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India-Russia Bilateral Relations

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“We need to convert the extraordinary goodwill between India and Russia into a thriving, visible, vigorous, and mutually beneficial economic relationship.”

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee

I. INTRODUCTION

In Relations between India and Russia are planted in history, mutual trust and mutually gain cooperation, and which possess the support of the citizen of both countries. Russia has been a long standing and demonstrable partner for India. Development of India-Russia relations has been a key pillar of India's foreign policy.² Traditionally, the Indo-Russian strategic partnership has been built on five major components: politics, defence, civil nuclear energy, anti-terrorism co-operation and space³ but after the signing of “Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership” in October 2000, India-Russia bond have acquired a approximately change face with enlarging levels of cooperation in almost all sites of the bilateral relationship consisting political, security, defense, trade and economy, science and technology, and culture

Diplomatic relations between India and Russia started even before India reached independence, on 13 April 1947. In the period immediately following independence the object for India was pertaining economic self-sufficiency through investment in heavy industry. The Soviet Union invested in various new enterprises in the field of heavy machine-building, mining, energy production and steel plants. In India's second Five Year Plan, of the sixteen heavy industry projects established, eight were started with the help of the Soviet Union. This included the establishment of the world famous IIT Bombay.⁴ Further, During the March 2010 visit of the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to New Delhi, the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described Russia in some terms:

“Relations with Russia are a crucial part of our foreign policy, and were gard Russia as a

¹ Student at New Law College, BVDU, Pune, India.

² *Bilateral Relations: India-Russia Relations*, Embassy of India, Moscow, Russia, (December, 2019) <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/bilateral-relations-india-russia.php>. (Last visited on Apr 27, 2020)

³ Speech given by former Indian Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai in Russia, (April 29, 2020; 01:43 IST), <http://indianembassy.ru/index.php/bilateral-relations/bilateral-relations-india-russia>.

⁴ *Ambassador Pankaj Saran's visit to Chechnya Republic (2018)*, Ambassador's interview, <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/70-years-of-india-russia-relations-a-historic-milestone.php>. (Last visited Apr 26, 2020 05:40 IST)

believed and dependable strategic partner. Ours is a relationship that not only stands independent of any other, but whose significance has grown overtime. Our partnership covers areas such as defence, civil nuclear energy, space, science and technology, hydrocarbons and trade and investment.”⁵ Needless to say, it is pertinent to mentioned that In April, 2018, both countries celebrated the 70th anniversary by organizing events across the length and breadth of the countries reflecting the deep and multifaceted relationship.

II. INDIAN SOVIET RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

The Soviet Union had its personally philosophical and military disputes with China and it too disliked Pakistan's allow acceptance of American help for its profits in the region. For the Soviet Union, India was therefore an prominent strategic enemy in the Cold War. India's starting value to the Soviet Union lived in Jawaharlal Nehru's diffusion of non-alignment and Mrs. Indira Gandhi's consequent refusals to condemn the Soviet Union (for military action in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and then again in Afghanistan in 1979), for which Soviet leaders were genuinely grateful. Although India had its own interest in Non-aligned movement, for Russia it was considered that India is extending its support to Russia.

III. INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

For the purpose of academic aspect, the relation between India and Russia can be categorized into two folds. First and the foremost, traditional components and other is Declaration of October 2000, are as follows:

A. Traditional component

India and Russia is having some relations in continuance for the past 70 years are termed as the traditional components. Traditional component are as mentioned below-

- **Political Relation**

The Moscow-Delhi relationship is exceptional in that it forged a sturdy link between the world's leading communist/ authoritarian superpower during the cold war, with a nascent but enthusiastic democracy led by the idealistic Jawaharlal Nehru. After the death of former Premier of the Soviet Union Stalin in 1953, the Soviet Union started showing interest in India and voiced its optimism for “friendly cooperation”. This was guided by the Soviet aspiration to enlarged connections in international area. USSR desired to propagate good relations with the “non- aligned” and newly appeared states of Afro-Asian region. In June

⁵ Former PM M. Singh, ‘PM’s Statement at the Joint Press Conference with his Russian Counterpart’ 12 March 2010, <https://archivepmo.nic.in/drmanmohansingh/speech-details.php?nodeid=870>. (Last visited Apr 30, 2020; 12:30 IST)

1955, Nehru visited the Soviet Union, and this was the first visit of that country by the Indian Prime-minister. These Soviet leaders supported various aspects our foreign policy, including Panch Sheel. Further, there are many issues on which Russia showed its stand with India are as follows:-

- i. Russian leaders elucidated that India would endure prominent in Russia's overall South Asian policy. Russia unambiguously aided India on the matter of J&K; and committed to back India in a bid for a permanent UN Security Council seat and made a promise not to give military-technological assistance to Pakistan.
- ii. The Soviet government never pressurized India to modify its political system or the socio-economic system, though they had "party to party" friendly relations with Indian leftist groups. In various international forums, the two countries had similar views on most of the issues. But still, "India retained its independence of action and judgment on international issues and thus remained true to its non-aligned status"⁶
- iii. The Soviet Union suddenly disintegrated in December 1991 and the mighty state of USSR was replaced by 15 Republics. India has maintained diplomatic, friendly and co-operative relations not only with Russian Federation but also with the other members of CIS⁷
- iv. Both India and Russia affirmed their stand to check growing menace of "religious fundamentalism, separatism and terrorism", which normally disturbed the unity of "pluralistic countries".
- v. Russia took the same stand on the Chechnya issue by rejecting any third party mediation for the resolution of the issue. This was an evidence how both the countries were forging common stand on issues of common concern.
- vi. The Annual Summit meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russia is the significant institutionalized dialogue process in the strategic partnership between both countries. So far nineteen Annual Summit meetings have taken place alternatively in India and Russia which resulted in 19 documents related to cooperation in defense, space, information security, foreign policy, trade & investment, hydrocarbons, ship building, railways, and science and technology.⁸

⁶ Dubey Muchkund, "India's Foreign Policy, Coping with the Changing World", Orient BlackSwan Private Limited, New Delhi, (1st e-edition, 2016), p.354

⁷P.22, Chapter-20, *India- Russia Relation*,

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/207808/5/5_%20chapter%202.pdf (Last visited Apr 27, 2020)

⁸*Annual Summit (Political Relations)*, India-Russia Relations-Ministry of External Affairs

http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_Russia_May.pdf. (Last visited Apr 28, 2020)

From the aforesaid points it is cleared that India and Russia both have common standing on global issues around the world.

- **DEFENCE AND SECURITY**

The defense facet of the relationship is one of the strongest pillars of the India-Russia relationship and has withstood the test of time. India is the largest buyer of Russian military equipment and, at the same time, Russia is India's principal defence partner.⁹ India and Russia began a meaningful defence cooperation in the early 1960s, which became central element of their growing strategic partnership subsequently. By the mid-1960s Russian military hardware supplies to India, surpassed that of the US. It is supervised by the Program for Military Technical Cooperation signed between the two countries which is valid, at present till 2020. It conserves the profits of the two states to facilitate development and strengthen the military and technical cooperation in the field of research and development, production and after sales help of armament system and various military tools. The two sides also have periodic exchanges of armed forces personnel and military exercises¹⁰.

- i. India, with Russia's cooperation, has gained capacity building in strategic fields through acquisitions and development of weapons. The relationship is generating from the traditional buyer-seller one to that of joint production and development, with focus on technology sharing. Russia is committed to becoming a part in the 'Make in India' program. BrahMos Missile System as well as the licensed production in India of SU-30 aircraft and T-90 tanks, are instance of such flag ship co-operation.
- ii. Defense industries of both the countries intended to go for arrange of Joint projects. The supersonic Brahmos cruise missile, Multirole Transport Aircraft, The Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA), Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme, HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft and KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters are the result of this joint venture.
- iii. The first-ever Tri Services exercise – 'INDRA 2017' took place in Vladivostok from October 19 to 29, 2017. On December 13 to 16, bilateral Russian-Indian naval

⁹ Defence, Ambassador Pankaj Saran's visit to Chechnya Republic (2018), *Ambassador's interview*, <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/70-years-of-india-russia-relations-a-historic-milestone.php>. (Last visited Apr 30, 2020; 01:32 IST)

¹⁰ India-Russia Defence Cooperation, *Bilateral Relations*, <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/india-russia-defence-cooperation.php>. (Last visited Apr 30, 2020; 01:03IST)

exercise Indra Navy-2018 was take place in the Bay of Bengal.

- iv. Recently in 2019, India-Russia conducted the joint military exercise under the aegis of the United Nations aimed at combating terrorism and insurgency.
- v. It is important to note that Russia currently is one of only two countries in the world (the other being Japan) that has a mechanism for annual ministerial-level defense reviews with India.

- **CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY CO-OPERATION**

Russia is an essential partner in the field of nuclear energy and acknowledges India as a responsible country with advanced nuclear technology with a flawless non-proliferation record. After the Paris Agreement on Climate Change India considers nuclear energy as a vital source of energy to require its energy and climate change obligations. This leads both countries together into a mutually beneficial relationship.

- i. After independence India entered into nuclear cooperation agreements with many countries, both for research and development efforts and supply of materials. In respect of nuclear cooperation on material transfer, India entered into an agreement with USA in August 1963 and with Canada in December 1963.
- ii. Subsequent to the first Indian nuclear test in 1974, Indo-US and Indo-Canadian nuclear cooperation came to an end. NSG guidelines restricted any nuclear trade with India for 33 years. Still for the running of the two nuclear reactors, India signed nuclear supply agreements with USSR in September 1976.
- iii. Before the break-up of the USSR, a “nuclear cooperation deal” was signed by India and Soviet Union in 1988. This deal was updated in 1997. The deal was extended with other agreements like the “2002 agreement for the construction of the nuclear reactors” by Russia at Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu¹¹.

Further, in October 2018, India and Russia signed an agreement to construct 6 nuclear reactors.

- **JOINT STANDING ON ANTI-TERRORISM**

Terrorism is an affair that disturbs both India and Russia. Though India has been a target of this menace for a relatively long period but it surfaced in the bilateral relations only after the downfall of the USSR. India is facing separatist activities in J&K, and similarly Russia in Chechnya. Both nations are finding it difficult to restrain these movements. Both India and

¹¹ *Nuclear Cooperation*, P.94, Chapter-20, India-Russia Relation, https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/207808/5/5_%20chapter%202.pdf (Last visited Apr 30, 2020; 02:26 IST)

Russia consider these movements as terrorism, instead of the “right for self-determination”. It is believed by both countries that some neighbor countries are assisting the separatists by providing “moral, political and financial support” to them. Thus Counterterrorism is another area where both countries find a convergence of interest. Both countries vigorously criticized terrorism in all its sorts, focusing the want for an effective worldwide measure in acting with the terrorist peril. According to the Document on Strategic Partnership in October 2000 summit; India & Russia have committed to exert in adjacent, for combating the peril of “worldwide terrorism and religious radicalism”. Both decided to set up a “joint working group” to plan out a collective approach to fight international terrorism.

- **SPACE CO-OPERATION**

Space has been the most victorious field of India Russia Cooperation. India & Russia has been conventionally contributing in the sphere of aerospace for many decades, and they concur to increase their cooperation in the area. Over the years, Space Program in India has been carried out with the help of high technology from the USSR. Carrying forward this traditional cooperation, Russia & India have undertaken numerous “high-technology space projects” under the “2004 Inter-Governmental Agreement on Cooperation in the area of exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes”. India-Russia co-operation in the area of tranquil utilize of outer space dates back to about four decagon. India and Russia have both signed agreements for the co-operation and utilization of GLONASS. India’s first Satellite Aryabhata was launched into space with the co-operation of the Soviet Union.

B. DECLARATION OF OCTOBER, 2000

India and USSR had good nexus between them but turning point was the collapse of Soviet Union. The principal political benefit, since the destruction of the Soviet Union, between India and Russia start with the Strategic Partnership signed between the two countries in 2000. This partnership added new fields in the partnership of India and Russia such as Trade and Economy, Science and Technology and Cultural Co-operation.

- **CO-OPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Cooperation in Science & Technology with Soviet Union, and now Russia, has always been considered as a matter of primary importance for our bilateral relations. Various institutions were set up with the help and aid of the Soviet Union, to develop India’s infrastructure. Many Research Centers as well as Laboratories were established in India by active cooperation of the USSR with Scientific Groups in India.

- **CULTURAL COOPERATION**

India-Russia Cultural relations are from chronicle and were grown even prior to India got independence in 1947. India and Russia have robust cultural ties, which are an essential donation to the strong and robust relations between the countries. Historical connections have donated to forming compassion among the nations. As the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi remarked, in India, every child knows that Russia is our country's greatest friend and has always stood with us during the toughest moments.¹² The bonding that began with Afanasy Nikitin reaching India even before Vasco-da- Gama discovered India to the West, Gujarat it raders settling in Astrakhan (city in Russia) and the set-up of the Russian the at rein Kolkata have all brought citizens of our countries closer. Russian literature and thinkers such as Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Pushkin and others have had a learned influence and donation to Indian literature and thought. Various generations of Russians have grown up by watching and understanding Indian films. Yoga (India's heritage) in Russia has been growing and becoming increasingly popular since the 1980s, particularly in majors cities and urban centers.

- **20th India Russia Annual Summit**

Till date there has been 19 annual summit between India- Russia has been successfully organized by both the countries. On September 4&5, 2019, Russia hosted 20th Annual Summit and Hon'ble Prime Minsiter of India Narendra Modi, on the invitation by President of Russia H.E. Vladhimar Putin, visited Russia to continue the dialogue of Strategic Partnership. Both countries imagined progressive development of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between India and Russia. Following Point are the outcome of the 20th Annual Summit-

- i. Both sides are prioritize strong, multifaceted trade and economic cooperation as the foundation for further expanding the range of India-Russia relations. The Leaders largely applauded the work of the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on buisness, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation which enshrines continuing enlargement of bilateral cooperation in diverse zones.
- ii. Russian President expressed their interest in expanding the participation of Russian business in "Make in India" program and that of Indian companies in investment

¹² Culture, Ambassador Pankaj Saran's visit to Chechnya Republic (2018), *Ambassador's interview*, <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/70-years-of-india-russia-relations-a-historic-milestone.php>. (Last visited Apr 15, 2020; 03:01 IST)

projects in Russia¹³. India and Russia signed 15 agreements taking bilateral cooperation to a modify high rate at the 20th annual summit.

- iii. India and Russia decided to step up industrial cooperation and create new technological and investment partnership, especially in advanced high-tech areas, with an aim to increase bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025¹⁴.
- iv. Russian President decided to set up more than 20 Russian-designed nuclear units in India in the next 20 years¹⁵.
- v. President Putin, at 20th annual summit, extended his invitation to PM for the celebration of 75th anniversary of Victory Day in Moscow on 9th May 2020.¹⁶

Needless to say, it is evident from the above points that in present time the India and Russia both the countries are committed to develop their mutual relations under the dialogue of Strategic Partnership.

IV. EXERTIONS IN INDO-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP

The India-Russia relationship has been under many exertion in the previous various ages just because of the increasing recognition in the Russian formation that India was expanding nearer to the United States. On the other side, it is not just Russia that is worried about the India-U.S. relationship. India too has worry about Russia's arising relationships with China and Pakistan, and also its growing relationship with Washington. Both Russia and China are being challenged by the US, politically, economically, and strategically. Russia's position on areas of stress in the world, whether it is Ukraine, Georgia, West Asia, Afghanistan or North Korea, appears to openly challenge U.S. predominance. This tension seizes India between its developing strategic partnership with the United States and its weakness on Russia for defense technological requirements.

V. OBLIGATIONS ON BOTH COUNTRIES TO REJUVENATE RELATIONS

Despite of the above mentioned points on exertions in India-Russia relations, some steps should

¹³ *India, Russia sign 15 agreements*, National News, News Service Division, All India Radio, <http://newsonair.nic.in/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=371062>. (Last visited Apr 26, 2020; 12:35 IST)

¹⁴ *India, Russia agree to step up trade to \$30 bn by 2025* (Published on September 04, 2019), Economy, The Hindu Business Lines, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-russia-agree-to-step-up-trade-to-30-bn-by-2025/article29332019.ece>. (Last visited Apr 26, 2020; 12:42 IST)

¹⁵ *India-Russia*, Live Mint, Sep 04, 2016, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/russia-plans-to-set-up-above-20-nuclear-power-units-in-india-in-next-20-years-1567600889899.html>. (Last visited Apr 26, 2020; 12:45 IST)

¹⁶ *Point.3, Annual Summit*, Bilateral Relations: India-Russia Relations, <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/bilateral-relations-india-russia.php>. (Last visited Apr 26, 2020; 01:15 IST)

to be taken by both the countries to rejuvenate the relations because it gives extra maneuvering space for both countries vis-à-vis other actors.

- India needs to regenerate on its strengths and concerns with the Russians and also requires to largen its scientific and technological relations with Russia since a groundwork for this already exists.
- Both the country need to explore other avenues of co-operation, beyond defense technical co-operation to strengthen this relationship.
- There is field for improvement in trade between Russia and India if the international North-South corridor through Iran and the Vladivostok-Chennai sea route can be operationalized.

India can benefit from hi-tech co-operation with Russia in the fields of artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, outer space and nanotechnology.

VI. INDO RUSSIA RELATIONS STATUS QUO

As of now, the whole world is aggrieved by the outbreak of Corona Virus (also known as COVID19). This has been declared as a World Pandemic by World Health Organization. As far as International Relation is concerned this is the peak time for ever country to show their support to each other and as far as India is concerned, this is the crucial as well as peak time for India also, in my opinion, to regain and to re-establish their relations with Russian Federation.

On March 25, 2020, PM of India Narendra Modi and the President of Russia Vladhimar Putin had a telephonic conversation in which both the leader agreed on further consultation and cooperation on all challenges faced by this major global crisis, including those pertaining to health, medicine, scientific research, humanitarian matters and impact on global economy.¹⁷ Further, both leaders assured to extend all possible aids to combat COVID19 together.

On 15th March 2020, the European Union exports of personal protective equipment, including face shields, surgical masks and gowns. As a result of this, India also banned the export of ventilators and sanitizers on March 24, 2020. Thereafter, Russian President as well as some other countries like USA asked India, through telephonic conversation, for the supply of medicine and equipment. In response to this Prime Minister of India told that he will also consider Moscow's request for supply of Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) in Russia in the

¹⁷Telephone conversation between PM and President of the Russian Federation , (March 25th, 2020), <https://www.narendramodi.in/telephone-conversation-between-prime-minister-narendra-modi-and-president-of-the-russian-federation-548963>. (Last visited Apr 26th , 2020; 02:08 IST)

backdrop of strong bilateral strategic partnership.¹⁸ Thereafter, on April 7, 2020, India lifts the partial ban on the supply of HCQ and Paracetamol medicine¹⁹. The incident and more specifically the action of India shows its intention to maintain good foreign relations at this crucial times and again India is passing the test of its relations with Russia.

VII. CONCLUSION

After the perusal of aforementioned discussion, One important lesson, that we learn from the history of India- Russia relation is that, despite numerous ordeals and hardships facing both countries, both sides have always found courage and strength to stand up to the odds of life, fight against all odds and ultimately triumph over the challenges. Russia and India may face temporary problems that from time to time, but they will always be a crucial element of any world sequence and will donate peerless towards the elevation of international behaviour and the development of mankind.

¹⁸ *India, Russia discuss facilitating needs of equipment, medicines to fight Covid-19*, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-russia-discuss-facilitating-needs-of-equipment-medicines-to-fight-covid-19/articleshow/75076396.cms?from=mdr>. (Last visited Apr 26th, 2020; 02:24 IST),

¹⁹ Basu Nayanima, *India Partially Lifts Ban on Export of Hydroxychloroquine*, The Print, (April 7th, 2020), <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/india-partially-lifts-ban-on-export-of-hydroxychloroquine-hours-after-trumps-threat/396792/>. (Last visited Apr 26, 2020; 14:26 IST)