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Abstract

The present article gives an overview of the India-Russia relations. It shows the mutual cooperation between them in the sphere of politics, economic & trade, defense, scientific & technological, health & medicine and on cultural spheres. It mentions about their traditional friendly relations before disintegration of the Soviet Union and continuing close relations during the transition period and their interest in further deepening and diversifying close and multifaceted ties with each other in the coming years.

The article mentions briefly about the historical background, it depicted how since the very early times both these countries are linked and dependent on each other. This paper also mentions about both the states foreign policy structures which indicated the importance of their bilateral relations and their other common foreign policies. It also gives both the states view on international problems concerned with fighting terrorism as both the countries are the major sufferer from terrorism and thus supportive to each other and shares common views on the matter.

Article also mentions about various joint commissions and also gives details about the exchange of high level visits from the both sides and presents the details on the meetings and signing up of the bilateral agreements on various occasions.

Article indicates about both the countries interest in creation of the more democratic, multipolar world and wants peace and stability and thus shares similar views on many aspects. It depicts that both the states want broad, deep and durable ties with each other. Leaders of both the

states are confident that both these nations can promote peace and brotherhood in the new century. The paper indicates the idea that India needs Russia as much as Russia needs India. It is highly important for both the countries to maintain good relations and cooperate with each other.

Indo-Russian Relations: An Overview

1. Introduction

Indo-Russian relations are time-tested and based on continuity, trust and mutual understanding. It is comprehensive and multifaceted and encompasses all areas including political, economic, defense, scientific & technological and cultural spheres, based on shared perceptions and mutuality of interests and mutual benefit. After the disintegration of USSR and the emergence of Russia as an independent State, Russia declared itself to be "State-continuator" of the erstwhile USSR. India recognised Russia as the successor-State to the former Soviet Union. Russian leadership has described Russia's relations with India as being "special". Former President Boris Yeltsin in his public references to India mentioned to continue "traditionally friendly relations" and continuing "cooperation with this great Asian country". Relations with Russia are an important foreign policy priority for India too. The need for close relations with India has also been referred by President Vladimir Putin who has stressed the geo-political significance of Indo-Russian relations. In the Foreign Policy concept released by Russian Federation on July 10, 2000, has been stated that one of the crucial directions in the Russian foreign policy in Asia is to maintain friendly relations with the leading Asian states including India.

India and Russia have expressed interest in further deepening and diversifying their close and multifaceted ties with a view of establishing a strategic partnership. A Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation was signed during the State Visit of President Putin to India during October 2000. This

bilateral documents layed down the broad contours of Indo-Russian relations in the 21st Century. This would also carry forward the principles of bilateral relations contained in the bilateral treaties of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation of August 9, 1971, of Friendship and Cooperation of January 28, 1993, the Declaration on further development and enhancement of cooperation of June 30, 1994 and the Moscow Declaration on the Protection of Interests of Pluralistic States of June 30, 1994. A total of more than 60 Agreements have been concluded between India and the Russian Federation since 1992 to give the necessary politico-legal basis to the relations. During the recent State Visit of President Putin to India, few more bilateral documents were signed. The friendly relation with both the countries will continue and will develop more in the future.

2. Historical Background

Strategic alliance between India and Russia has endured well over 40 years. Visit of Russian traveller Afanasy Nikitin to India well before the Portugese voyager Vasco de Gama was the first European to set foot on Indian soil and came through the land and sea route, which much later has been recognised by India, Russia and Iran as the north-south corridor of tremendous significance not only for trade but as a strategic axis for Eurasia. The strong links between the two countries was forged in the early 1960s as a fallout of the Cold War. India had spurned American overtures to join a military alliance, preferring to opt for what was then a newly coined word, nonalignment. India's honeymoon with China had ended in defeat and disillusionment in 1962. The Soviet Union's relation with China had soured and Moscow was looking for a counterbalance to China in the south and India fitted into the slot nicely.¹ Although nonalignment required maintaining anequidistance from both Washington and Moscow, it was apparent that New Delhi was a little

closer to the latter.

The bonds really became strong when the West, taking a somewhat myopic view, refused India's genuine requirement for sophisticated weapons and arms.² The Soviet Union was more than willing to fill the gap. The initial Indian hesitation to go in for Soviet arms slowly vanished when it was discovered that the Soviets had, in some areas, better equipment than was expected. What came as a pleasant surprise was that both the price quoted by the Soviets and the terms offered would make the purchases really attractive.³ Over the next 40 years India's armed forces became the largest recipients of Soviet arms. Even today more than 70 per cent of the equipment in the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy is of Soviet origin. The Indian Navy received Soviet submarines, missile boats, patrol vessels, destroyers and mine sweepers. Soviet long range maritime aircraft formed the backbone of the Navy's maritime reconnaissance squadrons. With Soviet assistance the Indian Navy turned the sleepy naval base at Vishakhapatnam into a modern naval dockyard and berthing facility.⁴

The Indo-Soviet friendship really flowered in 1971 when India confronted Pakistani excesses in the erstwhile East Bengal. The Soviets jumped in when the West rejected Indira Gandhi's plea for help. The zenith of Indo-Soviet political cooperation was reached during the 1971 war. The Bangladesh liberation struggle broke out at a time when Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were engaged in forging a new strategic relationship with China. Yahya Khan of Pakistan was the secret channel of communication between the American and Chinese leaders and was duly rewarded for his efforts by the creation of a Washington-Beijing-Islamabad axis aimed against India and Bangladesh. India responded to the new Washington-Beijing-Islamabad axis by signing the Indo-Soviet treaty of peace and friendship. Moscow also used its veto in

the UN to thwart attempts by imposing a ceasefire before the Pakistani army. When Washington sent the US Enterprises into the Bay of Bengal in a demonstration of support to Pakistan, Moscow responded by dispatching a submarine to the same area.⁵ Never before or after such countervailing power of the Soviet Union employed to greater advantage in India's favour. The resulting 20-year peace and friendship treaty was the acme of Indo-Soviet friendship. Soviet arms, some of them delivered by express means, contributed considerably to India's victory in 1971.⁶ Of course, it was not all one sided. The Soviet Union too gained considerably from having India as its southern ally.

The Soviets had a strong fleet in the Indian Ocean to counter the US presence.⁷ Although India refused base and docking facilities to the Soviet ships, there were numerous visits to Indian ports. As against this not a single US warship visited India from 1971 to 1983. With nearly 20 years of interaction between them, both countries developed strong attachment to each other.⁸ This was especially true of Soviet military leaders. Top military officials like Admiral Gorshkov, Marshal Ustinov and Marshal Akremeyov were extremely fond of India and the Indian armed forces. It was indeed during their time that most of the military agreements between the two countries were forged.⁹ During the Sixties, after failing to obtain modern Western fighter aircraft and submarines, India turned to Moscow for sophisticated military equipment and technology. ¹⁰Though India was careful to avoid over-dependence, Russia became the major foreign source of equipment for the Indian air force and navy. India's indigenous defense industry benefited greatly from access to Soviet technology.

In the economic field, too, India was able to obtain leverage from its Soviet ties. Thus, when the US declined on ideological grounds to assist India to set up a public sector steel plant, India turned to Russia for

help. And thus, India's first public sector steel plant was set up in Bhilai (Indian steel City) with the Soviet support. Once it was clear that India had a Soviet option, it became easier to obtain Western cooperation in setting up new plants in Durgapur and Rourkela (other Indian industrial cities).¹¹ In the heavy machinery and petroleum sectors as well, the Soviet option gave India invaluable leverage in its dealings with Western companies.

The emotions spilled out on to the streets. Indians were treated as honoured guests in the Soviet Union. Those were the days of long queues in Moscow and it was not uncommon to find the local people asking Indians to go to the head of a long queue. The equation began to change gradually in the late eighties. When Mikhail Gorbachev introduced perestroika, Indians for the first time, found that equipment's were no longer available at the easy prices of the 1970s. Supply of equipment continued but at a much slower rate.¹² The end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union have made considerable changes in the relationship between the two countries. Russia gave up its claims to become a superpower. The Soviet fleet terminated its presence in the Indian Ocean.¹³ However, having relation with each other for the past 30 years both the countries are still largely dependent on each other and support's each other considerably. Today, India needs Russia as much as Russia needs India.

3. Foreign Policy

India and Russian Federation's relation continues to be an important foreign policy priority for both the countries. Both countries have emphasized the importance which they attach to bilateral relations and

consider them not to be subject to political vicissitudes.¹⁴ With post Cold War transitional difficulties now left well behind, India's relations with Russia are progressing well in almost all areas of bilateral cooperation. There is recognition both in India and Russia of the strategic dimension of Indo-Russian relations. Both countries share similar perceptions on many international issues. Interactions on developments in the region lying between the borders of India and Russia have been found to be beneficial and contacts are being maintained on the evolving situation in Afghanistan.¹⁵

The Russians have always stood by India whenever required. During the Chinese war, the Soviets did not side with China. It was not easy for one communist state not to support the other.¹⁶ In 1966, the USSR tried to intrude peace between India and Pakistan. During the Bangladesh war, the USSR kept an eye on the United States Seventh Fleet and gave India moral support.¹⁷ Russia strongly supports India's desire to become a permanent member in the United Nations Security Council.¹⁸ It is significant that India and Russia are the world's largest democracies, India in terms of the size of the population and Russia in terms of its size.

There have been a large number of important visits/bilateral contacts between India and the Russian Federation. The two sides have agreed to hold annual bilateral summits and regular ministerial-level meetings. For the first time the security councils of the two countries have established a mechanism of continuous interaction through joint working groups covering a wide range of issues from terrorism, separatism, arms and drug trafficking, to regional and global stability, as well as economic, ecological and legal dimensions of stability. The first meeting of a working group on Afghanistan met on November 2000 in Delhi.¹⁹ The proposal to convene annual summit-level meetings and hold regular

bilateral consultations on issues of mutual concern and cooperation in the United Nations and inform each other of planned foreign policy initiatives, institutionalises foreign policy linkages on a higher plane than before. Russia proposes a special meeting of the U.N. Security Council on terrorism and separatism, which is of India's interest. This issue is important to Russia because the Taliban is up against the Russian also supported Northern Alliance of Ahmed Shah Masood in Afghanistan and there is much pressure on the Russian Army on the Tajikistan border.²⁰ The decision to set up a joint working group on Afghanistan shows the extent of seriousness of the two countries on collaborating on this front.

India and Russia felt trapped in a fast globalising world. India perceived that its allies among the non-aligned nations were either sinking into a debt trap or were forging ahead as local tigers with their own set of regional alliances. India was bereft of an ally in the Soviet Union. The old problems of its borders remained unsolved. The choice before the Indian Foreign Office was to shed the tried and trusted foreign policy ideals, push for integration with the globalisation phenomenon and engage with the U.S. It was with Yeltsin's visit, followed by meetings in 1994 and 1997, that India and Russia once again felt that a strategic partnership could be worked out.²¹ The reality of globalisation and the revival of a trend towards a multipolar world pushed the two countries into a strategic and economic alliance. In Russia, the neo-liberal economic policies, which advocated a complete destruction of Soviet-type institutions and market-led growth, led to a complete collapse of the financial and economic system. Levels of foreign aid and investment were far below expectations and were completely tied to the import of Western goods. The trade balance between Russia and the West was skewed against Russian goods. The secure COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) trading bloc was over.²² In these circumstances Russia once again had to seek its old allies, in India, West Asia and

South East Asia.

A strategic partnership between India and Russia seems logical and necessary in an increasingly multi-polar world. Ever since the establishment of an independent Russia, its interests in Europe, West Asia and in Asia have clashed with those of the U.S. The Russians were opposed to East Europe's inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO); Russia opposed U.S. policy in the former Yugoslavia and they backed Serb interests through the Bosnian crisis. On the question of Kosovo, the Russians opposed NATO military positions. In South Asia, Russia continues to support India on the Kashmir issue, is opposed to the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue, and in opposition to the U.S. pressure, continued to supply defense equipment and nuclear power technology to India.²³

Russian opposition to the U.S. on all these issues does not have the severe contradiction and the military or ideological opposition of the Soviet times. The rhetoric is missing, but the opposition continues. This opposition is based on Russian national interests and traditional alliance structures with these states that the Russians would like to continue with. While the form of Russian strategic policy has radically changed, its content has much continuity. On the question of Afghanistan, Russian opposition to the Taliban is based on its fear of the conflict and fundamentalist ideology spreading into Central Asia, especially the bordering Tajikistan, which is guarded by Russian troops.²⁴ Russian press and foreign policy literature have blamed the U.S.-Pakistan nexus for reinforcing the Taliban. India has made efforts to build ties with the Central Asian States but has had to compete with Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, China and the West. Indian and Russian interests coincide in the Central Asian States.²⁵ It would give India a clear geo-strategic advantage to link up with Russia in this region.

Russia along with the rest of the international community was critical towards India on the Pokhran-II nuclear tests but it reiterated its position that India sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and become a party to nuclear non-proliferation treaties. Russia opposed the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S., and refused to impose sanctions itself.²⁶ The Russian-Indian strategic link seems inevitable and mutually advantageous, providing the scope for a further expansion of ties. President Putin stated that India is not just an acceptable partner but a desirable partner. The two sides value each other in furtherance of their own political and business interests.

An India-Russia relation has the potential to evolve as a very powerful alliance in this part of the world which will put a brake on U.S. expansionism and aggression. Though Russia is no longer a military superpower, it retains an important say in world affairs.²⁷ India's economic and defense capabilities are also rapidly progressing. This relation can offer stiff resistance to U.S. plans that go against their interests.²⁸ During the last decade, India and Russia made paradigmatic shifts in their foreign policies and worldviews. The stability of India's relations with Russia has once again been demonstrated by the recent visit of the Russian president, Mr Vladimir Putin, to India.

4. Defense Cooperation

Bilateral defense cooperation between the two countries is proceeding well. Defense cooperation is limited not only to procurement but also to cover areas like service to service cooperation. A Joint Working Group on Military Technical Cooperation has been set up to monitor Indo-Russian

Defense Cooperation. Sixty to seventy percent of defense purchases made by India are from Russian federation. Russia has sold MiG aircrafts, Sukhoi-30 fighters, T-72 tanks etc. Besides these procurements, India and Russia have signed many agreements on upgradation of equipment.²⁹ Moscow wants to reverse its declining role in the global arms-market in order to earn hard currency and salvage a contracting defense industry in a world where the major arms exporters have not halted their trade.³⁰ India remains the biggest market for Russian military hardware and offers the best prospects for a major new base from which export of jointly manufactured equipment to other Asia-Pacific countries could be done.

India has had extensive cooperation in space with the former USSR. The Soviet side assisted India in setting up of the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station and the launching of Indian experimental satellites Aryabhata, Bhaskara 1 and Bhaskara 2. The Indian remote sensing satellites IRS-1A/1B were launched by Soviet launch vehicles on a commercial basis. The flight of Sqdn Ldr Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian in space, was from the Salyut Space Station in the USSR.³¹ Indian space cooperation has continued with Russia and is proceeding well.

An Inter-Governmental Agreement on the construction of a 2x1000 MW Nuclear Power Station in India was signed between the then Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and the Soviet President Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev on November 1988. Contracts were also signed for the supply of 310 T-90 to India main battle tanks and the transfer of technology for the manufacture of the SU-30MKI long-range versatile fighter jets. A deal on the refit of the Admiral Gorshkov aircraft carrier is also in the pipeline.³² The most sensational development is that, Russia has been supplying low enriched uranium for use in Indian nuclear plants. It is in line with its eagerness to build two 1000 MW nuclear power plants at

Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu, in defiance of US restrictions on transfer of nuclear technology. Russia is eager to proclaim that it treats India as a special partner in economic and diplomatic relations. It is happily back to the old times. Russia is now also customising India's military requirements. Besides, license production of SU 30 MKI and T-90s in India. The Brahmos missile to go into production in 2004 is a joint project. Two other joint projects are the future multirole transport aircraft and the fifth generation fighter.³³

At times of crisis during the Kargil conflict, the Russians have stripped their own Army spares to meet Indian demands. In turn these sales boosted the sagging Russian military industrial complexes, like those in St. Petersburg and Irkutsk, which are dependent on Indian orders. The Indo-Russian defence deals have contributed in the past and will now contribute to the new arms race that has been set off in the sub-continent following the Indian nuclear tests and the Pakistani response in May 1998.³⁴

The Russian decision to support further civil nuclear energy plants in India the commissioning of the Koodankulam nuclear plant and the proposed cooperation in the field of atomic energy is bound to draw Western criticism. The U.S. had tried to impose sanctions on the Russian firm Glavkosmos when it wanted to sell cryogenic rockets to India. Russian nuclear supplies to India will contradict rules set out by the Nuclear Suppliers Group of advanced nations, who are bound to question these agreements. However, despite U.S. pressure to stop military cooperation with India (which was part of U.S. President Bill Clinton's talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in September 1998), the Russians would like to emerge as independent partners and prioritise relations with India. ³⁵

5. Economic & Trade Relations

Bilateral trade is presently based on payment in freely-convertible currencies, also provided arrangements for trade with barter, counter-trade, buy-back etc. Approximately 80% of the trade is on rupee repayment track. Although trade registered a decline of 21.4% in Rupee terms during 1996-97, it again picked up in 1997-98 and registered a 14.1% growth compared to 1996-97. However, it once again declined by 9.45% in 1998-99. Present level of trade is not commensurate with the true potential, even though the total trade turnover has shown an upward trend during the year 1999-2000 when it grew by 28.75%. While Indian exports to the Russian Federation grew by 38.14% in Rupee terms (34.12% in US Dollar terms), Indian imports from the Russian Federation grew by 16.58% in Rupee terms (13.18% in US Dollar terms) in 1999-2000. ³⁶

Following are the DGCIS trade figures in Rs. billion (in US\$ billion in brackets)

Year	Indian Exports	Indian Imports	Turnover	% Change in Rs. Figures
1993-94	20.05 (0.67)	8.10 (0.27)	28.15 (0.94)	NA
1994-95	25.41 (0.85)	15.72 (0.52)	41.13 (1.37)	(+) 44%
1995-96	35.03 (1.16)	28.53 (0.94)	63.56 (2.1)	(+) 54%
1996-97	27.66 (0.92)	22.30 (0.74)	49.96 (1.66)	(-) 21.4%
1997-98	33.06 (1.07)	25.26 (0.81)	58.31 (1.88)	(+) 14.1%
1998-99	29.85 (0.71)	22.95 (0.55)	52.80 (1.26)	(-) 9.45%

1999-2000	41.22 (0.95)	26.76 (0.62)	67.98 (1.57)	(+) 28.75%
2000-01 (Apr-May)	7.37 (0.17)	4.23 (0.10)	11.60 (0.27)	(+) 39.43%

Principal Indian exports to Russia are drugs and pharmaceuticals, tea, coffee, rice, leather and leather products, food products, processed minerals, cotton yarn fabric, etc. Principal Indian imports from Russia are fertilizers, newsprint and paper products, iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, organic chemicals, etc. ³⁷

The two countries are now successfully cooperating in large-scale projects in the energy industry, metallurgy and also road construction. Other big projects are like the Sakhalin-1 oil and gas project worth 1.7 \$ billion Indian investment. The Indian Government has approved the proposal made by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission to purchase on 20 % interest the Shakalin-1 project from Rosneft. ONGC in this project will be required to invest \$ 1.7 billion.³⁸ The construction of 2.6 \$ billion Koodunkulam nuclear power station, in Tamil Nadu, and joint venture in oil exploration in the Bay of Bengal, in which Russia's oil major Gazprom and Zarubezhneftegaz will cooperate with Indian companies, under a production sharing agreement.

Moscow and Delhi have begun to work together in the diamond-producing sector. During the India-Russia inter-Governmental Commission the two sides agreed to follow-up on the possibility of cooperation in the diamond sector. Russia is now one of the largest exporters of raw diamonds and India is the largest centre for cutting and polishing diamonds. However, diamond trading was controlled by the

South African De Beers Company. De Beer's monopoly on worldwide sale of diamonds has loosened, allowing Russia to sell raw diamonds directly.³⁹ Direct sales to India would be beneficial to both countries and shift the dependency of bilateral trade from traditional commodities to the high value sector.

According to Mr. Lamba, the Indian Ambassador to Russia new areas of economic cooperation is emerging. He recalled that during President Putin's visit cooperation agreement with the OAO Gazprom was signed. At present negotiations are being held with Rosneft. The two sides are now expected to make assessment of the immense possibilities of increasing the annual trade turnover.⁴⁰ An Inter-Governmental Agreement on International North-South Corridor was signed between India, Iran and the Russian Federation, which was signed in St. Petersburg on September 12, 2000. This Agreement will facilitate easier movement of goods along the corridor connecting India through the sea route to Iran and then via Caspian Sea to the Russian Federation and beyond. This new initiative is expected to reduce transit time and cost of transportation of goods to the Russian Federation and European countries. ⁴¹

Russia's Gazprom announced its plan to construct an undersea gas pipeline between Iran and India for exporting Iranian natural gas to India via Pakistan. If construction actually begins, the US \$ 3.2-billion pipeline project will be a major political and economic achievement for Iran, India and Russia and will be another step towards closer cooperation between India and Russia.⁴²

Similarly, agreements to strengthen trade and economy within the framework of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation were reached.

While trade and investment between the two countries are likely to go into private hands, the governments of both the countries have simplified customs and other procedures to facilitate trade promotions.⁴³

Indo-Russian relations are marked with great stability and continuity regardless of political changes in both countries. There is a great measure of mutual goodwill and trust, understanding of each other's concerns. India and Russia acknowledge that there is a potential for business ties to flourish as both are huge economies. Russia which was reeling under various constraints in trade following globalisation, has come out with a lot of reforms to develop trade and economic ties with India. Russia's GDP has grown high compared to the past.⁴⁴ Russia is one of the best places in the world to have trade links because of cheap labour, cheap cost of production, open trade market, open economy and good support from the government.

The Confederation of Indian Industries signed an agreement with the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs on setting up of representative offices in Moscow and New Delhi respectively. EXIM Bank of India signed an agreement to extend a credit line of US \$ 10 million with the Vnesheconombank of the Russian Federation. The State Bank of India and the Canara Bank also reached agreement with the Central Bank of Russia for setting up a branch in Moscow.⁴⁵ These steps will further boost bilateral trade relations between the two countries.

The Putin administration has been able to make the place more livable and conducive to do serious business. This is reflected in the remarkable improvements in Russia's economy. There seems to be determined efforts to make foreign investment more attractive. Another area where the two countries could cooperate is the IT sector. Russia still holds the potential in IT hardware design and computing. There is ample scope for the two

countries to try for joint ventures. Some have already put forth the idea of using such ventures to tap the market.⁴⁶ Another area suggested is microelectronics. There have also been proposals that the Indian telecom industry could play a major role in modernising Russia's telecom system. In the next four years, Russia needs about two million telephone lines. Both private and public sector giants in India have the potential to undertake this task. There have also been suggestions for equity participation in such ventures. Now Indian car manufacturer Mahindra and Mahindra got the orders of selling the Vehical Scorpio in the Russian market.⁴⁷

An Indo-Russian working group on regional cooperation, set up under the Inter-Governmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation, has agreed to develop a joint directory of nodal regional organisations, build a computerised database and open joint inter-regional web sites to provide information on business opportunities for both the nations. ⁴⁸

6. Cooperation in Science and Technology

Extensive cooperation in the field of science and technology is proceeding well. There is interest in both the countries for further intensification of cooperation in the field of science and technology. The Integrated Long Term Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology (ILTP) was signed between India and USSR in July 1987. It was decided in April 1992 to convert the ILTP from Indo-Soviet to an Indo-Russian Programme. The 10th anniversary of the ILTP was celebrated in New Delhi on November 24, 1997. ⁴⁹

Prof. Murli Manohar Joshi, Indian Minister of Science & Technology, paid an official visit to the Russian Federation from July 2-8, 2000. He had meetings with Dr. Viktor Khristenko, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation; Mr. Alexander Dondukov, Russian Minister for Science and Technology; Mr. Filippov, Russian Minister for Education and Human Resources Development and with the heads of prominent Russian Institutes, Research Centers and the well-known academicians. He inaugurated the Russian-Indian Centre for Advanced Computing Research at the Institute for Computer Aided Design (ICAD), of the Russian Academy of Sciences on July 3, 2000 in Moscow. India has supplied the PARAM 10000 Series Computer for this Centre. Russia and India agreed that the Russian-Indian Center of Advanced Computer Researches should be set up in Moscow.⁵⁰

The implementation of nuclear reactors for Kudankulam, 25 km from Kanyakumar has started and now Russia is keen on setting up at least four more advanced light water nuclear reactors in India to further strengthen the techno-commercial ties between the two countries.⁵¹

During President Putin's recent visit dialogues for further intensifying extensive cooperation in the field of science and technology was also charted out. Russia is even offering co-operation in advanced hi-technology in areas such as plasma displays and lasers where Russia still has a lead. India and Russia have extended till 2010 their uniquely successful long-term programme of scientific and technical cooperation.⁵²

7. Cooperation in Health and Medical Sciences

In March 1979, an agreement had been signed with the former USSR on cooperation in the field of Medical Sciences and Public Health. In September 1993, the first session of the Indo-Russian Joint Standing Commission on Cooperation in this sector was held. During the Fourth IGC Session in New Delhi in December 1997, it was decided to set up two separate Sub-Groups under the Working Group on S&T, viz., a Sub-Group on Biotechnology and a Sub-Group on Medical Sciences. Russian Health Minister, Ms. Tatyana Dmitrieva, visited India on November 15-19, 1997.⁵³ A Parliamentary delegation from the Russian State Duma Committee on Health Care visited New Delhi from March 3-5, 1999, at the invitation of the India-CIS Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Russia and India are going to set up a joint Ayurvedic center. It will be a new area of cooperation. The center is also expected to deal in three major areas- research, publishing and education.⁵⁴

8. View on International Terrorism

Russia and India have common views on all international problems concerned with fighting terrorism. They stressed that double standards in assessing terrorism were unacceptable.⁵⁵ The notion of international terrorism was known in Russia and in India before the September 11th terrorist attacks on the USA;

Russia has been supportive to India on Kashmir and would like to see the issue to resolve bilaterally, on the basis of the Simla agreement. The 'Moscow Declaration' signed by the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation on June 30, 1994 specified that India and Russia "reiterate their support for each other's territorial integrity" as constituted by law and enshrined in their respective

constitutions.⁵⁶

Russia also continues to look benignly at India's nuclear programme and made no effort to either impose economic sanctions or block the sale of nuclear technology to India after the 1998 nuclear tests. In its recent efforts to counter the unipolar influence that US exercises over the world, Russia has once again sought to renew ties with its old Cold War allies and friends. Russia has still much love for India.⁵⁷ In fact, there are a lot of similarities between the dilemma Russia faces in Chechnya and the problem India faces in Kashmir.

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 two decades and Russia for a about a decade.⁵⁸ Though there has been a marked change in the US attitude following the September 11 terrorist strikes against it, it has yet to fully address India's concerns in relation to Pakistan sponsored cross-border terrorism or Russia's with reference to the post-Taliban set-up in Afghanistan. For example, Washington's belated designation of the Harkat-ul Mujahedin as a terrorist organisation and last moment feet-dragging on applying the same label on the Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Toiba, clearly aiming to counter Pakistan's attempt to project terrorism in Kashmir as a "freedom struggle", and some other countries 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".⁵⁹

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 attacks 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 contains 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", thereby seeking to make the latter a broader-based exercise than the present war. ⁶⁰

Russia will supply helicopters and landmine detectors to India to fight against terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. The copters are particularly useful in spotting terrorist movement and interdicting it. The mine detectors are expected to be very efficient in locating mines, particularly IEDs (improvised explosive devices, 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 terrorist activities and in conjunction with the Russian help will 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 a high altitude. The landmine detectors are a great blessing as the South African mine detecting trucks have proved to be ineffective.⁶¹

Vajpayee's government has been forthright in its support for Moscow in the difficult crisis which took place in the Moscow Theater by Chechen terrorist very recently. Indian Prime Minister spoke to President Putin shortly after the Chechen hostage takers were smoked out and then

shot.⁶² Terrorism is now a threat faced by everyone from India's Prime Minister Vajpaee, to Russia's President Putin, and also to the American president, George W. Bush to Indonesia's Megawati Sukar Noputri to Saudi Arabia's King Fahd.

9. Cultural Relations

India's most extensive cultural cooperation programme is with the Russian Federation. To give greater thrust to this important segment of people to people contact, Culture was brought under the auspices of the IRIGC (Indo-Russian inter governmental commission) during its 1st session in September 1994 and a Working Group on Culture under the IRIGC set up during the Session. Cultural, academic, scientific, educational, sports and other exchanges are being actively promoted under the various sections of the Culture Exchange Programmes (CEP) between India and Russia. Under the CEP, the "Days of Russian Culture" were organised in India from December 1-15, 1995 and the "Days of Indian Culture" were held in Russia from September 16-28, 1996. "Days of Moscow" in Delhi were held from September 23-27, 1998. "Days of Delhi" in Moscow were held from October 26-30, 1999. ⁶³

Exchanges have also been taking place on a regular basis between academics and scholars of the two countries. To increase Russian interest in Indian culture at the regional level, "Days of India" are being organised in various Regions of Russia. Under its auspices, a series of Indo-Russian Seminars "India-Russia: Perspectives in the New Century", and an exhibition on "the History and Activities of Parliament of India" are also being organised in various cities of Russia by the Indian Embassy along with the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow.⁶⁴

A Chair of Indian Philosophy was formally inaugurated on February 16, 1999 at the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences. The establishment of the Chair gave fresh impulse to Indian studies at the Institute and facilitated further strengthening and expansion of the bilateral relations. The Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre, attached to the Embassy of India in Moscow, is engaged in promotion of Indian culture and India related studies. A Hindi-Russian Dictionary website was launched on the Internet on May 24, 1999.⁶⁵

The Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre (JNCC), attached to the Embassy of India in Moscow, is actively engaged in promotion of Indian culture and India related studies in the Russian Federation. The Centre celebrated the 10th anniversary of its establishment on September 1999. Its activities include monthly lectoriums, concerts, panel discussions, book releases, photograph and painting exhibitions etc. Regular classes on Indian classical dances, music, yoga and Hindi are conducted by the JNCC. The Centre also facilitates teaching of Hindi in the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian State University of Humanities.⁶⁶ Assistance is also extended in teaching Hindi at the Universities of Vladivostok, Ufa, Voronezh and Kursk, and to Russian schools one each in Moscow and St. Petersburg.⁶⁷

A statue of Jawaharlal Nehru, sculpted by the famous sculptor Late Dmitry Ryabichev, installed in a specially landscaped garden opposite the University Metro Station in Jawaharlal Nehru Square in Moscow which was inaugurated during the visit of the then Prime Minister Shri Deve Gowda in March 1997. Not very far from Pandit Nehru's Statue, the Indira Gandhi Square houses statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Smt. Indira Gandhi. There is also the statue of Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore at the Friendship Park on the Leningradsky Prospect, (the highway leading to the international airport). A statue of Leo Tolstoy was unveiled

in New Delhi on December 1994 during the visit of the then Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. ⁶⁸

The current estimated strength of the Indian community living in the Russian Federation is around 16,000 people. It includes students, businessmen and others staying in Russia since long, apart from Mission personnel and their families. The strength of the Mission personnel and their families are around 800. Students form the major chunk of the Indian population. The estimated strength of the student community has grown from around 3,500 in 1993 to approximately 7,000 in 1998. ⁶⁹

The second largest section of the Indian community comprises of those who are working in Indian business establishments. Around 100 Indian companies and 15 Indo-Russian commercial joint ventures are functioning in the Russian Federation. Some of these Indian companies are registered with the Indian Business Association. The Association was formed on a voluntary basis in September 1993 to promote trade and commercial activities in the Russian Federation. ⁷⁰

Indian Association (erstwhile the Hindustani Samaj), during 42 years of its existence has been in the forefront of social and cultural life in Moscow. It works in close cooperation with the Indian Embassy and endeavours to maintain cordial and active relations with other organisations of Indians in Russia. Ramakrishna Society Vedanta Centres functions in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Apart from the Indian Association, other cultural organisations include the Bhartiya Sanskritik Samaj and Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. ⁷¹

On the 200th birth anniversary of Russia's greatest poet Alexander Pushkin, which fell on June 6, 1999, mass translations of the Russian author's works into various Indian languages were done. Maharashtra

Pushkin Committee has been set up by the Russian cultural society to translate the author's works into Marathi. ⁷²

Russian Airline Aeroflot has increased the number of flights to India in accordance with the agreement signed with the Air India. The numbers of flights have increased from eight to ten per week, and bigger and modern airliners are used. In a number of Moscow-Delhi-Moscow flights, Air India has been allotted 75 seats a week and the Aeroflot passengers on internal flights in India are brought to those towns where Aeroflot does not fly. Aeroflot also operates a cargo flight from Moscow to Delhi once a week from January 2001.⁷³ Thus cultural relations/cooperation between both the countries is continuing as before.

10. Joint Commissions

An Inter-Governmental Indo-Russian Commission on Trade, Economy, Scientific and Technological Cooperation was established in May 1992. Its first Session was held in Moscow on September 13-14, 1994. It was decided at the first Session to rename the Commission as Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC). The current Chairmen of the IRIGC are the Finance Minister from the Indian side and Mr. Ilya Klebanov, Deputy Prime Minister, on the Russian side.⁷⁴

Six Sessions of the IRIGC have already been held, during September 1994 (Moscow), October 1995 (New Delhi), February 1997 (Moscow), December 1997 (New Delhi), November 1998 (Moscow) and the 6th Session in January 2000 in New Delhi. Working Groups covering different spheres have been established within the framework of the Commission on: (i) Trade and Economic Cooperation; (ii) Power and Non-

Conventional Sources of Energy; (iii) Petroleum (Oil Industry); (iv) Ferrous and Non-Ferrous Metallurgy; (v) Science and Technology; (vi) Culture; (vii) Coal; (viii) Information Technology; (ix) Environment and Natural Resources; (x) Pharmaceuticals; (xi) Cooperation between Regions; and (xii) Cooperation in Civil Aviation. There are 11 Sub Groups under various Working Groups. 3 Sub Groups relating to (a) Transport, (b) Banking and Finance, and (c) Agriculture which also comes under the Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation. There are 8 Sub Groups under the Working Group on Science and Technology which deals with (a) Cooperation in the Field of Commercialisation and Transfer of Technology; (b) Agriculture; (c) Standardisation, Metrology and Certification; (d) Building Materials; (e) Oceanology; (f) Medical Sciences; and (h) Bio-Technology.⁷⁵

11. Exchange of Visits

11.1. From the Russian Federation to India

President Mr. Boris Yeltsin - January 1993

Prime Minister Mr. Viktor Chernomyrdin - December 1994

Foreign Minister Mr. Yevgeny Primakov - March 1996

Prime Minister Mr. Yevgeny Primakov - December 1998

From India to the Russian Federation

External Affairs Minister - November 1991

Prime Minister Mr. P.V.Narsimha Rao -July 1994

External Affairs Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee – May 1995

External Affairs Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee - August 1995

External Affairs Minister Mr. I.K.Gujral - February 1997

Prime Minister Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda – March 1997;

External Affairs Minister Mr. Jaswant Singh – May 1999

External Affairs Minister Mr. Jaswant Singh – June 2000

Present External Affairs Minister of India paid an official visit to the Russian Federation from June 21-24, 2000. He had detailed discussions with Mr. Igor Ivanov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, on bilateral matters and on regional and international issues of mutual interest. EAM also called on Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation; Mr. Sergei Ivanov, Secretary of the Security Council; and Dr. Viktor Khristenko, Deputy Prime Minister and Co-Chairman of the Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission. EAM also visited St. Petersburg where he met the Governor of St. Petersburg. ⁷⁶

11.3. Prime Minister Vajpayee's Visit to Russia

At the invitation of His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, paid a state visit to the Russian Federation from November 4-7, 2001. This visit was in line with the agreement to have annual Summit Meetings outlined in the Declaration on Strategic Partnership signed at the time of President Putin's State visit to India in October 2000. ⁷⁷

During his visit to the Russian Federation, Prime Minister Vajpayee met with President Putin, Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation Mr. Mikhail Kasyanov and Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Mr. Gennady Seleznyev. Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation and Co-Chairman of the Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission (IRIGC) for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation and IRIGC for Military-Technical Cooperation Mr. Ilya Klebanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Mr. Igor Ivanov and Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Mr. Sergei Ivanov called on Prime Minister Vajpayee. ⁷⁸

Prime Minister Vajpayee was conferred an Honorary Doctorate by the Moscow State University. Prime Minister Vajpayee also visited St. Petersburg where he attended a dinner hosted by Mr. Vladimir Yakovlev, Governor of the St. Petersburg Regional Administration. He inaugurated an exhibition of Indian paintings at the Russian Museum. A Moscow Declaration on International Terrorism was signed by the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation. Numbers of other bilateral documents were signed for strengthening cooperation in different fields. A Joint Statement on Strategic Issues was also agreed upon.⁷⁹

11.4. President Putin's State visit to India

Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation paid a State Visit to India from October 2-5, 2000. Mr. Putin met the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister of India. He also met other Indian leaders. President Putin addressed the two Houses of Parliament at a Joint Sitting. During his visit the Declaration on Strategic Partnership was signed and the mechanism of annual Summit level interaction was reiterated. In all he signed 17 Agreements/bilateral documents. During the visit, President Putin also visited Agra and Mumbai. The Jawaharlal Nehru University of New Delhi conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Laws on him.⁸⁰

State Visit of President Putin on Dec.3-5, 02, was also of great importance for both the countries. Russian President Putin is of strong view that India has stepped into the 21st century as a powerful democratic state, which enjoys a weighty authority in world affairs. President Putin has also expressed that the stability and strength of Russian-Indian contacts, has passed the test of time and was checked during the most complicated turns of modern history.

Detailed exchange of views on the most international problems was discussed. Issues of strengthening strategic stability, settlement of regional conflicts, about common position to strengthen the role of the United Nations in international affairs, formation of the India-Russia-China axis were discussed. On combating terrorism, both sides have underlined the importance of joint efforts for establishing solid international legal basis for cooperation in combating international terrorism including adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and the Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. This visit also pondered more on how to curb this menace.⁸¹

11.5. Parliamentary Contacts

Parliamentary cooperation constitutes an important facet of Indo-Russian ties and helps forge contacts across the political spectrum of both the countries. A Charter of the India-Russia Inter-Parliamentary Commission was signed in Moscow in November 1998. Past important parliamentary exchanges include the following:

Visit to India by a delegation of the Russian State Duma (Lower House) led by its Speaker Mr. Ivan Rybkin in November 1994;

Visit to Russia by the then Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee in January 1995;

Visit to India by a 7-member delegation of young Russian Parliamentarians in September 1996;

Visit to Russia by then Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. P.A.Sangma, accompanied by a multi-party Parliamentary delegation in October 1996;

Visit to India by a delegation of Russian State Duma Committee on

Nationalities led by its Chairman Mr. Vladimir Zorin in November 1996 at the invitation of our Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs;

Visit to India by the then Speaker of the State Duma, Mr. Gennady Seleznyev, from November 23-27, 1997;

Lok Sabha Speaker, Shri G.M.C. Balayogi, visited Russia for the IPU Conference from September 6-12, 1998.

An Indian Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, visited Russia from November 12-17, 1998.

A delegation of the Russian State Duma on International Affairs led by its Chairman Mr. V.P.Lukin visited India from September 13-16, 1998.

The Chairman of the Federation Council (Upper House) of the Russian Parliament Mr. V.P.Stroev visited India from February 8-10, 1999.

A delegation of Indian parliamentarians led by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mr. Santosh Gangwar visited Russia from April 5-9, 1999.

Russian Chairman of the Committee on Legislation, Court and Legal Reforms and Leader of the Group of Parliamentarians on Relations with India, Dr. A.I. Lukyanov, led a Russian Parliamentary delegation to India from April 18-22, 1999.

Visit of the Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation: State Duma Speaker Mr. Gennady Seleznyev visited India from February 29-March 2, 2000. He visited Hyderabad before coming to Delhi. This was the first visit overseas by the State Duma delegation led by Seleznyev after the Duma elections in December 1999. During this visit, Seleznyev called on the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister. He held detailed discussions with the Lok Sabha Speaker. The first session of the Indo Russian Inter Parliamentary Commission was also held during the visit. ⁸²

11.6. Contacts between Judiciary

The Chairman of the Constitutional Court of Russia, Mr. V.A. Tumanov, visited India in February 1996 at the invitation of the Chief Justice of India, Mr. A.H.Ahmadi. This marked the first contact at the highest level between the judicial systems of India and the Russian Federation. A return visit by our Chief Justice to Russia took place from February 17-23, 1997. The Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, Mr.V.M.Lebedev, visited India from May 3-5, 1999. The Chief Justice of India, Mr. A.S.Anand, visited the Russian Federation from May 22-25, 2000 at the invitation of Mr. V.M.Lebedev, Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. ⁸³

11.7. Contacts between Election Commissions

Chairman of the Russian Central Election Commission, Mr. Alexander Ivanchenko, visited India from April 1-8, 1997. The Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. M.S.Gill, accompanied by Election Commissioners Mr. Lyngdoh and Shri Krishnamurthy, paid a return visit to Russia from October 19-25, 1997. The Commissioner in the Russian Central Election Commission, Mr. Sergei Bolshakov, visited India from September 2-7, 1999 during the 13th General Elections and observed the election process. Mr. T.S. Krishna Murthy, Election Commissioner, led a delegation to Moscow from March 24-28, 2000 to observe the Presidential elections in the Russia Federation that were held on March 26, 2000. ⁸⁴

12. Conclusion

Prime Minister Vajpayee's and Russian President Vladimir Putin are keen to further improve the bilateral relations. Both states are equally interested in the creation of a more democratic, multipolar world and want peace and stability. The treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation signed showed a bright light on the essence of "special" Indo-Russian

relations opening the door for strategy. It sets common goals and spheres of cooperation. While consolidating creative work of the past, there was need to impart new dimensions to Indo-Russian cooperation. Leaders of the two countries are confident that the best of minds of India and Russia would continue to interact with, and influence each other to promote peace, brotherhood and enlightenment in the new century just as they did in the past.

India and Russia have been struggling to come to terms with a world that has changed fundamentally. Ties between them are broad, deep and durable. Some previously convergent interests have dissipated and there is potential for a clash of some redefined interests. But on the other hand, some previous differences have now disappeared; some interests that were common have survived through the transition to the new era and fresh complementarities are also emerging. Indeed, Indo-Russian friendship henceforth will be tested not on sentiment but on the touchstone of professionalism and the competitive thrust in today's market economy to mutual advantages. The tunes of Raj Kapoor (Famous Indian film actor and was immensely popular in Soviet Union) days would surely continue to haunt the old timers in Moscow softly, but the new tune in Indo-Russian relationship will be mainly the quality in cooperation. Indo-Russian cooperation continues to be highly important for both the countries.

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