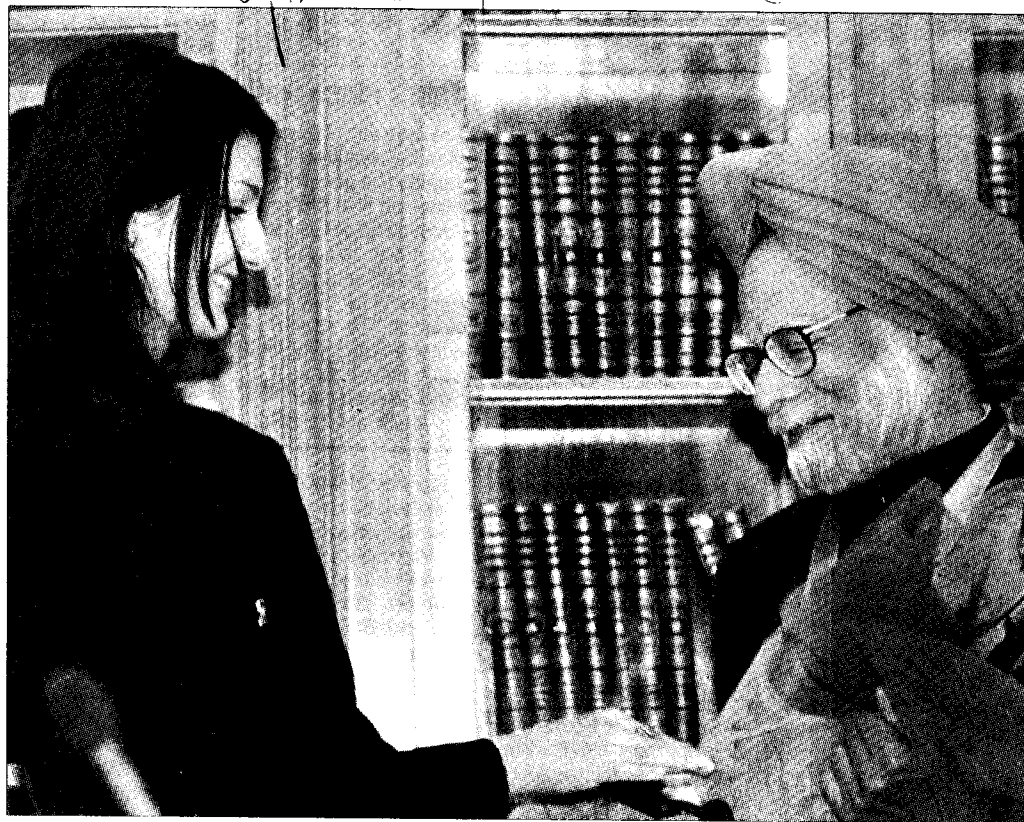
Foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said, "The Prime Minister told the Russian minister that India could consider positively the construction of an additional reactor in view of India's growing energy needs."

MOSCOW VISIT

Khristenko, on his part, welcomed India's willingness to invest in Sakhalin III oilfields. India already has a stake in Sakhalin I.

India is looking to step up cooperation with Russia on energy issues and it is one of the major thrusts of the Prime Minister's visit. He will meet President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday and hold delegation-level talks.

On Monday, he met the Russian energy minister and businessmen from Russia and India. At the meeting with the minister, the two countries spoke of greater cooperation in energy — including working together in third countries. The spokesperson said the two countries are eager to working in tandem in Central Asia.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Moscow State University on Monday.

PTI

Joint defence production mooted

Moscow, December 5

RUSSIA AND India plan to begin joint work in design and production of weaponry, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in an interview with a Russian newspaper published on Monday.

Singh, who arrived in Moscow on Sunday for a three-day visit, was quoted by the daily *Izvestia* as saying that the two countries planned to move from a relationship of "buyer and seller" to joint planning and production of high-tech arms.

He did not provide more specifics, but said Russia and India would sign an accord regulating intellectual property rights in several areas including military cooperation during his visit.

Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Russia last month and announced that the two countries were drafting contracts for the sale of Russian military equipment to India worth \$10 billion, Interfax news agency said. In response to a question about a warming trilateral bond between Russia, China and India, Singh said India regard-



Vladimir Putin

ed this three-way cooperation as "very fruitful" because it would help all three countries resolve shared problems.

AFP



PTI

Rector of Moscow University Viktor Sadovnichy, who awarded the PM with an honorary doctorate on Monday.

Tehran and Moscow sign \$1 bn arms deal

MEG CLOTHIER
MOSCOW | DECEMBER 3

RUSSIA plans to sell more than \$1 billion worth of tactical surface-to-air missiles and other defence hardware to Iran, media here reported on Friday.

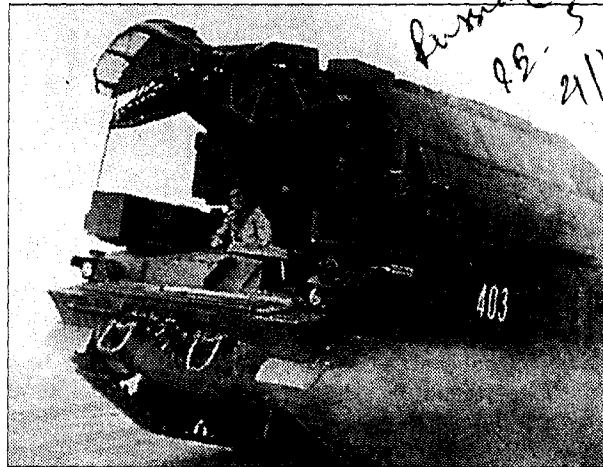
Moscow is already at odds with the West over its nuclear ties with Tehran but has sought to use its warm relations with Iran to be recognised as a key mediator between the West and the Islamic Republic.

US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, visiting Moscow, told Ekho Moskvyy radio he had raised the issue of arms sales to Iran with Russia's Foreign Ministry.

"For the past 25 years, in our opinion, Iran has supported terrorists in the Middle East, in the United States, and that is why we have very bad relations with them. You can understand why we do not support the sale of weapons to such a country," he said.

The *Vedomosti* business daily cited military sources as saying Iran would buy 29 TOR-M1 systems designed to bring down aircraft and guided missiles at low altitudes.

The paper, calling it the biggest sale of Russian defence hardware to Iran for



Russia is selling Iran 29 TOR-M1 anti-missile systems.

about five years, said Moscow and Tehran had already signed the contract.

Interfax news agency separately quoted a source as saying the deal, which would also include modernising Iran's air force and supplying some patrol boats, was worth more than \$1 billion.

The move, likely to irritate Israel and the US, could strain Moscow's efforts to broker a deal between Iran and European negotiators aimed at breaking a deadlock over Tehran's nuclear programme.

Russia's Defence Ministry declined to comment on the deal. Officials at state arms exporter Rosoboronexport, Russia's state defence supplier, were not available for comment.

However, the defence industry source told *Interfax* that there were no international restrictions on selling weapons to Iran.

"Moreover, practically all the weapons that Russia is delivering to Iran in the coming years are defensive rather than offensive in character," the source said.

One Western diplomat who closely watches Russia-Iran dealings said news of the deal was alarming and would further increase tensions.

"Russia has long positioned itself as a major peace broker between Iran and the West—and all of a sudden they are throwing this bombshell. It just does not make any sense," said the diplomat, who asked to remain anonymous.

—Reuters

04 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Russia, Ukraine headed for gas war

Moscow wants market prices for the gas it supplies. Kiev says no.

Vladimir Radyuhin

RUSSIA'S PRIME Minister Mikhail Fradkov cancelled his visit to Ukraine hours before it was due to start on Wednesday over Ukraine's refusal to discuss new prices for Russian natural gas. Analysts said the cancellation of the visit indicated Russia and Ukraine were on the verge of a gas price war.

The Russian Premier was to negotiate in Kiev a Russian proposal to increase the price of natural gas supplies to Ukraine and to pay cash for the transit of Russian gas to Europe. However, Ukraine has refused to discuss any changes in the current barter arrangement under which Ukraine meets more than one-third of its gas needs as payment for the transit of Russian gas exports to Europe. Russia has been supplying gas to Ukraine at \$50 per 1,000 cubic metres, which is less than one-third of the price it gets in Europe.

Earlier this year Moscow said it would stop supplying gas to Ukraine at heavily sub-

sidised prices starting from 2006 and offered to pay cash for its gas transits across Ukraine. Russia's state-controlled gas monopoly Gazprom said it was negotiating a new pricing mechanism under which it will hike the price of gas for Ukraine to \$160 and will pay cash for its gas transits to Europe. The move was widely seen as Moscow's reaction to Kiev's declared intention to re-orient its policy from Russia to the West in the wake of the so-called "orange revolution" in Ukraine a year ago.

Ukraine initially agreed to renegotiate its gas deal with Russia, hoping to diversify its gas supplies. However, its talks with Turkmenistan, which has so far been supplying nearly 50 per cent of Ukraine's gas needs, failed because Turkmenistan already has an agreement with Russia to sell practically all its natural gas exports to Russia's Gazprom over the next 20 years.

Following this setback, Kiev backtracked on its promise to discuss a new deal with Gazprom and insisted the current arrange-

ment stand unchanged, threatening otherwise to start siphoning off Russian gas bound for Europe. Analysts say Ukraine's refusal to negotiate gas prices with Russia's Prime Minister put the two countries on a collision course.

"Ukraine is pushing the situation to a gas war with Russia," said Sergei Markov of the Institute of Political Studies. "It hopes to play the card of Russian dependence on Ukrainian transit pipelines to Europe and counts on the support of its European allies and the United States in its standoff with Russia."

For its part Moscow reaffirmed its plan to increase gas prices for Ukraine. Russia's Energy and Industry Minister Viktor Khristenko told Channel One television that Moscow was firm in its intention to go over to "market pricing mechanisms" in its gas dealings with Ukraine. A Russian government source told the RBC news agency that the only concession Russia was willing to make to Ukraine was to postpone introduc-

ing new prices to March or April 2006. Experts said Gazprom could stop gas supplies to Ukraine in January 2006 if the sides fail to sign a new price agreement by the end of the current year.

Russia has also moved to ease its dependence on Ukrainian transit pipelines. "The more Russia's hands and feet are tied by transit countries, the more they have a temptation to be parasites on Russia," President Vladimir Putin said earlier this week in a clear reference to Ukraine. Two months ago Gazprom signed a mega contract with Germany's BASF and E.ON energy giants to build a seabed gas pipeline across the Baltic Sea for the export of 55 billion cubic metres of Russian gas to Europe. On a visit to Turkey last week, President Putin also discussed plans to extend the 1,213-km Blue Stream gas pipeline Russia has built across the Black Sea to Turkey to Italy.

The two projects will enable Russia to wield its energy clout against Ukraine with full force.

Putin hardens stand on disputed islands

Moscow is sticking to its position that Russia and Japan must first build strong trade and economic ties and then try and resolve the territorial dispute over four Southern Kuril Islands.

Vladimir Radyuhin

RESURGENT RUSSIA has hardened its position on a long-standing territorial dispute with Japan refusing to discuss ceding control even of some of the disputed islands as promised by the erstwhile Soviet Union.

On a visit to Tokyo on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said solution of the island problem "is unlikely to be easy," adding that the two sides "explained the logic of their positions to each other."

The Russian leader and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi signed 18 agreements on wide-ranging cooperation between the two countries but did not issue any statement concerning a territorial dispute.

Speaking after their talks, Mr. Koizumi said "a wide gap" remained between the two countries on the issue.

The territorial dispute over four Southern Kuril Islands has soured Russia-Japan relations for the past 60 years. Russia took possession of the islands at the end of the Second World War, which Japan fought on

the side of Nazi Germany. In 1956 Moscow and Tokyo signed a political declaration in which the Soviet Union agreed to return two smaller islands to Japan once the two countries conclude a post-Second World War peace treaty.

The treaty has never been signed, but in 1993 President Boris Yeltsin, who desperately wanted Japanese money to mitigate the catastrophic results of his economic reforms, signed another declaration with Japan in which Russia recognised the existence of a territorial dispute over the four Kuril Islands.

However, as Russia rebounded after Yeltsin rule, President Putin made it clear Moscow would not make any territorial concessions to Tokyo.

"The Kuril Islands are under the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, this is sealed in international law, it is the result of World War Two, and we are not going to discuss the matter," Mr. Putin said during a televised call-in question-and-answer session earlier this year.

Taken aback by Russia's new intractability Japan sought to revive an old Russian

proposal to engage in "joint economic activity" on the four islands. However, Russia has rebuffed the offer too.

Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso admitted the two sides did not discuss the issue. "One step forward may be to take a new approach with the suggestion of a project, in which we can see tangible results in the improvement of the islanders' lives," Mr. Aso said. "If such a project takes place, mutual trust could grow between the two countries as something said becomes a reality. But this isn't something that has been officially suggested [to Russia]."

Plan to develop local economy

After neglecting the Kuril Islands for many years Russia has assigned priority to strengthening its sovereignty over the islands and has approved multi-million allocations in next year's budget for developing local economy.

Mr. Putin is visiting Japan for the first time since 2000, even though he has toured the region every year. Moscow patiently waited for Tokyo to accept the Kremlin position that the two countries must first build

strong trade and economic ties and on that basis try and resolve the territorial dispute.

Because of the territorial dispute Japan has been reluctant to invest in Russia, accounting for less than 1 per cent of the nation's total foreign investment so far. However, with Russia emerging as a key source of energy contested by Asia's biggest energy consumers, Tokyo was finally forced to go along with the Russian formula for building bilateral ties.

During Mr. Putin's current visit the two sides have put the emphasis on economic relations, agreeing on a speedy construction of the first leg of a pipeline to bring Siberian oil to Japan. Japan has also agreed to invest in tapping new gas, oil and coal resources in Russia and in helping Russia to develop infrastructure projects in Siberia and the Far East.

At the same time, Moscow has sought to dispel any hopes in Tokyo for early shifts on the territorial dispute. Russia's Ambassador to Tokyo, Alexander Losyukov, was on record as stating that one should not expect any progress on the issue in the next 10 years.

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Kurile dispute eludes solution

HO-19 Russia @ 2/14
TOKYO: Japanese and Russian leaders on Monday failed to bridge the gap on the territorial disputes, but vowed to strengthen their cooperation in other fields including economy and energy.

Emerging from their two-hour meeting, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin said they agreed to boost bilateral cooperation and enhance mutual trust.

On the long-standing row over the transfer of a cluster of islands, they failed to reach a breakthrough, only saying they agreed to find a resolution acceptable to both countries.

Mr. Putin said he had invited Mr. Koizumi to visit Russia next year.

Before the press conference, the two sides signed 12 documents of cooperation covering

The two sides signed 12 documents of cooperation covering fronts from energy to anti-terrorism

fronts from energy to anti-terrorism.

The transfer of sovereignty related to the four islands off Japan's northern Hokkaido prefecture has been the primary stumbling block in the bilateral relations.

Differing views

The islands fell under the control of former Soviet Union at the end of the World War II. Citing a 1993 joint declaration, Japan insists that the Russia should turn over all islands prior to concluding a peace treaty.

Russia, however, sticks to a 1956 document with the peace treaty, which should come first and only two islands be returned.

Praise for ties

When asked if the discord would have negative impact on the economic cooperation, Mr. Koizumi just praised the economic relationship and expected the trade volume could breach \$10 billions this year.

Mr. Putin, however, said there is influence, but stressed that efforts should be made to reduce the impact.

Mr. Koizumi also pressed for an early agreement on building an oil pipeline from Russia's oil-rich Siberia to its Pacific coastal port to quench Tokyo's demand.

Mr. Putin arrived in Tokyo on Monday to pay a three-day visit. —Xinhua

Putin calls for resolving Kurile Islands dispute

Koizumi sceptical agreement can be reached at the summit

*Review
10-19-05
2/14*

TOKYO: Russian President Vladimir Putin called here on Sunday for a resolution of disputes with Japan as he sought more trade between the two countries whose ties have been hampered for 60 years over the status of four small islands.

Mr. Putin brought a delegation of 100 business leaders for his first trip to Japan in five years but few expect any breakthrough on four Kurile Islands off Japan's northern coast seized by Moscow in 1945.

The two countries have yet to sign a peace treaty formally ending World War II, but trade has been growing as Russia sorely needs Japanese investment in its Far East.

"I would like very much that in the coming years we could establish such relations as those whose foundations we have built these last few years," Mr. Putin said. But Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has expressed doubts that any agreement will come out of his summit with Mr. Putin, saying there was a "deep gulf" in views between the countries over the islands.

Russia also wants Japan to pay half of the \$16-billion price tag on an oil pipeline linking Siberian reserves to the Pacific, but Tokyo wants guarantees first that Japan will be the priority recipient. Japan will back Russia's bid to join the WTO and sign a deal to help dismantle Soviet era nuclear submarines. — AFP

Key issues at Tokyo summit

The shadow of a 60-year-old territorial dispute between Russia and Japan which has prevented the two nations from signing a formal peace treaty is likely to loom large during Vladimir Putin's three-day visit to Tokyo



▶ Kuril Islands dispute: Over four islands seized from Japan by Russia at the end of World War Two in 1945

▶ Oil pipelines: Japan wants Russia to build pipeline to Pacific coast, from where oil could be shipped to Japan — Beijing wants route to northern China

▶ Other key issues: North Korea's nuclear programme, Russia's hosting of G8 and accession to WTO, Japan's bid for seat on UN Security Council

Russian President Vladimir Putin



Japanese Premier Junichiro Koizumi



Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, wire agencies © GRAPHIC NEWS

Russia not planning new military ties in Asia

ASSOCIATED Press
Moscow, November 1

RUSSIAN DEFENCE Minister Sergei Ivanov rejected suggestions on Tuesday that recent joint manoeuvres with Chinese and Indian troops were intended to pave the way for a new military alliance in Asia.

The August exercise involving Russian and Chinese troops and last month's joint drills of Russian and Indian forces were intended to practice joint action against international terrorists and to showcase state-of-the-art Russian weapons to traditional customers, Ivanov told the daily Izvestia.

The exercises "didn't threaten interests of any third nation and didn't signal an intention to create a new military-political bloc in the region," Ivanov said.

The eight-day manoeuvres with 7,000 Chinese troops and 1,800 Russians underscored growing military ties between the former Cold War enemies, motivated by their common unease with US dominance in world affairs.

Moscow and Beijing, which dominate the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a regional security grouping that also includes four ex-Soviet Central Asian nations, have been increasingly uneasy about the U.S. Military presence in the resource-rich, strategically located region. In July, the SCO demanded a quick U.S. Withdrawal from their bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and later that month Uzbekistan handed the American forces a 180-day eviction notice.

Putin decision

President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that he will not change the Russian Constitution to enable himself to seek a third term in 2008, but vowed not to allow "destabilisation" in Russia following the vote, leaving the door open for drastic action in the event of a crisis. He did however hint vaguely of a continuing role for himself and said he would attempt to groom a successor. "I am not indifferent about whose hands the country that I have dedicated my whole life to ends up in," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

0 2 NOV 2005

“Russia wants widest possible agreement on U.N. Security Council expansion”

The Russians have been very circumspect on the issue of expanding the United Nations Security Council. **Andrei Denisov**, Permanent Representative of Russia to the United Nations, provides written responses to questions sent earlier.

Amit Baruah

What does Russia mean by “broad consensus” when it speaks of reform of the United Nations Security Council?

Of course, we would prefer to reach a consensus on such an important issue as the Security Council reform. But we understand that it's not realistic. That's why Russia consistently insists that the decision on the Security Council's enlargement should be based on the widest possible agreement. In our view, such an agreement envisages a more substantial political support for one or another decision rather than the legally required two-thirds of the votes. On this basis, we are ready to support any reasonable option of the Security Council's enlargement, including its expansion in both categories — of permanent and non-permanent members.

The last and only expansion of the Security Council in the non-permanent category took place by a General Assembly vote (1963) followed by ratification. Given the 191 members of the U.N. today, how is a “broad consensus” possible now?

We call for a continuation of consultations in order to reach the widest possible agreement. We are optimists and believe that it is possible to do so though, obviously, it will not be easy.

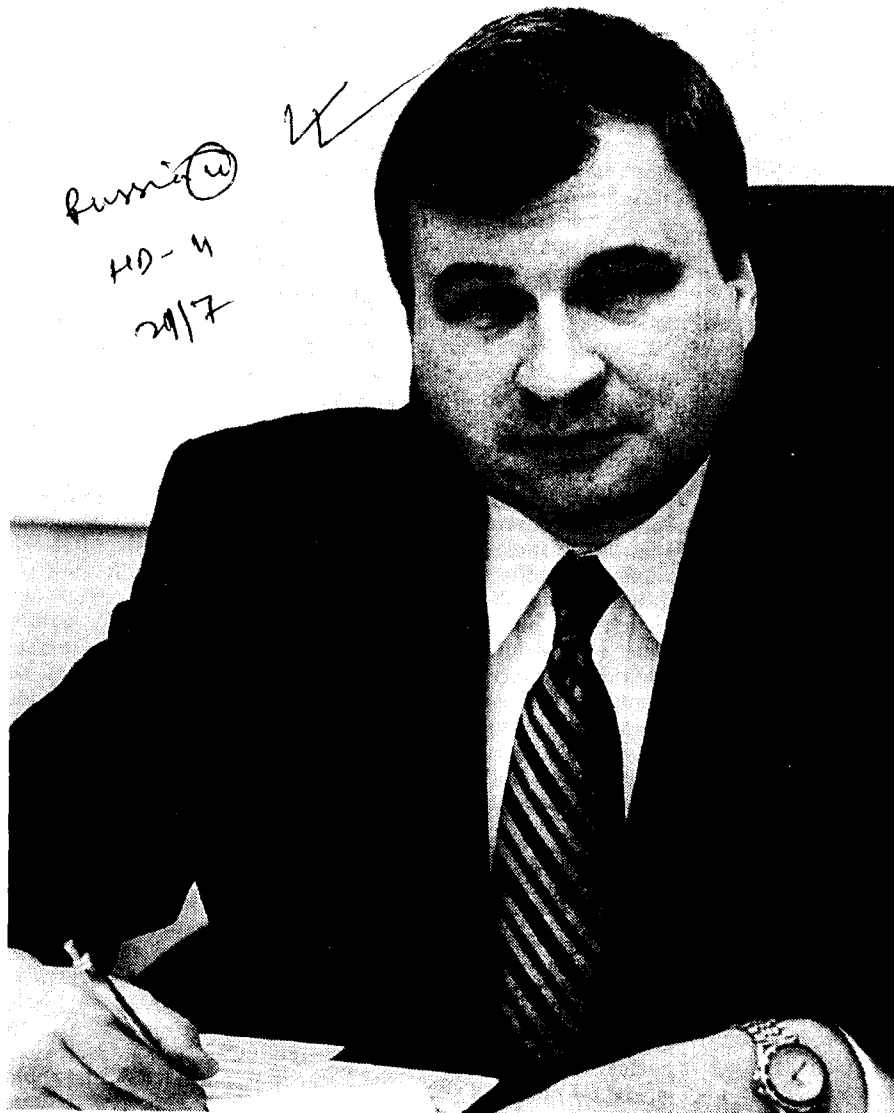
The voting in the General Assembly should not cause a split among the member states and should not lead, as a result, instead of strengthening, to the weakening of the United Nations and its Security Council, which is in nobody's interest.

Given the fact that the G-4 has virtually given up on the veto, what problems does Russia have with the draft resolution?

We believe that the reform of the Security Council should be based on a number of principles.

The task is to increase the representativity [representative character] and effectiveness of the Council's membership through the inclusion of major and influential developing states.

We are advocating the preservation of the compact size of the Security Council and insist that after enlargement the number of members in a new Security Council should not exceed a reasonable size (let us define it



Andrei Denisov ... “the voting on Council expansion should not cause a split.” — PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

as “20 Plus”) — making the Council more representative must not undermine its effectiveness. There should not be a *priori* granting of the veto right before a new composition of the Council is defined in case of a decision in favour of the Council's enlargement in both categories.

Russia has been a champion of India's case for permanent membership. Does Russia's current ambivalence advance India's cause?

The Russian Federation stands by its decision to support India's case for Security Council permanent membership provided

there is the widest possible agreement in favour of the Council's enlargement in both categories. This has always been our consistent position.

Does Russia have a problem with Japan's candidature for Council membership?

Russia is ready to support permanent membership of Japan in the new Security Council provided the Security Council's enlargement in both categories receives the widest possible agreement.

Are you coordinating positions on Council reform with the United States and China?

On such an important issue as the Council's reform we are in constant touch with all the main players, including other members of the “P-5,” including, of course, the U.S. and China, participants of the “Group of 4,” representatives of “Uniting for Consensus,” A.U. [African Union] and others. We are following the normal practice of consultations with all the interested parties.

What chances does the G-4 have in getting its resolution through the General Assembly?

It's very difficult to prognosticate. In this regard I would like to stress that those who advocate a speedy adoption of concrete decisions on such an important issue as the Security Council's reform bear serious responsibility.

They should calculate thoroughly all positive and negative aspects of their move, give a sober estimate of an actual level of support they enjoy in order to avoid pernicious consequences for the future of the U.N.

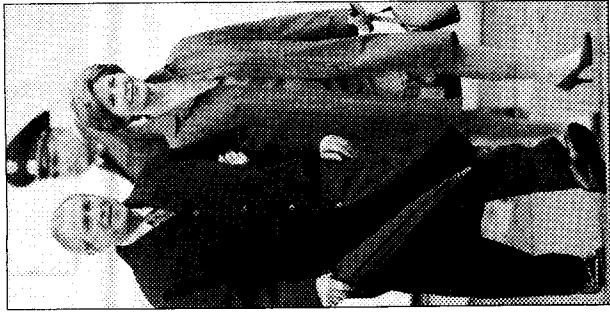
The U.S. has now suggested an expansion of “two or so” in the permanent category and “three or four” in the non-permanent category? Does Russia support the American position?

Provided the Security Council's enlargement in both categories receives the widest possible agreement Russia is ready to support permanent membership in the new Security Council of Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan, and of one or two African countries. In this context, we also see Egypt as a strong candidate for the permanent membership. As for the U.S. position, we are ready to discuss it provided [there is] a formation of a broad agreement in this regard.

1 JUL 2005

THE HINDU

Putin salutes war veterans



REUTERS
U.S. President George W. Bush and wife Laura arrive for a military parade in Red Square, Moscow, on Monday.

Moscow, May 9

THE RUSSIAN president, Vladimir Putin, on Monday paid solemn tribute to the huge wartime sacrifice of the Soviet Union as Russia held a lavish parade, attended by dozens of world leaders, marking the 60th anniversary of the allies' victory over Nazi Germany.

Putin, flanked by the US president, George Bush, the French president, Jacques Chirac, and the German chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, said his country would never forget the debt owed to the tens of millions of Soviet citizens who died to defeat Nazism.

"I bow low before all veterans of the great patriotic war," Putin said, describing May 9 1945 —

known as Victory Day in Russia — as "a day of victory of good over evil."

"The most cruel and decisive events unfolded on the territory of the Soviet Union. We know that the Soviet Union in those years lost tens of millions of its citizens. It obligates us to great responsibility and forces us to deeply recognise on what a ... precipice the world stood at that time, what monstrous consequences violence and moral intolerance, genocide and persecution of others, could lead to."

German troops never attacked the islands to recapture them. Instead, they waited until Germany had been defeated in Europe, and then allowed the occupying troops to surrender.

VICTORY DAY

troops. During the occupation, German currency was circulated, curfews imposed, radios confiscated and forbidden and the population issued with identity cards. Food was in short supply. The small Jewish population was deported to Nazi concentration camps, where some died. Other islanders were transported to Germany.

British troops never attacked the islands to recapture them. Instead, they waited until Germany had been defeated in Europe, and then allowed the occupying troops to surrender.

At the ceremony in Moscow,

white-haired veterans bedecked in medals and some waving red carnations drove down the cobble square in green trucks as the audience cheered. The event, full of Soviet imagery, began with four goose-stepping soldiers dressed in ceremonial green and gold embroidered uniforms carrying a red flag with a hammer and sickle. This was a replica of the banner of the red army's 150th rifle division.

War veterans from all over the world gathered near Lenin's tomb for the military parade featuring second world war-era tanks and MIG and Sukhoi jets, and then lay wreaths to honour fallen soldiers.

The Soviet Union lost an estimated 27 million people during

the conflict known in Russia as the great patriotic war. Putin, born after the war to parents who survived the 900-day Nazi blockade of Leningrad, now St Petersburg, has said that more than half of his relatives were killed. His older brother died of diphtheria and his mother was once almost given up for dead.

But the Moscow celebrations are also causing controversy, raising the ire of eastern European nations who see the end of the World War II as the beginning of their domination by Moscow. And they throw a spotlight on the precarious international position of Putin, who is facing increasing US criticism on his democratic record and is struggling in the face of growing

western influence in the former Soviet republics.

The leaders of two Baltic nations, Estonia and Lithuania, stayed away from today's event, angered by Putin's portrayal of the Soviet Union as a liberator despite decades of occupation.

Bush balanced his Moscow visit with a trip to the Baltic nation of Latvia, which he celebrated as a young democracy, and a planned stop tomorrow in Georgia, where a new pro-western leadership is seeking to shed Russian influence.

"It is a moment where the world will recognise the great bravery and sacrifice the Russian people made in the defeat of Nazism," Bush said.

The Guardian

Russian NGOs complain to Bush

Moscow, May 9

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush heard a litany of complaints on Monday from representatives of Russian non-government organizations on the difficulties they face because of government hostility.

Participants at the meeting said Bush told them he spoke to President Putin of concerns on human rights in Russia. Human rights activist Lyudmila Alexeyeva said she told Bush NGOs were accused of being unpatriotic if they accepted foreign funding, but this was their only choice. Private businesses that provided financing earlier would not help groups unpopular with the government after the state's assault on the oil empire of tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, whose Yukos firm supported NGOs.

Russian guest list reflects multipolar world vision

Moscow, May 9

THE LIST of guests invited by Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the 60th anniversary of the allied victory over Nazi Germany in World War II reflects the Kremlin's vision of a multipolar world in post-Cold War era, in which India has a major role to play, Kremlin sources said.

"The Moscow Victory Day celebrations are not only the formal recognition of the victors and vanquished, but also the reflection of the contours of a rapidly emerging new global multipolar world order, which would be incomplete without India playing an important role as a major Asian power." In this context, President Putin's invitation to Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh is logical, the Kremlin sources said. At first glance, most of the 58 originally invited heads of state and government represent the nations, which were either in the allied camp or Nazi Axis during the World War II.

However, they can be broadly classified as the permanent members of the UN Security Council including China, members of the Group of 7 of the most industrialised democracies, members of the European Union and the former Soviet republics. In this classification, India stands alone and this signifies the importance given to it by Russia in the modern geopolitical calculus.

PTI

Communists honour Stalin

Moscow, May 9

SOVIET DICTATOR Josef Stalin's increasing popularity was on full view on Monday as around 7,000 communists commemorated the end of World War II in their own way, out of sight of US President George W. Bush, whose red carpet welcome by Russian President Vladimir Putin they condemned.

Activists and war veterans, many in threadbare clothes bedecked with World War II medals, waved banners and portraits of the moustachioed Soviet leader Stalin.

"Glory to Stalin, glory to the communists, glory to the Soviet people," read one huge banner. "Each person is duty bound to kill a NATO occupant," read another, adding, "We defeated fascism — we will defeat Zionism."

AFP



AP
Russian President Vladimir Putin kisses First Lady Laura Bush (L), while George W. Bush kisses Ludmila Putin (R) during a welcome ceremony in Moscow on Monday.

Russia bolsters role in West Asia

President Putin has shown that despite its limited resources Moscow will not let Washington define the political landscape of West Asia.

Vladimir Radyuhin

RUSSIA HAS returned as a key player in West Asia following President Vladimir Putin's historic visit to the region last week.

During a three-day tour of West Asia, Mr. Putin paid the first ever visit by a Russian or Soviet leader to Israel and Palestine and the first such visit to Egypt in the past 40 years.

Mr. Putin stepped right on to American turf and challenged the position the United States enjoyed as the chief power broker in West Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union 14 years ago.

The Russian President announced that the Middle East Quartet, which includes the U.S., Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations, would meet in Moscow on May 8 on the sidelines of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. He also proposed holding a Middle East peace conference in Moscow in the coming autumn and vowed to push his plan even after Israel and the U.S. rejected it.

'Honest broker'

Russia "will play as active a role [in peace-making between Israel and Palestine] as the parties involved will want it to play," Mr. Putin said in an interview before the visit. Mr. Putin's visits projected Russia's new image of an "honest broker" in contrast to the U.S., which is seen as heavily tilted towards Israel.

In recent years, Russia has built close ties with Israel while retaining strong support for the Arabs. Mr. Putin said his visit to Israel, where emigrants from the former Soviet Union make up a quarter of the population, had "turned over a new page" in bilateral relations. Russia, which did not have diplomatic relations with Israel during the Cold War, today has the same tradeover with it as with India and exports hundreds of millions of dollars worth of diamonds and oil products to that country. Israel is keen on extending cooperation with Russia to space exploration and to getting Russian gas supplies.

Mr. Putin signed a military-technical cooperation accord with Israel, but at the same time stood firm on Russia arms supplies to Syria and promised military hardware to Palestine. He brushed away Israeli objections to the delivery of anti-aircraft missiles to Damascus, arguing that the close-range Strelts missiles would not change the military balance in the region, but would make it "more difficult [for Israeli aircraft] to make low-altitude flights over



EXTENDING HELP: Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah. - PHOTO: REUTERS

the Syrian President's residence."

Mr. Putin promised to give helicopters and communication equipment to the Palestinian Authority, and to train Palestinian security personnel.

Moscow also proposed supplying 50 armoured vehicles to Palestine, and although Israel said it would not let the vehicles through, Russian officials said the talks would continue.

"If we expect Chairman [Mahmoud] Abbas to fight terrorism effectively, he can't do it with slingshots and stones. We must understand this," Mr. Putin said in Ramallah. He also promised Russian aid in rebuilding the Gaza Strip after Israel withdraws from the territory this summer.

Russia was the first member of the quartet of nations Mr. Abbas visited earlier this year after being elected the new head of the Pal-

estine National Administration.

Fruitful visit

Mr. Putin's visit to Egypt proved by far the most productive. Russia has moved to revive extensive economic and military ties the Soviet Union had built with the regional superpower. Mr. Putin became the first Russian leader to visit Egypt after Nikita Khrushchev, who in 1964 inaugurated the Aswan High Dam, a Soviet-built hydropower project that irrigated huge masses of arable land and met 80 per cent of Egypt's electricity needs at that time.

After long years of stagnation commercial ties between Russia and Egypt are growing again. Bilateral trade doubled last year, and while it still stands at a low level of \$834 million the potential is very big. Mr. Putin discussed the construction of nuclear power

facilities, and the supply of MiG fighter planes to Egypt. In a joint declaration, the two sides stated that "relations between Russia and Egypt have scaled new heights of strategic partnership in recent years."

Mr. Putin's tour of West Asia has crowned a string of Russian diplomatic successes in the region in recent years, which included rapprochement with Saudi Arabia during the first-ever visit, in 2003, by a Saudi leader to Moscow, and the resumption of close ties with Syria following President Bashar al-Assad's talks in Moscow earlier this year. Russia's opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq has won a lot of respect in the Arab world. Mr. Putin has reasserted Russia's traditional role as a counterweight to U.S. diplomacy and showed that despite its limited resources Moscow will not let Washington define the political landscape of the region.

Putin hardens line on Iran nuclear programme

Reuters
Jerusalem, April 28

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin, hardening his line towards Iran's nuclear programme, said on Thursday Tehran needed to do more to assure the world it was not trying to build atomic weapons.

At a news conference in Jerusalem, Putin said Tehran's agreement to return spent nuclear fuel to Russia — which agreed to supply the material to Iran's Bushehr plant — "does not seem to be enough."

He said that in addition, the Iranians should "abandon all technology to create a full nuclear cycle and not ob-

struct their nuclear sites from international control".

Iran has long denied accusations it is secretly seeking nuclear arms and has received strong backing from Putin, who sees cooperation with the Islamic Republic as a way to strengthen Russia's role in the Middle East.

In February, Moscow and Tehran signed the fuel supply deal long opposed by Washington, which believes Iran could use Russian know-how to make nuclear weapons.

On the eve of his visit to Israel, the first by a Kremlin leader, Putin proposed hosting a Middle East peace conference in Moscow later this year.

The offer was swiftly rejected as pre-

mature by Israel and the US. Israeli Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said on Channel One television that Putin did not raise the proposal in talks with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

After greeting Putin in Russian, Sharon said: "I am certain this meeting will deepen the relations between Israel and Russia."

Kharrazi threat

Meanwhile, Iran threatened to restart its uranium enrichment programme if talks with European Union heavyweight France, Britain and Germany fail on Friday.

"If there is no agreement and nego-

tiations collapse, there is no choice but to restart the programme," foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi said in The Hague after talks with his Dutch counterpart Bernard Bot.

Iran is due to hold talks in London on Friday with Britain, France and Germany, who share Washington's suspicions that Iran may be planning to develop nuclear arms and want Iran to give up uranium enrichment in return for incentives such as trade deals.

Iran insists its nuclear ambitions are limited to the peaceful generation of electricity and says uranium enrichment is a sovereign right it will never renounce. Four months of talks have not changed Tehran's position.



Russian President Vladimir Putin in Egypt.

29 APR 2005

Russia

Old ghosts

Putin seeks an identity

SFB
25/4

President Vladimir Putin cannot have his cake and eat it. In his annual state of the nation address he said that encouraging democracy was the main task before Russia, yet at the same time characterised the end of the totalitarian Soviet system as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. Incidentally, an annual state of the union address by the President is an American institution that the Russians have adopted. But Putin's statement that Russia will move towards democracy at its own pace is a coded response to Western, chiefly American complaints that he is becoming too authoritarian. Of course, Washington is used to citing human rights and civil liberties selectively, whenever it suits what are perceived to be its strategic interests. But it is also the case that Putin is taking Russia in a direction away from, rather than towards democracy — with his replacement of provincial elections by appointments from above, crack-down on media freedoms and harsh handling of the Chechens.

His foreign policy record has been spotty lately, down on the wrong side in case of the "velvet revolution" in Ukraine. Rather than Russia being able to halt processes of change in Ukraine, talks now are about whether a velvet revolution could happen in Russia itself, and Putin himself appeared to broach the possibility. He said testily that any "illegal" attempts to provoke unrest would be crushed. Simultaneously, he appeared to give a nod to liberal values, when he spoke of the public's right to information on whether the state should provide a social safety net. His remarks appear to be intended both to reassure his listeners that Russia is evolving towards Western-style reforms, and keep the investment dollars coming, while making suitable gestures towards nationalistic and "great power" rhetoric.

29 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Russia, NATO sign status of forces pact

Both sides hail agreement; legal, financial terms laid down

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: Russia and NATO signed an accord facilitating joint military training and transit of troops through each other's territory.

The Status of Forces Agreement, signed at a Russia-NATO Council meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Thursday, lays down legal and financial terms for the temporary deployment of armed forces for training operations, emergencies and transit.

Both sides hailed the accord as a milestone for Russia-NATO cooperation that lays a legal basis for joint military training, peace-keeping and anti-terrorist operations, as well as for transit of NATO troops to Afghanistan.

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Alexander Yakovenko, warned that relations with NATO might change for the worse if NATO invited members of the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to join the alliance. Four CIS states, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan, said they would seek NATO membership.

Target set

AP reports from Vilnius:

NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to boost military and political cooperation with the pro-Western government in Ukraine on Thursday, prompting the former Soviet republic to set 2008 as a target for joining the military alliance.

Meeting for the first time on the territory of the former Soviet Union, NATO ministers pledged to help Ukraine with reforms de-



JOINING FORCES: The French Foreign Minister, Michel Barnier (left), the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice (centre), and other leaders during a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission in Vilnius on Thursday.

- PHOTO: AP

signed to prepare it for joining the alliance, but they stopped short of committing to membership.

Dr. Rice said the decision "raises NATO's cooperation with Ukraine to a new level."

Ukraine's Foreign Minister, Borys Tarasuyk, welcomed NA-

TO's move as launching "a new chapter" in his country's relations with NATO. He said his country would now push forward changes to meet alliance standards.

"Ukraine may be ready to fulfill this ambitious programme of reforms in, let us say, three

years' time, so by the year 2008," Mr. Tarasuyk told a news conference.

Reforms

Some NATO Ministers suggested the date was optimistic, given the reforms that Ukraine needs to implement to underpin

democracy and overhaul its bloated military. After expanding deep into Eastern Europe last year to include Lithuania and the other Baltic states, NATO turned its attention further east, holding separate talks with Tarasuyk and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov.

THE HINDU

22 APR 2005

RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS

Handicapped By The Absence Of A Strategic Goal

By SERGEI KARAGANOV

Although the next Russia-EU summit will only be held on 10 May in Moscow, it was at the top of the agenda during the European quartet conference of Russia, France, Germany and Spain in Paris in mid-March. The EU commissioners for trade and external affairs recently visited Moscow, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has met with his three counterparts from the former, current and future EU presiding countries.

This is certainly encouraging, but a sense of disquiet remains. Russia and the EU do not have a strategic view of the goal of their dialogue. Brussels' dialogue with Moscow has been made subordinate to bureaucratic interests and inertia. Russia does not yet have such bureaucracy and so it is doomed, in the absence of a strategic goal, to cede positions and make concessions that are frequently not simply unprofitable but also detrimental.

Senseless concessions

For example, incompetence led to Russia's defeat at the talks on Kaliningrad, and now Russians have to apply for visas to get from one part of their country to another, and transit fees have skyrocketed.

These losses remind me of the late Gorbachov or early Yeltsin/Kozyrev periods: the country is still paying for their incompetent policy of surrender with unjustified suspicions of the West and a feeling of being cheated. In fact, we cheated ourselves.

Unfortunately, there is a possibility of more senseless concessions. The Russian political elite believes that Russia-EU relations are in a hidden crisis. There is no long-term constructive agenda for bilateral relations, and differences in Russian and European political values are becoming glaring.

The situation is complicated because the EU, which does not have a strategy regarding Russia,

The author is the presidium chairman of the Russian Council for Foreign and Defence Policy

is pressing for unilateral concessions for its member states or market entities. It is haggling over tens or hundreds of million euros, which are sometimes crucial for Russia, while its subsidies to the agriculture of member states run into a hundred billion euros.

Moreover, it seems that the

centre of weakness, finding itself in isolation from which its tsars and general secretaries pulled it at such a high cost.

To make up for the conceptual vacuum in Russia-EU relations, the sides invented the "four spaces" — economic cooperation; freedom, security and justice; external security; and research,



EU, which has a vague position on its common foreign and security policy, has chosen the CIS as the arena for building it up. While Russia was fighting a real or mythical American challenge during the presidential election in Ukraine, the EU representatives quietly entered the scene and tackled the conflict that developed during the last stage of the election campaign.

Conceptual vacuum

There is another challenge to Russia and its relations with Europe. In the wake of the Ukrainian election, it has become apparent that all western republics of the former Soviet Union will sooner or later join Nato and thereby enter the zone of EU attraction in a few years.

This may create a potential threat to Russia, which can turn from a centre of power into a

education and culture.

We can sign the relevant documents, if there is nothing better on the table, but there is a danger of a sense of complacency developing in bilateral relations, which will inevitably lead to new disappointments. For example, these four spaces can be used to demand more concessions from Russia (such attempts have been made before).

It is particularly worrying that the Russian negotiators have been set the task to sign the agreements on the four spaces at the Russia-EU summit this May. Our European partners have not been set this goal, which puts the Russian negotiators in a weak position. Unless Moscow abandons this goal, we will repeat the story of the 1997 Nato-Russia Founding Act, when President Yeltsin ordered his diplomats to sign the document that gave the

green light to Nato expansion. And now the Kremlin cannot protest even if Ukraine or Georgia join the bloc.

Another danger of the agreements on the four spaces is that they do not entail signing a new fundamental treaty on Russia-EU relations, while the old, imperfect and obsolete Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 1994 will expire in 2007. But it can be prolonged, leaving the sides with nothing more than the pleasant-sounding but legally and politically senseless spaces.

Different EU

Russia must determine what it wants. Does it want to become Europe (though not quite an ordinary one) and be with Europe? Or does it want to remain alone, with a growing population and share in the global GDP? If it opts for going together with Europe, it should encourage the EU to determine what it wants of Russia, and probably even raise the strategic question of admission to the organisation, though it will be a new and different Russia and a different EU. This self-determination will help elaborate a vector of internal development for Russia.

Russia has far fewer experts on the EU than the smaller countries in Europe, even though Europe accounts for half of Russia's trade, tourism and business. To remedy this situation, we should draft a priority programme for training EU experts.

There is also a crucial issue of initiative: Russia should start drafting a treaty to replace the 1994 PCA, precluding the development of a legal and political vacuum camouflaged by "spaces" and avoiding a habitual situation where Moscow would have to edit the text drafted in Brussels. The agreements on the four spaces can be signed but without making any concessions, and when they are ready and not at a set date. And, lastly, the spaces should not replace a new treaty but become a stage in its elaboration.

20 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Russia, Iran sign nuclear deal

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, FEB. 27. Russia and Iran signed a nuclear fuel repatriation agreement today paving the way to starting up Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr.

The deal signed by Russia's nuclear energy chief, Alexander Rumyantsev, and the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, provides for the return of all spent nuclear fuel to Russia precluding any risk of Iran diverting the material to a weapons programme, which was the main U.S. objection to the construction by Russia of the \$1-billion Bushehr reactor.

Within three months of today's signing, Russia will supply 90 tonnes of enriched uranium needed to launch the reactor early next year.

After about a decade of use, Iran will have to send the spent fuel back to a storage facility in Siberia. The fuel deal came three days after the U.S. and Russian Presidents, George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia,

agreed that Iran should not be allowed to build nuclear weapons.

Washington has recently toned down its criticism of the Bushehr reactor project satisfied that Russia will not give any fuel until Iran agrees to return all its spent fuel. A week ago Mr. Putin told the visiting head of Iran's Supreme National Security

Council, Hassan Rowhani, that Moscow was satisfied Iran had no intention to build nuclear arms and vowed to continue nuclear energy and defence cooperation with Teheran.

He also promised to visit Iran later this year. Russian officials said they were considering an Iranian proposal to build a second nuclear reactor at Bushehr.

The A.Q. Khan link

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 27. Fresh allegations have surfaced that Iran may have bought nuclear designs and materials from the infamous A.Q. Khan network some two decades ago with the meeting in Dubai in 1987 seen as not only kick-starting Teheran's efforts but also using the notorious black marketing ring's offer as a "guide" to buy some of the "pricier" items elsewhere, according to a report in *The Washington Post*.

Quoting foreign diplomats and American officials, *The Post* says international investigators have uncovered evidence of a secret meeting between Iranian officials and associates of the Pakistani scientist that resulted in a written offer to supply Iran with the makings of a nuclear weapons programme. That first meeting in Dubai was when Iran was at war with Iraq and Teheran bought centrifuge designs and a starter kit for uranium enrichment.

THE HINDU

28 FEB 2005

Putin stands firm

By Vladimir Radyuhin

Russia (V)
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Mr. Putin has positioned Russia as too valuable a U.S. partner in security, non-proliferation, and energy for Mr. Bush to turn his back on him.

THE MAIN result of the meeting in Bratislava on February 24 between the Russian and U.S. Presidents, Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush, is that the two leaders pledged to maintain during their second presidential term the positive agenda they set for bilateral relations over the past four years: cooperation on terrorism, security, non-proliferation, and energy.

The constructive tone of the Russian-American summit, the first since Mr. Bush's re-election last November, was a victory for the Russian leader considering the enormous pressure that has recently built up in the United States to punish Russia for its "neo-imperialist" foreign policy and for "rolling back of democracy" inside the country.

When the Republican administration took over from the Democrats in 2001 its first move was to downgrade relations with Russia and disband the joint economic commission headed by the U.S. Vice-President and the Russian Prime Minister. It took Mr. Putin nearly a year to unfreeze bilateral ties.

As Mr. Bush embarked on his second term, storm clouds gathered again on the Russian-American horizon. Mr. Putin's moves to consolidate power at home and his increasingly assertive foreign policy driven by Russia's economic revival have provoked the most virulent anti-Russian campaign in the West since the end of the Cold War. Western media compared Mr. Putin to Mussolini and Hitler, and accused him of rebuilding a totalitarian empire in the former Soviet Union.

The U.S. President has been under tremendous pressure from both Democrats and Republicans to get tough with the Russian leader and a number of U.S. senators demanded that Russia be excluded from the Group of Eight.

Yet, the meeting did not produce any backslide in Russian-American ties. Mr. Bush emerged from the two-and-a-half hour meeting with Mr. Putin saying they had a "very important and constructive" dialogue and "produced a lot of positive results."

Russia secured a crucial U.S. pledge to help it join the World Trade Organisation this year itself. The two leaders agreed to work together on international measures to protect nuclear material and to share information on how best to improve security at nuclear facilities to "counter the evolving terrorist threats." A separate agreement was signed on the sidelines to enhance control over shoulder-fired ground-to-air missiles.

Both Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin said

they reached agreement on most other issues discussed, including a pledge to work to prevent Iran and North Korea from acquiring nuclear arms.

"The common ground is a lot more than those areas where we disagree," Mr. Bush said summing up the talks.

A great deal of this common ground is to be found in a joint statement on energy cooperation, which is a key to understanding the success of the summit. Russian oil was easily the biggest single factor that swayed Mr. Bush in favour of continuing a cooperative relationship with Moscow.

The U.S. has long been eyeing Russian energy resources. Back in 2002 Yukos, then Russia's biggest private oil company, planned to sell a controlling 44 per cent share to either ExxonMobil or ChevronTexaco and use the proceeds to finance the construction of a \$4-billion pipeline from Russia's western Siberian oil fields to Murmansk, a northern port capable of sending super tankers directly to America. The U.S. was looking to sourcing more than 13 per cent of its oil supplies from Russia in order to ease its dependence on the increasingly volatile Middle East.

Mr. Putin, who pushed to reassert state control over the energy sector, wrecked the plan. The Yukos head, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, was arrested last year on charges of fraud and tax evasion, and his main production unit, Yuganskneftegaz, was confiscated by the state in December in partial settlement of a multi-billion back-tax bill slapped on Yukos.

Meanwhile, Russia, which currently exports the bulk of its oil and gas to Europe, has turned to the East to diversify its energy export routes. In December, Moscow announced plans to build a 50-million-tonne oil pipeline from Eastern Siberia to the Pacific port of Nakhodka from where crude will be shipped to Japan and Korea. Simultaneously, Russia pledged strategic energy partnership with China and India. Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar visited Moscow just two days before the Putin-Bush summit to win Russia's support for multi-billion-dollar Indian investment in the Russian energy sector.

This scramble for Russian oil threatened to leave the U.S. out in the cold. In Bratislava Mr. Bush readily traded off a pledge he made two days earlier in Brussels to put "demo-

cratic reform at the heart of our dialogue with Russia" for a piece of the Russian oil pie.

The joint statement issued by the Russian and U.S. Presidents described energy cooperation as "one of the most promising areas of Russian-American relations." The document called for "increased Russian oil and gas imports to U.S. markets," the construction of the Murmansk pipeline, and the launch of several joint energy projects, including an oil pipeline and LNG production, by 2008. By recalling at the post-summit press conference the sale of a Russian Government stake in the LukOil giant to U.S. Coconophlips, a deal he personally approved last year, Mr. Putin made it clear that any American penetration of the Russian energy sector will be under Kremlin control.

Mr. Bush has accepted the new rules of the game. Within hours of the Bratislava summit a U.S. court in Houston, Texas, passed the long-awaited ruling on a Yukos plea against the expropriation of its Yuganskneftegaz unit. The court refused to hear the case in the U.S. thereby sealing the Russian Government's victory in the battle for control of Russia's biggest private oil company.

While the timing of the court ruling may be accidental it underlined the fact that over the past four-five years Russia has become too important a global player for Washington to ignore or alienate Moscow, especially at a time when the U.S. is deeply mired in Iraq. Mr. Putin has positioned Russia as too valuable a U.S. partner in security, non-proliferation and energy for Mr. Bush to turn his back on him.

With Russia's economy rebounding on the oil revenue windfall, Mr. Putin is far less susceptible to U.S. pressure than his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, was. Mr. Putin firmly rebuffed Mr. Bush's expression of "concerns about Russia's commitment in fulfilling these universal principles [of democracy]," even if in the U.S. President's own words he "did so in a constructive and friendly way."

Addressing a joint press conference with Mr. Bush, Mr. Putin stated that "the principles of democracy should be adequate to the current status of the development of Russia, to our history and our traditions," and that the advent of democracy

should not come in such a way that it is "accompanied by the collapse of the state and the impoverishment of the people" — a clear reference to the chaotic rule of Mr. Yeltsin, whose democratic credentials the West never questioned.

"I'm absolutely confident that democracy is not anarchy. It is not a possibility to do anything you want. It is not the possibility for anyone to rob your own people," Mr. Putin said.

In the run-up to the Bratislava summit, Mr. Putin paraded his independent foreign policy by offering to sell arms to Syria, branded by Washington a "sponsor of terrorism," and supporting Iran in its nuclear row with the U.S.

Russia also announced plans to hold a massive joint military exercise with China on Chinese territory in 2005 involving troops, submarines and strategic bombers. The first ever joint war games sparked fears in Washington that Russia and China could be on the way to forming a military alliance. While such an alliance seems a remote possibility at present, Mr. Putin sent a signal to the U.S. that he is prepared to play the China card if Washington continued its zero-sum game for influence in the former Soviet Union.

It was one area of Russian-American relations that was not mentioned — at least publicly — at the Bratislava summit in a sign that the sides probably failed to come to any agreement on this divisive issue.

True to his newly declared crusade to plant American-type freedom globally, Mr. Bush predicted in a speech in Bratislava ahead of his meeting with Mr. Putin that "democratic revolutions" the U.S. helped engineer in Georgia and Ukraine will march across the rest of Russia's ex-Soviet backyard. He specifically mentioned Belarus, Russia's closest military and economic ally. Time will show if this was a gesture to accommodate neo-liberal fundamentalists in the U.S. or the guiding principle of Mr. Bush's second term.

U.S. meddling in the former Soviet states poses the biggest threat to cooperative relations between Moscow and Washington. The future of these relations will ultimately depend on whether Moscow can convince Washington that a strong Russia serves U.S. interests best and is the most reliable guarantee of stability in the Eurasian region.

The Bratislava summit gave some ground for guarded optimism on this score. It showed that the Bush administration put energy and security issues above its concerns for democracy in this part of the world.

Putin toes US terror line, spurns democracy advice

Associated Press
Bratislava (Slovakia), February 24

PRESIDENTS GEORGE W. Bush and Vladimir Putin agreed on Thursday on new efforts to keep nuclear arms out of dangerous hands, but their sharp differences over Russian backsliding on democracy spilled into an open and sometimes-prickly exchange.

Seeking common ground with a former Cold War enemy that is now a key anti-terror partner, Bush said the two leaders stressed agreements over differences. Standing side by side, their answers to questions about US concerns that Putin is moving to solidify central power and quash dissent showed the sensitivity of the topic. "It's important all nations understand the great values inherent in democracy — rule of law and protection of minorities, viable political debate," Bush said. "And when I brought that — Vladimir can speak for himself on this issue. All I can tell you is he said, 'Yes meant yes when we talked about values that we share'."

Putin said, "Russia has made its choice in favour of democracy. This is our final choice and there's no way back, there can be no return to what we used to have. We're not going to make up, to invent any kind of special Russian democracy. We are going to commit to the fundamental principles that have been established in the world."

As the leaders met for two hours at a medieval castle overlooking the snow-covered capital and the Danube River,



REACHING OUT George W. Bush with Vladimir Putin in Bratislava on Thursday. AFP

aides inked an agreement designed to counter conventional and nuclear terrorism, in part by restricting the availability of shoulder-fired missiles capable of bringing down aircraft. Bush said they

were in unison on the importance of stopping suspected nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and Iran. "We agreed Iran should not have a nuclear weapon." Putin did not address the topic.

Iran N-plan OK: Putin

Associated Press
Moscow, February 18

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin said on Friday that Moscow would continue its nuclear cooperation with Iran and that he was convinced Tehran did not intend to develop atomic weapons.

Iran's nuclear programme is likely to be one of the top issues when Putin and President Bush meet on Thursday in Slovakia.

Moscow has helped Iran build a nuclear reactor, a project that has been heavily criticised by the United States, which fears it could be used to help Tehran develop atomic weapons.

"The spread of nuclear weapons on the planet does not aid security, it does not strengthen security. The latest steps from Iran confirm that Iran does not intend to produce nuclear weapons and we will continue to develop relations in all spheres, including the peaceful use of nuclear energy," Putin said at a meeting with Iranian National Security Council chief Hassan Rowhani.

Putin's statement indicated that the chance of agreement with Washington on Iran is minimal. "We hope that Iran will strictly adhere to all international agreements, in relation to Russia and the international community," Putin said. He also said Iran's leadership had invited him to visit, and he accepted.

A Russian analyst questioned whether Putin's statement was based on actual information or on expediency. "To my mind, it's hard to find arguments to support Putin's declaration," said Anton Khlopkov, director of the PIR Center, which studies weapons issues. He noted "Iran is potentially an important strategic partner for Russia ... (with) a whole series of coinciding interests."

Russia's nuclear chief is expected in Iran next week to sign a protocol on returning spent nu-



Vladimir Putin with Iranian nuclear chief Hassan Rowhani in Moscow on Friday.

AFP

clear fuel to Russia, the only remaining obstacle to the launch of the Russian-built reactor. If the signing goes ahead as planned February 26, it would pave the way for the deliveries of Russian nuclear fuel for the Bushehr reactor, which is set to begin operating in early 2006.

The protocol is aimed at reducing concerns that Iran could reprocess spent nuclear fuel from the \$800 million Bushehr reactor to extract plutonium, which could be used in nuclear weapons. Moscow says that having Iran ship spent nuclear fuel back to Russia, along with international monitoring, will make any such project impossible. Rowhani acknowledged the international community has long expressed concern about Iran's nuclear program, "but now, no one can doubt that Iran's nuclear program has a peaceful character."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2005

Russia's foreign policy challenges

By Dmitry Kosyrev

Russia has not yet learnt to convert its economic successes into political influence abroad.

AT LEAST two critical sets of problems for Russia's foreign policy this year are also in India's sphere of interests or geographically close to it: Iran and Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan.

Both knots relate to the situation in which Russian diplomacy found itself last winter — that of a sudden challenge, if not the need to defend itself against a surprise attack. This was particularly sensed in relations with Europe, and, to a lesser degree, with the United States.

Russia has no problems with Iran. But this country remains the main apple of discord between Moscow and Washington, which has been noticeable in all recent contacts between the Russian and American leaderships. Of course, American accusations that Iran sponsors terrorism and is developing nuclear weapons are of a kind with the charges levelled against Iraq and since proved false. America faces the problem of, without losing face, catching up with the Europeans, Russians, Indians and others for whom Iran is a partner. Russia must find out how to help America solve the issue without Iran turning into the next Iraq. The challenge for Russia is avoiding conflict with the U.S. while protecting its own economic and political interests in Iran and the Middle East, and South Asia, interests that coincide with India's.

Central Asia poses a slightly different challenge. With anti-Russia forces coming to power in Georgia and Ukraine (which remain economically tethered to Russia), Moscow wants to ensure that the experience of the "street" seizing power is not repeated on another flank. This concern could be seen from its nervous response to events around the elections in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in late February.

An "orange revolution" in a Muslim state could lead to chaos and a threat to the stability of a whole region that is important for Russia. The problem is how Russia can join forces with its allies (China, India and others) not so much to maintain the current regimes in Central Asia as to set up viable political systems there that can guarantee peace and development. This should be done to pre-empt American or European "fans of freedom."

Putting forward an alternative to Western recipes for political arrangements in Asia is no laughing matter. In other words, Moscow's Asia policy is unexpectedly both a continuation

and a reflection of its European-American policy. In both cases, not only Russia but also its neighbours will have to display diplomatic adroitness and toughness at one and the same time to protect their interests. Russia's foreign policy in the past few months has made this absolutely clear. It has demonstrated both its strength and weakness. A remarkable episode occurred during a recent news conference held by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. "We have reached a level of trust when we can ask each other all sorts of questions and get answers to them," was how the Minister responded to questions about frequent criticism rebounding between Moscow and Washington. Yes, hitting the right tone in dialogue with the most influential power in the world and maintaining it is an achievement. But how necessary is it? Herein lies one of the key problems of the foreign policy of a country with most of its territory in Asia, and most of its population in Europe, a country that has retained the status of the world's second-largest nuclear power and is quickly regaining its economic might, but has to work against great odds to claim a global role that corresponds to the vision of the Russian voters.

Many of Moscow foreign policy's complications are rooted in the fact that Russia and its electorate not only want to but potentially can play an independent role in the world, the role of a power forming the global order. On top of anything else, this struggle for a place of honour on the world stage is on in an unprecedented epoch — of change that is bound to realign all forces. New powers, first China and then India, will come to the fore in the world economy and then the polity in the next few years. Experts, including those from Goldman and Sachs or the authors of a recent CIA report, are debating who will follow. Some name Brazil and Russia, others Indonesia.

And while, for example, the European Union as a whole and European powers individually lack the flexibility and freedom to choose options — thereby meaning they statically watch novices ascend and then adapt themselves to these changes — Russia is in a different position. This position is both more enviable and more complex. Russia's geographical

range, rapid economic growth, and much else are tempting it with a multitude of choices in foreign policy. But this is an extremely hard game to play, and creates complications both at home and abroad.

The key factor here is the country's limited potential. Russia has only just understood that its role in the world has changed. "A steadily growing economy no doubt boosts Russia's international standing," Mr. Lavrov said at the same news conference. "Today we have more scope for developing not only political dialogue with other countries, but also bolstering this dialogue with specific economic and investment cooperation projects."

The economic results of 2004 — economic growth posted more than 7 per cent — are impressive, although bureaucrats hoped for more and fear a slowdown this year.

On the one hand, the country's federal budget last year had a surplus of \$25 billion, and the Stabilisation Fund — a reserve for future economic projects — was built up to about \$20 billion. Last year, Russia, after cutting back its sovereign debt by one-third since 1999, increased its gold and hard currency reserves by nearly 70 per cent (they are approaching the \$120 billion mark). Such record figures were not reported even in the Soviet era.

Lastly, the International Monetary Fund debt was paid off in late January. Now Russia is free to become a creditor itself within the IMF, attracting all the classic accusations of the organisation's debtors.

However, its gross domestic product, which amounted to about \$613 billion, was too dependent on oil exports. The country has become wealthier, its per capita GDP has risen to \$4,000, but it has failed to become a large world exporter in anything but oil and gas. Moscow's export and foreign trade potentialities are so far centred on energy — oil and gas supplies and construction of conventional and nuclear power plants — and also include potential for the export of military and civilian technologies. This is an improvement on the past, but not enough for a key role in the world.

This is why too many of Russia's foreign policy successes are ephemeral. Yes, the ability to talk to America

and other powers as their equal is an achievement, but it does not compensate for Russia's very small percentages of foreign trade with the U.S. and most other countries. It may be recalled that reciprocal caution displayed by the two main powers of our world — the U.S. and China — is based above all on the fact that their economies are interlinked, that by harming China economically, the U.S. would harm itself. This is not true of Russia — yet. Moreover, over the expanses of the former Soviet Union, where many countries depend on economic relations with Russia for survival, Russia is also experiencing setbacks, above all in Georgia and Ukraine. In other words, Russia has not yet learnt to convert its economic successes into political influence abroad.

The most interesting and successful changes in Russian foreign policy are taking place in Asia. "These countries want us to return to the region as a strong independent player," says a source in a delegation from the Federation Council (upper house of parliament) that recently came back from Vietnam and had talks with several Pacific countries. Asia also needs Russia as a supplier of energy to fuel the swift development of new world giants. Japan, China, South Korea, and India are jostling for Russian oil, something that was very much in evidence last year.

In addition, the ruling establishments and public in Asia see almost eye to eye with Moscow on political philosophy and on the global order. Asia is free from the main issue that has poisoned and continues to poison Moscow's relations with Europe, especially with the EU. Namely, that the Europeans are disappointed that the Russian public is not eager to learn from European values, and Russians are angered that the European public does not accept the idea of communicating on an equal footing with a nation that considers itself to be different from the Europeans and will stay that way. For Asia, differences between peoples, civilisations and political systems are quite an acceptable situation.

The question is: how can this spirit be converted into foreign policy achievements? Perhaps the key to success lies in the greater confidence of the Russian political class in its freedom, its strength, and the legitimacy and attainability of its goals.

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