

## India and Russia as strategic partners in post-cold war era: A brief overview

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to highlight and trace various aspects of Indo-Russia relation since their evolution, including the major developments that have happened in this era. The focus has been on convergence of interest in post-cold war era. The changing equation in international politics due to the emergence of terrorism on a global scale, as also Islamic extremism, has provided opportunity for the two countries to come on a common platform. The problem of terrorism in Chechnya and Kashmir has been of great concern for Russia and India. The other areas where the interests of Russia and India converge are: striving for multipolar global order, strengthening democracy, technology and economic imperatives that have immense potential for joint ventures and cooperation. Thus, Indo-Russia relations are not only marked by the historical compulsions but also by the changed global realities that make it necessary to further strengthen the bilateral ties.

**Keywords:** Kashmir, Chechnya, Cooperation, Technologies, defence

### Introduction

Indo-Russian relations are civilizational and time-tested. These have traditionally been based on continuity, trust and mutual understanding. The importance attached to them cuts across party lines in India and is not subject to political vicissitudes. There is a national consensus on the need for a strong and stable relationship with Russian Federation. A similar consensus exists in Russia on close and friendly ties with India. To make their relation firm and more strong, a declaration on strategic partnership between the Republic of India and Russian Federation was signed during the State visit of President Putin to India in October 2000. This is a document of cordial significance and marks a new step forward in the elaboration of the principles of our bilateral relations. It lays down the broad contours of bilateral relations between India and the Russia Federation in the twenty-first century.

### Objectives

1. To assess the development and prospective of Indo-Russian relations after disintegration of USSR.
2. To analyse the strategic importance of Indo-Russian relation in post-cold era.
3. To analyse the Indo-Russian coordination on Global Terrorism.

### Methodology

For the purpose of the study, both published and unpublished secondary data has been utilized. The data of India-Russia relations were also analyzed. The data is collected from International Security, Centre for Policy Research, Indian Institute of Defence and Analysis and from various Books, Newspapers, and Internet.

### Discussion

The India and Russia are two important players on international level both are strategically important and have played important role in combating international and regional

issues, as well as cooperated in various fields which are discussed below.

### Political Cooperation

Political cooperation between India and Russia has emerged as the dominant framework in their bilateral relations. Following Putin's visit to India in October 2000, it led to an intensification of political cooperation in the shape of the holding of annual Summit, and regular Ministerial-Level consultations that now form an intrinsic facet of their bilateral relations. Both countries have intensified their cooperation on various political issues that include: terrorism, uprising in Chechnya and Kashmir; Central Asia; joint efforts for a multipolar world on bilateral as well as multilateral Foras. Both countries hold unanimous views on regional and international issues, and coordinate their efforts on various Foras <sup>[1]</sup>. Brief overview of their cooperation on the issues mentioned above is given below.

### Views on International Terrorism

Russia and India have common views on all international problems concerned with fighting terrorism. They stressed that double standard in assessing terrorism where unacceptable <sup>[2]</sup>. The notion of international terrorism was known in Russia and in India before the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack on the US. Russia has been supportive to India on Kashmir and would like to see the issue to resolve bilaterally, on the basis of the Shimla agreement. The 'Moscow Declaration' signed by the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russia Federation on June 30, 1994, specified that India and Russia "reiterate their support for each other territorial integrity" as constituted by law and enshrined in their respective constitution <sup>[3]</sup>.

Both Russia and India not only have a long history of mutual cooperation and friendship dating back to the 1950s when Russia was a part of the erstwhile Soviet Union, but have also been exposed to fundamentalist Islamic terrorism-India for over decades and Russia for about two decades <sup>[4]</sup>.

Though there has been a marked change in the US attitude following the September 11, 2001 terrorist strikes against it, US has yet to fully address India's concerns in relation to Pakistan sponsored cross-border terrorism or Russia with reference the post-Taliban set-up in Afghanistan. For example, Washington's belated designation of the Harkat-ul- mujahidin as a terrorist originations and last moment feet-dragging on applying the same label on the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Toiba, clearly aiming to counter Pakistan's attempt to project terrorism in Kashmir as "freedom struggle," and some other counties to attach the same tag to Chechnya. The declaration affirms: "In multi-ethnic and democratic countries such as India and the Russian federation, violent actions being perpetrated under the slogan of self-determination represent in reality acts of terrorism which, in most cases have strong international links [5]."

While India and Russia are a trifle wary about American intentions and commitment to persist with its war against terrorism beyond the destruction of Osama Bin laden and Al-Qaida's terrorist network, both are understandably keen that nothing should impede the recent US led attack on Afghanistan and the ongoing war against Bin Laden and Al-Qaida. Hence, neither the Moscow declaration nor the joint statement issued by Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Putin contained anything that can upset the US. Nevertheless, the two did call, in the joint statement, for the creation of "a new cooperative security order" as the launching pad for "a multi-polar world". Also, in the Moscow declaration, they "reaffirmed the central role of the UN in the struggle against terrorism," there by seeking to make the latter a broader-based exercise than the present war [6].

Russia supplies helicopters and land mine detectors to India to fight against terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. The copters are particularly useful in spotting terrorists movement and interdicting it. The mine detectors are very efficient in locating mines particularly IEDs (improvised explosive device, mostly RDX packed mines). These have claimed a large number of lives of policemen and security forces. India has already procured from Israel some lethal hardware to battle terrorists activities and in conjunction with the Russian help while enhance the ability to counter the militant menace. The arrival of helicopters is particularly welcome since it will provide an eye in the sky to control the activities of terrorists from high altitude. The land mine detectors are a great blessing as the South African mine detecting trucks have provide to be ineffective [7].

### **Joint stand on Kashmir and Chechnya**

Both Russia and India are facing with separatists movements in their respective region of Chechnya and Kashmir based on the right for self-determination. Both countries have failed to curb these freedom movements. Both countries project and equate these movements for self- determination with terrorism. Both they also believed that these movements have the backing of some regional countries, which are extending them moral, political and financial support. In the joint statement issued at the end of President Putin's visit to India in October 2000, the two sides underlined the importance of joint efforts in "combating international terrorism". Both believed that the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan had become a 'breeding ground' for sponsoring and promoting 'extremism' in Chechnya and Indian-held Kashmir [8].

The joint statement issued at the end of their summit-level talks in New Delhi in October 2000, also expressed the position of the two countries on the restive situation in Kashmir and Chechnya. The statement appreciated the 'measures taken by India in combating terrorism and ushering in normalcy in the state of Jammu and Kashmir' it explicitly demanded an end to 'cross-border terrorism' for the resumption of bilateral talks between India and Pakistan. On the Chechnya and Kashmir issue, both countries hold similar views: that the violent movements of self-determination being waged in both the regions are acts of terrorism. Furthermore, both countries link these self-determination movements with outside support which targets their sovereignty and territorial integrity. President Putin's address to India parliament in which he said that "the same people are organizing terrorist attacks from the Philippines to Kosovo, including Kashmir, Afghanistan and Russia's northern Caucasus" are an ample proof of their unanimity of views on Kashmir and Chechnya. During the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Russia in November 2001, the Russian President Putin stated that, he would urge the US president George Bush, to include 'Pakistani-backed insurgents in Kashmir' and Chechen 'rebels' in Russia on the list of terrorists to be targeted by US-led coalition [9].

On the eve of the Russian President's visit to India in December 2002, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, wrote in an article published in a Russian newspaper *Roosiiskaya Gazeta* reiterating this connection between insurgency in Kashmir and Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kashmir, the Philippines and other parts of the world have become a generally accepted fact. It is a well-known fact that they have undergone training in the camps and are using similar crime tactics and methods. Further that "for the same reason, Russia treats with understanding the concern of India over the penetration of groups of militants through the line of control into the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It shares the opinion about the need for the fulfillment by Pakistan of the obligation's assumed to liquidate the terrorist infrastructure on the territory under its control [10].

The Russian ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin, also wrote in an article published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in its issue of December 3, 2002, and addressed the pertinent aspect of the Kashmiri people's struggle for self-determination in terms of dismissal by equating, 'Liberation struggle with international banditry.' He advised that 'foreign policy should not succumb to the temptation of ignoring this, and that Pakistan, by completely and unconditionally fulfilling its obligations to end 'cross-border terrorism' and destroy the terrorist infrastructure within its territory, would open up possibilities for the resumption of a long overdue peaceful dialogue between India and Pakistan [11].

The present position of Russia on Kashmir is very favorable to India in the sense that Russia, as a major power and permanent members of UNSC, is bending over backwards to consolidate past friendship, and make strategic partnership a reality. While, Pakistan officially recognizes the Chechen dispute as an internal matter of the Russian federation and avoids giving harsh statements on this account, Russia's unflinching support to India on Kashmir will undoubtedly harm Pakistan's principled stand on the Kashmir dispute.

### **Convergence of Interests in Central Asia**

In the joint statement issued at the end summit-level talks between the two leaders in Moscow in November 2001, both sides expressed a deep concern “over the threat to the security and stability in Central Asia posed by international terrorism and religious extremism.” Both sides agreed that “regional cooperation can play an important role in the stabilization of the situation in the Central Asia region.” Hence, with a tacit approval of Russia, India has expanded its presence in the region in the shape of providing military assistance and training to the armed forces of Central Asian States (CAS). India has opened a military base in Farkhor, Tajikistan. India realize the importance of central Asia’s market, and is endeavoring to capture its share, the North- South corridor agreed up on by India, Iran and Russia will go a long way in integrating Indian economy with that of the CAS. Iran’s land links to CAS are to be expanded and utilized to carry Indian goods to CAS <sup>[12]</sup>.

### **Scientific and Technological Cooperation**

At present, Russia and India have a scientific and technological cooperation arrangement under the integrated long term programme in science and technology of (till 2010), which is a continuation of the earlier integrated long term programme of cooperation in science and technology (ILTP) signed between India and the FSU in July 1987. The Declaration on Strategic Partnership signed in October 2000 laid clear emphasis on strengthen close cooperation within the framework of the India- Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) of trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation. Twelve working groups were established under the IRIGC, covering different spheres. These are: trade and economic cooperation, power and non-conventional sources of energy, petroleum (oil industry), ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, science and technology, culture, coal, information and technology, environment and natural resources, pharmaceuticals, cooperation between regions and cooperation in civil aviation <sup>[13]</sup>. In 2010, ILTP was extended for another 10 years with a renewed mandate “Innovation Led Technology Programme”. India-Russia Science and Technology Centre with branch each in Delhi-NCR and Moscow was set up in 2011-2012 in order to promote transfer of technologies and their commercialization. Two programmes of cooperation in field of science and technology and in bio-technology were signed in October 2013 and are in the process of implementation.

### **Defence**

India has longstanding and wide ranging cooperation with Russia in the field of defence. India-Russia military technical cooperation has evolved from a simple buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research, development and production of development of the fifth generation Fighter Aircraft and the multi Transport Aircraft, as well as the licenced production in India of SU-30 Aircraft and T-90 Tanks, are examples of such flagship cooperation. The two countries also hold exchange and training exercise between their armed forces annually. The inter-governmental commission and its working groups and sub-groups review defence cooperation between the two countries <sup>[14]</sup>.

### **Commercial Relations**

Trade, investment and economic cooperation between India and Russia have been growing steadily. In 2012, bilateral trade increased by 24.5% to reach US\$ 11 billion out of which Indian exports amounted to US\$ 3 billion which Russian exports were valued at US\$ 8 billion. In January-September 2013, bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 6.94 billion. Exports from India to Russia amounted to US\$ 2.33 billion while imports from Russia stood at US\$ 4.61 billion.

IRIGC-TEC is the main institutional mechanism to review economic cooperation. It integrates seven working groups on trade and economic cooperation, modernization and industrial cooperation, energy, investment projects, tourism and culture, science and technology, and communication and IT. India-Russia Forum on Trade and Investment co-chaired by the commerce and industry Minister of India and the Russian Minister for Economic Development, and India-Russia CEOs Councils are the two primary mechanisms to promote direct bilateral business-to-business contacts between India and Russia. Mechanisms such as India-Russia business council (partnership between FICCI of India and CCI of Russia), India-Russia trade, investment and technology promotion council (partnership between CII of India and RUIE of Russia), India-Russia business dialogue (partnership between CII of India and Russia’s business council for cooperation with India) and India-Russia chamber of commerce (with focus on SMES) supplement the efforts to build direct business-to-business ties <sup>[15]</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Indo-Russia relations have greatly expanded its scope in the post-cold war era. Although their relations encompass social, economic, political, geostrategic and defence collaboration, however, security cooperation still remains the dominant aspect of their relationship, with non-traditional threats, like terrorism, narco-trafficking etc. are now part of the traditional nations of security dominant during the cold war era. While both countries were being waged in Chechnya and Kashmir, they in turn have focused their energies on getting so called freedom movements equated with terrorism. Hence, cooperation on the issue of terrorism will intensify with the passage of time. India and Russia are in the process of institutionalizing their relations. The formation of various working groups to monitor developments on political, economic, science and technology and cultural fronts will go a long way in strengthen their bilateral relations. Warmth in Indo-Russia relations depends to a greater degree on how India balances itself between its increasing desires to West, and maintains traditional relations with the Russian Federation.

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