



## INDO-RUSSIA RELATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UKRAINIAN IMBROGLIO: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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### Abstract

*Russia has been a longstanding and time-tested partner for India. Development of India-Russia relations has been a key pillar of India's Foreign policy. India and Russia have enjoyed good relations since 1947 wherein Russia helped India in attaining its goal of economic self-sufficiency through investment in areas of heavy machine-building, mining, energy production and steel plants. Later India and Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in August 1971 which was the manifestation of shared goals of the two nations as well as blueprint for the strengthening of regional and global peace and security. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, India and Russia entered into a new Treaty of Friendship and cooperation in January 1993 and a bilateral Military-Technical Cooperation agreement in 1994. As the Indian government's response to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis received a mixed reaction, it puts a serious introspective question to Indian lawmakers: is Indian foreign policy still dependent upon the big superpowers or are we moving towards Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)? After abstaining in UN Security Council, New Delhi again abstained from voting in United Nations General Assembly on a resolution condemning "in the strongest terms" Russia's belligerence against Ukraine and calling on Moscow to "immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from Ukraine's territory within its internationally recognised borders." In the current crisis, India has strived to maintain a non-aligned collinear, avoiding pointing a finger or naming names. This has proven to be challenging in the present predicament. It has done so by reiterating fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international law, but also appeals for a halt to violence and to return for dialogue as "the only response to addressing disagreements and conflicts, however daunting that may sound at this time."*

**Keywords :** India, Russia, Bi-lateral, Relations, Trade

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### INTRODUCTION

The origin of defense diplomacy between India and Russia began since 1962 and since then is based on mutual trust and more than 70% of Indian defense equipment today is of Russian origin. These weapons have also proved their worth at a time when India needed them in conflicts. Defense has been a vital pillar of the relationship. Unlike other nations, Russia has never invoked arms sanctions on India and at a critical times like the Kargil conflict, Russia has even supplied items to India from their own military reserves. India-Russia military technical cooperation has evolved from a buyer – seller framework to one involving joint research and production of advanced defense technologies. Brahmos missile system as well as licensed production in India of SU-30 aircraft and T-90 tanks, are examples of such flagship cooperation. Counter terrorism is another area where both countries find convergence of interest. Both countries strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms. India –Russia cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of outer space dates back to about four decades. 2015 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of India's first satellite

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“Aryabhata” on a Russian launch vehicle ‘Soyuz’. Today Russia is the most important strategic space power for India. There is a strong tradition of Indian studies in Russia. Apart from Hindi, languages such as Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Sanskrit, and Pali are taught in Russian institutions. There are regular cultural initiatives to promote people-to-people contacts between India and Russia. India-Russia nuclear cooperation goes back to 1960s. In 1961, India had concluded research and development agreements with Russia in Hungary for the Rajasthan Atomic Power Station[RAPS]. During the Cold War period, Russia also supported India by supplying fuel at Tarapur in 1982 and in 1988, agreed to help construct reactors and supply light water for reactors in Koodankulam after Pokhran. Since the signing of “Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic partnership” in October 2000 {during the visit of President Putin}, India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, defense and economy, science and technology and culture. Under the strategic partnership, several institutionalized dialogue mechanisms operate at both political and official levels to ensure regular interaction and follow up on cooperation activities. During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010, the strategic partnership was elevated to the level of a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership”. New Delhi needs Moscow’s support in the India’s bid for a permanent seat on the UN security council. India and Russia are engaged in several multilateral efforts that are greatly favoured by Russia such as the BRICS and the SCO. Annual summit meeting is the highest dialogue mechanism under the strategic partnership. The Russians have backed the Indian position on Kashmir. Russia has consistently supported India on Kashmir issue. In 2019, when India abrogated Article 370, Russia maintained that it was an “internal matter of India”.

### **Background**

In the initial years of Indian independence, upto 1953, Stalin was not very keen about India. Stalin did not appreciate the non-aligned posturing of India and perceived Indian leaders as capitalist lackeys. After the death of Stalin, with the coming of Nikita Khrushchev to power, Soviets began to view India favourably as a counter balance in East-west confrontation. India also responded to the changing Soviet posturing. India conducted the nuclear test and Soviets did not condemn it and, in fact, went on to support India with the supply of heavy water for the nuclear programme. In words of PM Narendra Modi, “India gives top priority to its relations with Russia. India this rapidly changing world, our relation has become more relevant.”

### **Objectives of the study**

- The research study has carried out following objectives.
- To trace the origin and development of Indo-Russia strategic partnership.

To examine the Ukrainian imbroglio and impact of war on India’s economy and Imports.

### **Methodology**

The methodology adopted for the study is historical, analytical and descriptive. Data used in this paper has been collected both from primary and secondary sources like- official reports from India and Iran, drafts official documents, books, magazines, journals, periodicals and newspapers. Relevant material from internet has also been accessed.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

V.D Chopra in his book *Indo-Russian Relations : An Overview* Russian-Indian Relations : A View into the Third Millennium Indo-Russian Strategic Cooperation Indo-Russian Strategic Partnership for Enhanced Cooperation The Phases in Indo-Russian Relations Future of India-Russia Defence Cooperation India-Russia Economic Relations : Challenges and Opportunities Trade Relations between India and Russia Economic and Trade Relations between India and Russia Indo-Russian Nuclear Cooperation Indo-Russian Cooperation in Marine Science and Technology Russia and South Asia : Growing Indo-Russian Relations Indian Economic Interests in Central Asia in Post-Soviet Era Central Asia : Russian and Indian Interests Indo-Russian Relations: Prospects and Problems in the Twenty First Century Indo-Russian Relations : Historical Perspective Impact of Developments in Russia on Indian National Movement Political Pluralism in Russia - A Tentative Assessment Russia's Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period Putin, Plutocracy and Foreign Policy Russian Foreign Policy A Wind of Change is Blowing : A Report on Russia Today Economic Transformation in Russia Putin's Russia : Unquiet Flows the Don Chechen Imbroglio : Prospect of Russian Disintegration ? Russia, China and India : An Overview Russia and China : The Emerging Strategic Partnership New Starting-Point, New Challenges-Sino-Russian Relations in the New Century.

Jasjit Singh in his book: *India Russia Relations* There is an apparent global power shift from the West to the East, essentially due to the rise of India and China and, as a consequence, the US has called for greater presence in the East in the midst of a major economic crisis and huge defence cuts. Many, after the Cold War, considered the international order to be unipolar; however, the rise of India and China, with Russia, Japan and South Korea assuming significant roles, appears to indicate a shift to a polycentric global order. Hence, the Indo-Russia dialogue assumes critical importance in the 21st century as a result of new evolving power centres and the relative decline of some older ones. The proceedings of the seminar highlight the requirement of a new relationship based on the Indo-Russia framework rather than on the earlier Indo-Soviet model in the midst of the changing regional strategic landscape. The book also draws attention to the shift in the US policy in East Asia. The economic and military rise of China and India; the lacklustre economic performance of Japan; the emergence of India as a nuclear weapon power; and the relative decline of US credibility as a security provider have altered the strategic landscape of the region. China's assertiveness and North Korea's emergence as a nuclear power are challenging the US presence in the region and, therefore, forcing the US defence policy to 'Look East'. This book brings out an exciting analysis of future Indo-Russia relations based on defence, civil nuclear energy, space and science and technology.

Wilson situates Ukraine's February insurgence within Russia's expansionist ambitions throughout the previous decade. He reveals how President Putin's extravagant spending to develop soft power in all parts of Europe was aided by wishful thinking in the EU and American diplomatic inattention, and how Putin's agenda continues to be widely misunderstood in the West. The author then examines events in the wake of the Uprising—the military coup in Crimea, the election of President Petro Poroshenko, the Malaysia Airlines tragedy, rising tensions among all of Russia's neighbors, both friend and foe, and more. Ukraine Crisis provides an important, accurate record of events that unfolded in

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Ukraine in 2014. It also rings a clear warning that the unresolved problems of the region have implications well beyond Ukrainian borders.

Gidadhubli, R. G. (1999). India-Russia Economic Relations: Issues and Prospects. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(20), 1215–1219. Wide year-to-year fluctuations characterise India's trade with Russia. While that country is all set to make significant sales to India of machinery and equipment and military hardware, India has to reckon with ad hocism in the manner of utilisation of the rupee hoard at Russia's disposal and bleak prospects of significantly boosting exports even of 'comparative advantage' commodities. Exports to Russia may plunge once rupee trade is completely phased out

ALAM, M. B. (2019). Contextualising India–Russia Relations: THE CHINA FACTOR. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 23(1), 48–59. This paper examines and summarises the broad contours of India–Russia relations of the past seven decades in multiple facets with far reaching ramifications at play. It also explains the China factor in a contextual relationship with India and Russia and on the background of the Sino–American equation, as China becomes a preeminent power in Asia with an ambitious agenda to match the prowess of the US on the global front. At the end it forecasts some probable scenarii both regionally and globally involving India, Russia and China.

Sasikumar, Karthika, and Gilles Verniers. “The India-U.S. Nuclear Cooperation Agreement: Explaining the Contentious Indian Debate.” *Asian Survey* 53, no. 4 (2013): 679–702.

The article states that U.S.-India civil nuclear energy agreement triggered a contentious debate in India from 2005 to 2008. Regional political actors played crucial and unanticipated roles in the debate

Kutty, S. N. (2019). Dealing with Differences: The Iran Factor in India-U.S. Relations. *Asia Policy*, 14(1), 95–118. This article examines the India-U.S. strategic partnership and argues that the Iran factor is not as big an impediment to the bilateral relationship as is often assumed. The India-U.S. relationship is not as sensitive to the Iran factor as is frequently depicted. Both sides are accommodative of each other's strategic interests and have so far taken the long view when dealing with their differences to avoid major disruptions in ties

Singh, S. (2019). The Indo-Pacific and India-U.S. Strategic Convergence: An Assessment. *Asia Policy*, 14(1), 77–94. This article examines Indian and U.S. perceptions of the Indo-Pacific, the extent of their strategic convergence and cooperation in this region, and the manner in which key states in the region have responded to this seeming convergence

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

While India cannot fully disentangle itself from Russian arms transfers and cooperation in the short term. India needs to begin decreasing its reliance on Russian weapons and components. India needs to find alternative sources for the production and maintenance of several weapons systems, especially high-end weapons. India has to rebuild on its strengths and common concerns with the Russians. Both have to revitalize their earlier agreement on sharing intelligence for a joint strategy on terrorism. Scientific and technological relations needs to be deepen since a base already exists. More focus needs to be given in trade and investment ties between India and Russia. India should seek to play a more active role in the SCO as a member. Since Russia has close relations with



Iran, India should explore the possibility of Russian involvement in Chabahar port which will provide Afghanistan and Central Asia access to Sea. Reinventing Indo-Russian relations should be focused by political leadership of both the countries.

India should develop its indigenous capacity for needs of weapon system. It cannot be forgotten that no country will part with any of its critical technologies. Indo-Russia counter terrorism agenda must seek greater institutionalization, instead of relying on Pakistan's rising and falling relevance in Russian considerations regarding terror networks. In international politics, there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies, only national interests in such a scenario India must continue to pursue its foreign policy of strategic hedging.

## UKRAINIAN IMBROGLIO

As the Indian government's response to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis received a mixed reaction, it puts a serious introspective question to Indian lawmakers: is Indian foreign policy still dependent upon the big superpowers or are we moving towards Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)? After abstaining in UN Security Council, New Delhi again abstained from voting in United Nations General Assembly on a resolution condemning "in the strongest terms" Russia's belligerence against Ukraine and calling on Moscow to "immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from Ukraine's territory within its internationally recognised borders." In the current crisis, India has strived to maintain a non-aligned collinear, avoiding pointing a finger or naming names. This has proven to be challenging in the present predicament. It has done so by reiterating fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international law, but also appeals for a halt to violence and to return for dialogue as "the only response to addressing disagreements and conflicts, however daunting that may sound at this time."

In effect, India's direct involvement has been confined to trying to pressure the Ukrainian and Russian governments to ensure the welfare and security of more than 20,000 Indian nationals in Ukraine, the majority of whom are students, and to arrange a safe passage out of the country. India's dependence on Russia for defense is well documented, and represents the primary reason for its evergreen response to the Ukraine crisis. Over 70 percent of India's defense inventory is attributed to Russia. Recently India have finalized a deal worth INR 5,000 crores for the manufacture of 7.5 AK 203 Russian Assault rifles.

For Moscow, Delhi is its largest importer of arms, and for India, Russia is the largest exporter when it comes to arms transfer. Between 2000 and 2020, Russia accounted for 66.5 percent of India's arms imports. Of the \$53.85 billion spent by India during that period on arms imports, \$35.82 billion went to Russia. During the same period, imports from the United States were worth \$4.4 billion, and from Israel \$4.1 billion. In light of India's overdependence on Russia, Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal has called upon India's start-ups to become self-reliant in energy and defense.

## Bilateral Relation

The first concern between India and Russia is rapidly expanding ties between India and USA, which started with the Indo-U.S nuclear deal in 2008. The growing defense relationship between India and USA .. Russia's decision to supply Pakistan with the Mi-35 Hind Attack Helicopters has alarmed the Indian defense establishment. Indian Armed

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Forces often complain about spare parts and maintenance of Russian equipments. Part of blame is on Indian defense and foreign policy negotiations that failed to develop a deeper perspective on life cycle of products. Russia has also made efforts for strategic outreach towards China since Ukraine crisis. Russia has proposed Russia-India-China forum. India is hesitant about this because of unresolved issues with China. Lack of involvement of the private sector has resulted in higher costs of transactions. Russian firms imports goods from China or Europe as transport takes one to two weeks compared to 40-50 days from India. Further, there are difficulties in interaction between Russian public sector companies and Indian private companies. Closer ties between Beijing and Moscow will give China greater influence over Russian policy. Then China could pressure Russia to halt the sale of new systems or the transfer of spare parts to India. This would greatly reduce Indian military capabilities until India could pivot to other suppliers such as the US or Israel. China could also pressure Russia to recognize Chinese claims over disputed territory in northern and northeastern India or to change its traditionally pro-India stance on Kashmir. Relatedly, China could influence Russia to increase its partnership with Pakistan, especially in energy, as China has invested in the development of Pakistan's economy and infrastructure as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The Russian invasion of Ukraine poses a serious threat to Indo-Russian relations due to the potential for closer Sino-Russian alignment and the potential for the war to undermine the Indo-Russian arms relationship.

Ukraine was a member of the Soviet Union until 1991 when it disintegrated, and Russia has tried to maintain the country in its orbit since then. In 2014, a separatist insurgency started in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, Donetsk Basin. Russia further gained a maritime advantage in the region due to its invasion and annexation of Crimea. As a result, both the US and the EU have pledged to safeguard the integrity of Ukraine's borders. So India is balancing between Russia and US amidst growing tensions. India is not considered as neutral by the western block on Ukraine.

India's recent abstention at UNSC on Ukraine issue indicates that it will continue to maintain favorable relations with both the countries whilst prioritizing its own interest. US accommodated India's stance on Russia stating that America's relation with India has not been impacted by the ongoing tensions with Russia, seems to suggest that India is so far successfully navigating between both the great powers. Although India and the US have quite contradictory responses towards the Russia-Ukraine crisis. India and US have underscored their commitment to continue to build on the momentum of recent years and not lose sight of the larger strategic picture also imports most of spare parts and weapons .

## CONCLUSION

The war will also not change Russian or Indian interest in creating a multipolar world. Thus there will remain some mutual interest, even if Russia and India drift apart due to the erosion of the Indo-Russian arms relationship and/or greater Russia-China alignment. If the eventual impact of the war on Russia-China alignment or the Indo-Russian arms trade remains minimal, this shared interest could sustain a strong Indo-Russian relationship. And if these factors severely strain Indo-Russian relations, this common concern will provide a reason for some engagement between New Delhi and Moscow, potentially limiting the damage to the India-Russia relationship.



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