



Insights of Indo-Russian Cooperation Through Bilateral Ties in the Present Global Scenario

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Abstract— As we know, India and Russia have experienced and enjoyed a strong relationship largely due to the 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship' which was signed on August 9, 1971 in New Delhi. Moreover, on the Kashmir issue, the USSR (now Russia since 1991) fully supported India's standpoint of view with letter and spirit. In the present world order, India is again coming closer to Russia. Therefore, some of the foreign policy analysts expressed their opinion that in the new global political scenario, trade and economic ties between the two will affect the future dynamics of global politics. However, Russia has been entangled in warfare with Ukraine for a long time, therefore, India's role as a world leader can bring the end of this conflict, which will certainly have a positive and long-term impact on the bilateral relationship between the two nations. In recent years, the US is changing its attitude towards India; the fulfillment of Indian military orders by Russia may be a cause of concern for India which will be hampered by the US sanctions. In spite of some radical changes in the global environment, there is a great potential to enhance energy partnerships, transfer of technology, trade cooperation and cultural exchange between the two nations. Here it is noteworthy to point out that the historical foundation of the Indo-Russian strategic alliance is built on key areas such as: politics, defense, nuclear energy, terrorism, and space technology. The Russian President Vladimir Putin made his official visit to India on 6th December, 2021 and met PM Modi which paved a way to better understanding between the two nations. On the contrary, after the formation of the NDA government, PM Shri Narendra Modi made many visits to Russia to strengthen the bilateral relations. Recently, PM Modi visited the Russian city Kazan (22-24 October, 2024) to attend the 16th BRICS Summit. Meanwhile, trade value between the two nations was recorded to be 65.7 billion during the financial 2023-2024. The present research paper highlights the key areas of cooperation between the two nations, India and Russia in the present global scenario.

Keywords— *bilateral ties, strategic partnership, trade issues, nuclear energy, defense relations, space cooperation.*



I. INTRODUCTION

Actually, Indo-Russian relations strongly encompass their bilateral ties and broader international strategies in the changing global order. The fact is that throughout the Cold War period, both the countries forged a close and strategic partnership based on the principle of mutual understanding. Most of the scholars agree with the fact that mutual defence and economic strategies of both the nations have always strengthened the diplomatic collaboration on

various issues; even after the incident of 1991, Russia and India continued to uphold strong ties, and still today they share a distinctive and trustworthy partnership on the global level. Likely, both the nations regard their relationship as a unique strategic bilateral partnership. After the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the US-led unipolar world order began to unravel, both the nations, India and Russia shared a common goal of promoting a multipolar world order, with each country aiming to serve

as one of the poles instead of a simple bipolar arrangement. In the present global scenario, following the onset of the Ukraine War including economic sanctions by the opponents, Russia continued supplying discounted oil and chemical fertilizers to India, which resulted in an unexpected increase in bilateral trade between the two nations reached at \$27 billion in the year 2022, consequently, Russia became India's leading supplier of these commodities. Furthermore, in the consequent year, the estimated trade value between the two was estimated to be \$30 billion. Moreover, both nations are also members of several international organizations, such as the SCO, BRICS, G20, and the UN. In the changing global political environment, Russia has expressed and agreed its full support for India to obtain a permanent position with veto power on the UN Security Council. On the security concerns it is supported by many scholars that the Indian market is the second-largest for the Russian defense industry. In 2017, Russia was the leading supplier of defense equipment, providing over 68 percent of the military hardware imported by India. Regarding the diplomatic understanding, India maintains an embassy and two general consulates in Moscow city. On the contrary, Russia also has an embassy in New Delhi including six consulates in different cities. Furthermore, in the consequent year of 2022, another survey was conducted by an NGO which concluded that 43 percent of Indians named Russia as their most trustworthy ally in the present global order.

II. A HISTORICAL FOUNDATION OF THE INDO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

After the establishment of the UNO on 24th October, 1945, the world order emerged as a bipolar, where the US and the Soviet Union (USSR) were found in the state of cold war. The US formed NATO and the Soviet Union formed the WARSA to strengthen their allies. Now both the allies attempted to foster closer ties with the Third World countries. Meanwhile, the two nations, India and the USSR established their first diplomatic relations in June 1955 after the visit of PM Jawaharlal Nehru to the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, N. Khrushchev visited India and in a press conference, he stated: "The Soviet Union fully supports Indian sovereignty over Portuguese coastal colonies like Goa and the disputed land of the Kashmir region." India received substantial military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union under Khrushchev, in 1962, the Soviet Union agreed to share technology with India to produce MiG-21 jet fighters. The Soviet Union was successful in mediating a settlement named as 'Taskant Declaration' in January 1966.

Furthermore, even after the power shifting in 1977 as Janata Party government, bilateral relations remained cooperative and India made efforts to strengthen its military and economic ties with the Soviet Union. On the contrary, in response to India's attempts to strengthen the diplomatic ties, the Soviet Union promised to provide more financial support and armaments to India. On the contrary, India also placed a high priority on bilateral relations with the Soviet Union by the signing of two long-term economic agreements with the Soviet Union by the newly appointed PM Rajiv Gandhi during his first official visit abroad in May 1985. Likewise, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev made his first visit to India in late 1986, and he met with the then PM Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi, which paved a new pathway to strengthen the bilateral ties between the two nations. However in the consequent year of 1991, the USSR got a political and economic setback when it experienced a drastic change as disintegration of the strong union framed after the end of the second world war.

III. POLITICAL RELATIONS

The first major political initiative between Russia and India following the disintegration of the USSR began with the 'Agreement on a Strategic Partnership' in the year 2000, which became a genuinely historic move. Similar to his predecessor, former PM Manmohan Singh in a talk during the Russian President Putin's 2012 visit to India stated: "President Putin is a beloved friend of India and the original founder of the Indo-Russia strategic alliance. On matters of shared interest, such as those at the UN, BRICS, G-20, and SCO, both nations collaborate closely in the new global order." On the other side, Russian president Putin fully supported India's demand for a permanent seat on the UNSC; Russia also openly favoured India's admission to the NSG and APEC. Recently, PM Modi visited Russia in July 2024 that coincided with the Russian air strikes in Ukraine; Zelensky called it a devastating thrust to peaceful efforts when Modi visited Ukraine in August 2024. However, it was an investing effort to reaffirm India's position of neutrality on the war and betterment of relations with Ukraine. Meanwhile, it came to know that PM Modi was the first who visited Ukraine since the two nations established diplomatic cooperation in 1993. After this event, the fear in New Delhi is that in the coming years if Moscow could side with China in a potential conflict with India.

IV. INDO-RUSSIAN DEFENSE TIES

A large number of foreign policy analysts agree with the fact that the Soviet Union has been a significant supplier of

defense equipment to India with sixty eight percent especially from 2012 to 2016; by agreeing to build navy frigates and the KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopter, both the nations have strongly tied up their collaboration in the production of defense equipment. As a result, both the countries again came closer to enhance the technical cooperation in the defense sector which encompassed a wide range of collaborative activities such as: marketing of armaments and military technologies, cooperative development and manufacturing, and the acquisition of high-tech weapons. Meanwhile, this collaboration goes beyond a straightforward buyer-seller agreement and includes cooperative exercises, training, service-to-service exchanges, and research and development, which proved to be a remarkable step in the history of Indo-Russian bilateral cooperation. After this, the most effective joint airborne exercises were held in Russia in September 2007. On the contrary, an 'Inter-governmental Commission on Military-technical Cooperation' jointly led by the defense ministries of both the nations gave a new height to mutual understanding in the changing multipolar global order.

Then in the year of 2017, during the visit of the Russian President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi, an agreement was signed by both the nations on the joint research and production of possible multi-role aircraft, which gave a boost to economic cooperation. In this regard, a scholar remarks: "The value of India's defense agreements with Russia will surely increase as soon as the final design contract for the collaborative creation of a stealth fifth-generation fighter is inked". Moreover, it was estimated that the entire cost of this massive project for India will be close to US\$35 billion if it buys more than 200 of these fifth-generation fighters, as it plans to do beginning in 2022, since each jet will cost at least US\$100 million. Meanwhile, in the month of October, 2018, India and Russia made history by agreeing to pay a sum of \$5.43 billion for five 'S-400 Triumph Surface-to-air Missile' defense systems, which are among the most powerful armaments in the world. However, the US threatened India to impose penalties for its plan to buy the S-400 missile defense system from Russia, but it remained meaningless and India paid no attention. Some of the defence collaborative initiatives between India and Russia are: BrahMos Cruise Missile Program, Sukhoi Su-30 MKI Program, HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft, KA-226T Helicopters, KKA-226-200, T-90S Bhishma, Nuclear Submarine Akula-2, INS Vikramaditya Aircraft Carrier, Tu-22M3 Bombers, Upgrade of MiG-29 etc. The chief of the 'Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation' Dmitry Shugaev, stated: "Russia is ready to work together, and has already put forward ideas for the cooperative development and manufacturing of contemporary military

hardware." Further, at the Army-2022 Forum, the Russian side released a statement indicating its willingness to work with others and presenting ideas for the cooperative development and manufacturing of contemporary military hardware adhering to the 'Make in India' programme. Then in the consequent year of 2023, there were a number of joint military exercises between the two nations. In the year 2024, both the nations regarded military technical cooperation a core pillar of the strategic partnership.

V. BILATERAL TRADE

In the wake of economic reforms, India was one of the countries that implemented new economic policy in the era of globalization. In this perspective, the main focus of both nations remained on the key value chain sector to enhance bilateral trade such as: precious stones, metals, coal, electronics, aerospace, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, apparel etc. Consequently, bilateral trade between the two nations during the year 2012 saw a more than seven-fold increase from \$1.5 billion in 2002 to \$11 billion, with both governments aiming for \$30 billion in bilateral commerce by 2025. The two governments have developed a cooperative economic strategy that aims to increase future bilateral trade by utilizing a range of economic considerations in vital sectors like rough diamonds, gas, and oil. Meanwhile, a number of MNCs from Russia played a vital role as long-term suppliers in the changing world economic order.

Recently, Russia has claimed that it will cooperate with India to support its 'Make in India' campaign by participating in the development of 'Smart Cities', the commercial nuclear industry, the aerospace industry, and enhancing the making of military weapons through cooperative modes. Today Russia is willing to participate in the enormous, more than \$100 billion DMIC infrastructure project, which would eventually link smart cities and industry with Mumbai and Delhi via trains, highways, and ports. Today, one of the main goals of the Russian government is to build a smart city in India based on Russian technologies. Moreover, both countries have committed to working jointly to develop and build a number of aircraft in the aerospace sector. Recently, the head of Russian UAC, Mikhail Pogosyan in an interview said: "We are intending to sell in India about one hundred passenger aircrafts by 2030, which will account for 10 percent of the Indian market for airliners in the sector." Further, he also stated: "A scientific and engineering foundation for collaborating on civil aviation projects has been established by the unparalleled extent of Indo-Russian collaboration in military aviation."

Russia has planned to develop nuclear power units in India, as well as cooperation in building nuclear power stations of Russia's design in third world nations. The Gazprom Group and GAIL of India reached an agreement in 2012 to supply 2.5 million tons of LNG annually. Today ONGC-Videsh is a well-known example, having invested more than \$8 billion and owning substantial stakes in oil deposits. Due to India's recent reduction of visa procedures for visitors, the number of Russian tourists increased by more than 22 percent. Moreover, both countries set an investment target of \$30 billion by 2025; however they achieved their target by 2018, therefore, both the nations planned to raise this targeted sum to \$50 billion. India also agreed to set up a SEZ for MNCs belonging to Russia. Furthermore, India and Russia looked at alternate payment methods after most Russian banks withdrew from Visa or Mastercard and SWIFT in March 2022, when Russia was facing economic sanctions from Western countries for its invasion of Ukraine. On the contrary, both nations discussed the acceptance of MIR and RuPay cards. Keeping the above fact in view, the RBI and the Bank of Russia seek to simplify financial operations. On August 2, 2022, the Indian Ambassador to Russia disclosed Russian interest in selling Indian agricultural products, textiles, and pharmaceuticals on the Russian market. In just the first five months of 2022, Indo-Russia bilateral trade grew by a record \$18.229 billion. Furthermore, during the financial year 2023-24, bilateral trade between the two nations recorded \$65.7 billion, which reached \$68.7 billion in the current financial year.

VI. SPACE CO-OPERATION

As we know that India and Russia have a long history of space cooperation. The Russian President Vladimir Putin visited India in December 2004 and signed an 'Inter-governmental Framework Agreement' on co-operation in outer space for peaceful purposes. Furthermore, both nations also signed an agreement on collaboration in lunar exploration in 2007, which proved to be a milestone in the history of space cooperation between India and Russia. Again in December 2021 both nations signed an agreement on protections for innovations in the space sector. Now the Russian space agency (Roscosmos) and the ISRO decided to strengthen their cooperation, ensuring collaboration on satellite navigation and human space programs. In 2024, both the nations strengthened their space cooperation with a central focus on India's 'Gaganyaan Human Space Flight Program', which included Russia's training for Indian astronauts at the 'Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center'. Now India could participate in Russia's Venere-

D mission to 'Venus' including the core area of research in space medicine.

VII. NUCLEAR AGREEMENTS

In the current global scenario, we are living in the era of nuclear warfare. However, India had become a nuclear power in 1975, but in the madness of nuclear threats every nation desires to be empowered with nuclear weapons. Therefore, India and Russia came closer in the year 2009 and signed a new nuclear pact, adding to the two countries' prior agreements. In recent years, there have been ongoing discussions between Russia and India. There are now two reactors in operation at the Kudankulam NPP. Meanwhile, during his 13th annual meeting in India, Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed on a cooperative roadmap for civilian nuclear energy. Moreover, it is agreed that over the years leading up to 2030, sixteen to eighteen nuclear reactors will be constructed with an estimated cost of \$2.5 billion per reactor. At the beginning of 2017, Russia provided India with a \$11.38 billion loan to cover the majority of the nuclear power plant's construction. As a result, the building of the nuclear power facility began in 2021, however, the construction of the first and second power units is presently underway. It is hoped that these units will start to work smoothly in the year 2025. In August 2024, India and Russia worked on a Rs. 10,500 crore deal for Russia's nuclear fuel company TVEL to supply fuel and core components for KKNPP units 3 and 4 till the year 2033.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Now we can point out that Russia has always supported India on different issues, political or not-political especially on Kashmir issue. In the wake of the 21st century, both nations came closer and a new pathway of bilateral cooperation started to work. As we know that it is the era of nuclear warfare and some nations are entangled in global tensions. Today India relies on Russia as a key partner for meeting its clean energy goal particularly targeting triple nuclear power capacity by 2032. Likewise, on the trade issues we come to know that India's exports are less than imports which indicates trade imbalance; it is a key concern for India. Therefore, India needs to improve and strengthen her bilateral ties with Russia such as: defense ties, trade issues, nuclear energy and space collaboration. A number of foreign policy analysts agree with the fact that Russia has always been a trustworthy friend of India especially on the Kashmir issue. Therefore, any tension between Russia and India would have a major effect on bilateral cooperation and consequently, it would also hamper the path of mutual understanding.

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