

India-Russia Relations in the Emerging World Order

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The fifteenth India-Russia annual summit took place in a fast changing global geopolitical scenario and in a challenging moment in world politics. India and Russia emerged as vital strategic partners representing global transformation from a unipolar world order dominated by one centre to a multipolar order based on multilateralism, principles of UN Charter, non-intervention, cooperation, convergence of national interests, mutual understanding and trust. This is because of the perceived failures of the American “unipolar moment”, which is guided by the principles of pre-emptive strikes, regime change, disarmament and intervention. After twenty-five years of Soviet disintegration, the current geopolitical realities like rift in the US-Russia-Europe relations over Ukraine conflict, global oil crisis, economic crisis, Euro zone crisis, conflict in West Asia, NATO military build-up and expansion to Russia’s border, escalation of terrorist attacks in Europe, emergence of BRICS countries, Russia’s shifting priorities to Asia-Pacific, commencement of Eurasian Economic Union, and shifting power alignments from west to east expose the dangers of unilateralism and reflect a paradigm shift in the world order.

In the changing global scenario, Russia has re-emerged as an independent player on the world scene and India attained the reputation of an emerging global economic power next to China, which is the second largest global economic power. India-Russia relations, which existed as time-tested since the Soviet days based on convergence of national interests, mutual trust, confidence and understanding, has been depicting a long term synergy, especially since the signing of “Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership” in October 2000 during the visit of President Putin to India. Thereafter, relations have been qualitatively transformed in virtually all areas such as defence, energy, technology and innovation, global issues and order, and revitalised economic cooperation and elevated the partnership to the level of a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.” The new government came to power in India in May 2014 also asserted Russia’s unique place in Indian foreign policy and is determined to look for strengthening the India-Russia relations over the next decade. In short, Russia remains a strong pillar in India’s foreign policy matrix and the bilateral relations are in the core interests of both countries, although certain regional political issues stand as challenges and “time testing”. This paper is an

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attempt to examine the present state of India-Russia relations, its significance in the emerging world order, and the challenges, issues and opportunities in the way ahead.

Global Strategic Context

The collapse of Berlin wall in 1989 and the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 led to the end of bipolar system and cold war and marked the beginning of a new phase in the global order.¹ Globalization, transnationalism and unipolarity became the major trends in the changing global order in the post-cold war era for the past twenty five years. As a result of globalization the issues and challenges in the contemporary world had acquired an unprecedented transnational character. A range of new issues such as security, terrorism, energy, climate change, cyber security, nuclear disarmament, trade, development, poverty, inequality, diseases, and religious extremism became transnational challenges going beyond the territorial boundaries of a nation state. Weakening of nation states and their traditional social role and intensified corporatization at the cost of nature and human lives is another major challenge for people all over the world (Bhambhri 1997). New forms of authorities and multiple actors –state, non-state, transnational and intergovernmental – have emerged and continue to emerge in the international system challenging the earlier established forms of authority. Collective engagement of states is very much necessary than ever before.

When we look at the global order in terms of polarity, a “unipolar moment” emerged after the disintegration of Soviet Union. The world witnessed a unipolar world order led by America, the sole superpower without an enemy. American primacy, unilateralism, interventions, world hegemony and exceptionalism remain the guiding principles of American foreign policy and national security objective. Eurasian landmass was given the primary attention due to its significance for sustaining American global primacy for which control over it is crucial. Besides, this region is home to aspirants of regional hegemony and political and economic challengers to American primacy, i.e., Russia, China and India. A retrospective look at strategic plan of former US National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski makes this objective clear. He states:

America’s emergence as the sole global superpower now makes an integrated and comprehensive strategy for Eurasia imperative... Eurasia is home to most of the world’s politically assertive and dynamic states. All the historical pretenders to global power originated in Eurasia. The world’s most populous aspirants to regional hegemony, China and India, are in Eurasia, as are all the potential political and economic challengers to American primacy (Brzezinski 1997a: 309).

Therefore, he elaborated plans for control over the distribution of power in Eurasia as he sees the region serving as the decisive geopolitical chessboard. He argues, “With Eurasia now serving as the decisive geopolitical chessboard, it no longer suffices to fashion one policy for Europe and another for Asia. What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to

America's global primacy..." (Brzezinski 1997b: p). Brzezinski clearly states that "a wider Europe and enlarged NATO will serve the short term and long term interests of US policy", and "a politically defined Europe is essential to Russia's assimilation into a system of global cooperation" (Brzezinski 1999: 311).

The triumphalist US political elites did not satisfy with containment of Soviet Union. In the post-Soviet period they targeted continuously Russia in their pursuit of global hegemony because the country dominant in Eurasia at present is Russia. Hence, trapping Russia even by destroying the peripheral countries remained as a foreign policy priority in the US involvement in the region. Former US Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates's statement testify this fact. Robert Gates, referring to Dick Cheney, former US Defence Secretary and Vice President, wrote in his memoir, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, "When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, Dick wanted to see the dismantlement not only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world" (Gates 2014). His statement undoubtedly clarifies why Euro-American imperialists are after Russia and reveals that the underpinnings of the US policy in Eurasia had the goal of complete destruction of Russia. Such a goal is further evident in US policy of sanctions on Russia and Russophobia in the context Ukraine crisis with the aim to economically weaken and politically isolate so as to foment a "regime change" in Russia and install an American puppet Government there. With the depiction of "Russia as an aggressor", the US and West made it clear that they view Russia as a "threat to global security", on which logic NATO continues military expansion to Russia's borders. Russia at present is confronting containment II policy of the west.

The US "pivot to Asia" is another containment policy in the Asian region to prevent the rise of China challenging American economic power in the global stage. China has become the largest economic power in the world which is a threat to US global primacy. In preventing China, the US political elites see India as a counterweight to be used against China. The US endorsed India's great power status with the above calculation as testified in a speech made by President Obama in Mumbai during his visit in 2010. He stated: "The USA does not believe, as some people say, that India is a rising power; we believe that India has already risen. India is taking its rightful place in Asia and on global stage. And we see India's emergence as good for the USA and good for the world" (Obama 2010).

The US strategists acknowledged the geopolitical and economic significance of India in the 21st century. According to Henry Kissinger, former US State Secretary, "India will be a fulcrum of twenty-first century order: an indispensable element, based on its geography, resources, and tradition of sophisticated leadership, in the strategic and ideological equation of the region and of the global order at whose interaction it stands" (Kissinger 2014). He describes India as "a great civilization at the intersection of world orders, shaping and being shaped by their rhythms. It has been defined less by its political boundaries than by a shared

spectrum of cultural traditions” (Kissinger 2014). This assessment came now when the American “unipolar moment” is depicting failure as it produces multiple crises, political instability and chaos in various regions of the world and paves the way for reactionary non-state forces like ISIS to emerge. Rebirth of fascism is taking place in Europe and the US supports neo-Nazi and fascist elements.

It is in this global context that Russia is calling for a multipolar world order and a consensus of responsible powers that respect international law and sovereignty of other states. Putin is trying to develop close strategic alliance and partnership with countries like China, India, Turkey, Egypt, etc., and through Eurasian integration, and platforms like BRICS, SCO and G20. When resurgent Russia, rising China and emerging India come close, this alliance projects a shift in power alignment in the eastern direction. The shifting of geopolitics from west to east is the most important dynamics in the emerging world order.

Vladimir Putin sees the current significance of Russia, India and China in the East in order to confront containment II in 21st century, as in the same way Lenin observed in 1923 the significance of Russia’s alliance with India and China in the East for ensuring the success of socialism in its struggle against imperialist countries (Lenin 1923). He says:

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured (Lenin 1923).

In a similar vein, Vladimir Putin views that such an alliance might counter NATO expansion and neo-liberal capitalism and strengthen multipolarity. Russia, China and India together can ensure the emergence of a multipolar world order which will be more democratic, equitable, prosperous and peaceful as he asserted in his speech at 43rd Munich Conference on Security in 2007:

The combined GDP measured in purchasing power parity of countries such as India and China is already greater than that of the United States. And a similar calculation with the GDP of the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China – surpasses the cumulative GDP of the EU. And according to experts this gap will only increase in the future. There is no reason to doubt that the economic potential of the new centres of global economic growth will inevitably be converted into political influence and will strengthen multipolarity (Putin 2007).

The above outlook is one of the greater strategic depths in the Eurasian orientation and focus on India in Putin’s Russian policy.

In an interview given to Indian media and Russian RTR TV channel on the eve of Putin’s India visit in 2000 to their question what factors have contributed to the strategic alliance between Russia and India, Putin answered:

Russia adheres to the theory of preserving the strategic balance in the world, in its various regions. India, in my opinion, is a key factor in world politics,

not only regional politics but, I stress, in world politics. And we are interested in maintaining relations with such a great power as India in pursuing the goals that we seek to achieve internationally: stabilisation and the creation of a modern democratic world order, and the goals that we set in bilateral relations. Russia and India are also natural partners in terms of their mutually complementary economic, scientific and technological potential (Putin 2000).

Regarding initial decline in cooperation he said:

It is our long-term position that India as one of the biggest countries in Asia and the world is a key factor of stability on the planet and in the region. Russia is interested in India playing a key role in international affairs. This is in our national interests. I haven't the slightest doubt that such an approach fully meets the national interests of India itself... it is for the benefit of both India and Russia. It pursues the interests of the two countries, but these interests fully meet those of the international community (Putin 2000).²

Here it is clear that Russia wants a long term partnership with India based on the recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity and convergence of each other's legitimate interests.

India view itself as an emerging global power. The strength of such a claim has been articulated by diplomats and strategists in their speeches and statements. For example, Nirupama Rao, former Foreign Secretary, and the first Indian woman Ambassador to China and Sri Lanka, in her speech at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI–Institut français des relations internationales) in Paris on 5 May 2011 stated:

In an Asia-centred century we would naturally wish to ensure a role for India that is commensurate with its size, its growing economic strength, its democratic stability and proven capacity to manage our enormous diversity, contribution to global peace and security and what we see as our justified quest for a greater voice in a multilateral system that is balanced, equitable and representative of new global realities (Rao 2011).

Apparently, India views its civilizational strength, economic growth, soft power credentials, bilateral defence relations and military strength, bilateral and multilateral engagements, market potential and cultural attractiveness as indices of great power status and influence.

Indian foreign policy of nonalignment takes a new meaning in the changing situations. Multilateral alliances and strategic autonomy are the two principles apart from national interest included in India's foreign policy. India pursues for a multipolar world order through global institutions and aligning with other powers showing consensus in this direction. BRICS is an example. India views unipolar world order as dangerous. India challenged unipolarity indirectly as an emerging power aligning with rising China and Russia. It is also to be noted that India has lot of differences with west on a range of issues related to trade, climate change, market access, agriculture, etc. India showed support to Russia on the Crimean issue. India do not support the US containment and isolationist measures against countries like

Russia, China, Iran and Burma but continues to maintain diplomatic relationship. India ignored attention to Obama's advice that "it's not a good time to do business with Russia" when he visited India as chief guest during Republic day celebrations on 26 January 2015. This shows India holds its principles of "strategic autonomy" and independence in international relations and views on global issues. Therefore, in the current global geopolitical calculations of great powers India, with its great civilizational strength and economic potential attains a significant position.

India and Russia view mutual relations as a key pillar in their foreign policy. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement after the 15th India-Russia summit meeting with Putin offering unreserved support for Russia against the backdrop of the cold war like trends in world politics and the concerted Western strategies to 'isolate' Russia is noteworthy. Here, India's position is clear that it will not have any major shift from the earlier policies towards Russia. The global dimension of India-Russia relationship is based on the belief that their enhanced role in the international system will bring global strategic stability, modernization, prosperity and a democratic multipolar world order. The unity of perception on security issues and geopolitical priorities make this relation important.

The strategic self-identity India and Russia are trying to project and challenges they are facing also condition their foreign policy. India has been projected as a growing economy and an emerging global power in the international system by the country's political leadership. Several indicators show the country as emerging power. India is known as the world's biggest democracy. She has the second largest population, fourth largest armed forces, fourth largest economy and sizeable middle class(Nayar and Paul 2003: 9). She owns globally recognized companies in pharmaceuticals and steel, promising information technology sector and space technologies, growing voice in the international stage and emerging largest and youngest workforce; World Bank Group 2014).India is showing growth despite global economic slowdown. In spite of several achievements India has a lot of challenges like poverty, unemployment, environmental issues, malnutrition, inequality, crimes, etc. also to address.

In the regional context also India has many security challenges from neighbouring countries. Dealing with Post-NATO Afghanistan, Pakistan, and improving already complex relation with China are challenges for India in Asia. South Asia is the least integrated region in the world. Countries in the region view India's policies with scepticism, whether India follows a "big brother" attitude to them is another challenge for her. Pakistan sponsored cross border terrorism is a serious security issue facing India.

Russia is a great power since the time of Peter the Great. After disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia lost its great power status temporarily. Today, Russia re-emerged as a great power of global significance and capable of challenging the wrong policies of west. Russia is strongly committed to a multipolar world order. She is the largest energy exporter and has the fifth largest economy. Being a veto

power in the UN she has already become a strong voice on the international issues. However, Russia is confronting containment II strategy of West and NATO encirclement. The Ukraine crisis and alleged role of Russia upset her relations with Europe and the US. The west imposed sanctions on Russia for weakening her economically and isolate politically. Oil price decline affected the economy negatively. The post-sanction economic crisis and inflation led to suffering of people. Russia is now struggling hard for economic recovery. This is the time Russia requires assistance from India. Soviet Russia in the past helped India's development when she gained independence from British Empire in 1947. India maintained friction-free relations with Soviet Union in the past.

Historical Background

India-Russia relations predate India's independence. It is a general understanding that India-Russia relations have the uniqueness of civilizational basis and deep historical roots, mutual understanding and convergence of interests. J.A. Naik notes that Russian accounts indicate the existence of economic and cultural contacts between the two peoples much before the October Revolution and British conquest of India. The first Russian writing on India appeared in 12th-13th century known as "The Relation about India" or "The Story of India the Rich" (Naik 1995: 1). India was a fairy land for people of Kievan Rus.

Russian mercantile Diaspora, travellers and Indologists also gave accounts on India. Russian merchant from the city of Tver, Afanasy Nikitin visited India in the 15th century (1446-1472) and published an account of his travels. His work *A Journey Beyond Three Seas (Khozhdenie za tri moria)* is considered as the first eyewitness account of India by a Russian. Gerasim Lebedev, a Russian traveller reached India in 1785. He was a creative intellectual who possessed expertise in music, drama, Sanskrit and Bengali language. He was considered the first Russian Indologist (Naik 1995).

By 17th century a large number Indian traders were settled in Astrakhan in the Volga Basin. They developed contact with Moscow and St. Petersburg even during the days of Peter the great. The tsarist government even granted temporary citizenship with equivalent rights and duties enjoyed by Russian merchants (Naik 1995). During the years of war against Napoleon in 1812 the Indian merchants generously contributed to the Russian victory. Over two and a half centuries ago, Peter the Great sent his Special Envoy Vice Admiral D. Wilster to India to sign an agreement, to "work as hard as possible in order to have fruitful commercial relations between the two sides" (Vajpayee 2000; Kaushik 1971).

Russian intellectuals also sympathized on India's struggle for freedom. Appreciating the liberation movement of Indian people the Russian magazine, *Otechestvennye Zapiski* wrote: "At present there is hardly a more important, interesting and more serious political issue than the Indian problem. We all are waiting impatiently for news from India. India is the magic word we are looking for

in newspapers” (Sahai 1990: 3). Ivan Palovich Minaev, Russian Orientalist and pioneer of Indian studies in Russia had contact with Indian nationalist leaders like R.G. Bhandarkar, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Kashimath Trimbak Telang and Surendra Nath Banerjee. Minaev visited India thrice during the 1870s and 1880s. He wrote three books and more than 130 articles on Indian history and culture (Sahai 1990: 2).

Russian revolution greatly influenced Indian national leaders. Once the Bolsheviks won the revolution the British Indian government in its Montagu Chelmsford Report of 1918 mentioned that “the Revolution in Russia was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism ... It has given an impetus to Indian political aspirations” (quoted in Chopra 2005: 233). Even Mahatma Gandhi, a critique of Bolshevism acknowledged the progressive ideals of it. He said: “the Bolshevik ideal had behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctioned by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain” (Gandhi 2009: 33). Admiring Soviet socialism Rabindranath Tagore said, without a visit to Soviet Union “my life’s pilgrimage would have been incomplete” (quoted in Chopra 2005: 237).

Mahatma Gandhi was highly influenced by Leo Tolstoy in experiments with truth and non-violence and developing his non-violent resistance, *Satyagraha*, in Indian freedom struggle. Tolstoy’s famous “letter to a Hindoo” attracted Gandhi (Anand 2010). Indian writer, Rahul Sankrityayan contributed a travelogue titled “*From Volga to Ganga*”, which could be a perfect imagery for the Indo-Russian civilizational encounter. “Kalidasa, Prem Chand and Krishan Chander were as popular in Russia as were Tolstoy, Gorky, Pushkin and Dostoevsky in India. The Famous Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin said about Kalidas’ works, “for me Kalidasa is no less important than Homer.” Generations of Russians danced to the tune of “Awara Hun” and Indians exulted in the excellence of Anna Pavlova’s art. This is only a small glimpse of the size and the splendour of the Indo-Russian civilizational relations” (Kant 2000). Nicholai Roerich, a Russian painter, writer, archaeologist and philosopher, chose India as his home and left an everlasting cultural legacy. Thus, as history testifies one can assume that the socio-political, cultural and economic relation between people of India and Russia dates back to several centuries.

Jawaharlal Nehru was deeply impressed by Soviet economic planning. He believed that Soviet model of development is a solution to Indian problems like poverty and illiteracy. His fascination to Soviet model of development and socialism led to the India’s “socialistic pattern of development” and close strategic relation with Soviet Union. Upon Nehru’s proposal for establishing diplomatic relations, Soviet Union began diplomatic relations with India on 13 April 1947, six months before she gained independence (Pant 2013).

India’s relationship with Soviet Union began to flourish in the Khrushchev era with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s visit to Soviet Union in 1955.

Convergence of Indian and Soviet views on a broad spectrum of issues like Korean question, China's UN membership, US military aid to Pakistan, Soviet support to India on Kashmir and Goa issues, Soviet neutrality on India-China conflict of 1962, Soviet negotiation in India-Pak conflict in 1965, etc. shaped Indo-Soviet relations. In 1955 Soviet Union accepted the position that Kashmir is integral part of Indian Union (Pant 2013: 2-3). By late 1960s Indo-Soviet relations established a strong foundation.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was another landmark event in the relation between the two countries (Imam 1987). The significance of this Treaty is reflected in the words of K.P.S. Menon: "I have never known a measure which was greeted with such a widespread enthusiasm by my countrymen as the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. The immediate reaction was one of instantaneous relief. It was as if one has been walking alone through a dark forest infested with snakes and robbers and suddenly emerged into a sunlit glade" (quoted in Sahai 1990: 12; Menon 1971). This treaty had become the legal foundation for Indo-Soviet relations. Since then Indo-Soviet relations strengthened with defence, energy, trade, metallurgy, culture, strategic and diplomatic relations as the priority areas of cooperation.

India's interest was in promoting global peace and stability, comprehensive Asian security, promoting the principles of non-violence, humanism and preventing threat of a new war and opposing racism and neo-colonialism. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to India in November 1986 and the signing of 10 point Delhi declaration by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Gorbachev on principles of nuclear weapons-free and non-violent world was a historical event in Indo-Soviet relations (Subrahmanyam 1987). Gorbachev stated that Soviet people had special feelings for India, considering them as old friends and reliable partners. Lenin and Nehru are figures guided to shape mutual policies towards each other. In his interface with the journalists in India Gorbachev said that "Lenin was guided by respect for Indian people, when he insightfully predicted India's important role in international affairs. The idea of Lenin motivated our policies and actions in regard to India. Many generations of Soviet and Indian leaders have worked hard so that we might see our relations in such a state today" (Subrahmanyam 1987: 37; Sahai 1990: 5).

The basic principles for which India and Soviet Union stood for articulated in the Delhi Declaration of 1986 in defence of humanity stands relevant even today twenty-five years after the disintegration of Soviet Union. The principles were: "1. Peaceful co-existence must become the universal norm of international relations; 2. Human life must be recognized as supreme; 3. Non-violence should be the basis of community life; 4. Understanding and trust must replace fear and suspicion; 5. The right of every state to political and economic independence must be recognized and respected; 6. Resources being spent on armaments must be channelled towards social and economic development; 7. Conditions must be guaranteed for individuals'

harmonious development; 8. Mankind's material and intellectual potential must be used to solve global problems; 9. The 'balance of terror' must give way to international security; 10. A nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world requires specific and immediate action for disarmament" (Sahai: 17-18).

Rajiv Gandhi emphasized that Delhi declaration is a historic document which embodies a comprehensive new framework for international relations based on freedom, equality and non-violence and is a major contribution to a cooperative and peaceful world order. Its international significance will be seen in time (Ibid: 22). However, before fulfilling the objective in the direction specified in the Declaration, Soviet Union became part of history leaving a more difficult situation to emerge in the international system, the solution for which India and Russia has to work together at the backdrop of the past civilizational, deep rooted, time-tested and friction-free relationship.

India-Russia Relations in the Post-Bipolar World

The Soviet disintegration was a great shock to India and left her with uncertainty and chaos in the initial years. Russia was preoccupied with economic recovery. Boris Yeltsin who was President followed Atlanticist pro-western policies. Atlanticists were not interested in developing relations with India. Therefore, there was a neglect of India in the initial years, i.e., during 1991-1993 by Russia. But since 1993 change towards a more Eurasianist approach reflected in Russian policy during Yeltsin period itself. Russian leadership understood that the US and west were not treating Russia as an equal partner, but they expect Russia to be a junior partner. They realised the need of establishing strong bilateral relations with India. On the Occasion of Presidential visit to India in the early 1993, Yeltsin declared, "the time for Russia's concentration on partnership with the West has come and gone. The recent series of visits to South Korea, China and now India is indicative of the fact that we are moving away from western emphasis in Russian diplomacy." Further, multipolarity as a concept in Russian foreign policy was consolidated by former Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov. Primakov believed that Russia, like any other great power, should develop a diverse foreign policy cultivating strong ties with both the West and with China, India, Japan and countries of the Far East and Middle East (Belopolsky 2009: 20).

When Vladimir Putin became President in 2000 he asserted Eurasianist foreign policy based on maximising Russian interests through aligning with both East and West. He visited India on 2-5 October 2000. President Putin and Prime Minister Vajpayee jointly signed Declaration for Strategic Partnership between India and Russia and launched the annual Summit process in New Delhi in October 2000. Delhi Declaration became the foundation for new relation between India and Russia and Putin became the architect of India-Russia relations in the 21st century. This declaration was a continuation of earlier treaties from 1971 Treaty of Friendship and

Cooperation, to Moscow Declaration of June 1994. The Delhi Declaration evinced the basic ethos guiding the strategic partnership:

“Convinced that the further comprehensive development of their bilateral ties would promote progress and prosperity in both states and the consolidation of positive trends in the world as a whole, seeking to impart a qualitatively new character and long term perspective to their multifaceted bilateral relations and to actively develop them in political, economic, trade, scientific, technological, cultural and other fields, in the years ahead and into the 21st century, proceeding from the conviction that it is necessary to build a multipolar global structure based on sovereign equality of all states and peoples, democratic values and justice, confirming their adherence to the common ideals of peace, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, non-violence and secularism, recognizing their special responsibility by virtue of being among the largest multiethnic, multilingual and multi-religious states.

“Inspired by a desire to jointly contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security, the democratisation of international relations, as well as to the promotion of the establishment of a new, just and stable world order, Partnership and cooperation at various levels had been agreed upon: diplomatic, trade and economy, defence, science, culture, fight against international terrorism, separatism, organised crime, and illegal trafficking in narcotics, and so on. Both countries declared that the strategic partnership between the sides is not directed against any other state or group of states, and does not need to create a military-political alliance” (MEA 2000).

Seventeen bilateral agreements and documents were signed in the field of strengthening defence and military technological cooperation, science and technology, culture, postal communications, cooperation between regions, legal assistance in civil and commercial matters, cooperation in trade and economy, agriculture defence and processing and trade of diamonds, cooperation in the banking sector, atomic energy exploration and development of oil and gas fields and cultural cooperation. Putin visited Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Mumbai on 5 October 2000 (BARC 2000). He was the first Russian leader to visit BARC. He also visited Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi where the world's biggest centre of Russian Studies is located. He was honoured with the title of honorary doctor of law. In his speech Putin stated, “India is a reliable ally of Russia”(kremlin.ru 2000). He also attended a lunch hosted in honour by the then President of India K. P. J. Raman Narayanan. Speaking at the lunch Putin called signing of Delhi Declaration as “an important milestone in the two country's bilateral relations” (kremlin.ru 2000). Putin being the architect of Indi-Russia relations the succeeding years saw intensified cooperation between two countries.

The significance of this declaration is that it was signed in the global and regional context of unipolarity, US domination, regional political instability (Afghanistan) and security threats (cross border terrorism) which are common for

both India and Russia. The framework of annual summits, guiding principles and commitments are shaped in the Delhi Declaration as the basis for future trajectory of the bilateral partnership in the 21st century. New institutional mechanisms were suggested to establish and old ones were renewed to implement the agreements and for interaction. Both countries set up a Joint Working Group on Afghanistan, an Inter-Governmental Commission for Military Technical Cooperation, and a process for active cooperation between the National Security Council of India and the Security Council of the Russian Federation, election commission of the two countries, Comptroller and Auditors General of India and Russia, and the judicial authorities of the two countries. The Integrated Long Term Programme Cooperation in Space and Technology was extended for ten years until 2010 (MEA 2000).

In the second summit held in Moscow in November 2001, in the atmosphere of terrorist attacks in US on 11 September 2001 and thereby US-declared war on terror, the focus was on international terrorism and insurgency. Since both countries are facing common issues in Chechnya and Kashmir, efforts for combatting terrorism are their common interest. The summit condemned Pakistan's help to cross border terrorism and support to Kashmiri militants in India and Taliban in Afghanistan. In the third summit in 2002 the two sides unveiled "Delhi Declaration on Further Consolidation of Strategic Partnership". International terrorism and threats to global peace and security and stability remained main issues. Combating terrorism and the dangers posed by terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan drew attention. The fourth summit in 2003 held after the US invasion in Iraq, clearly stressed the dangers of American unilateralism and emphasised the common position that the future world order should be "based on multipolarity" and "should be determined by collective and multilateral processes rather than unilateral ones" (Embassy of Russian Federation in the Republic of India 2003). India expressed its full support to Russia's membership in WTO. The first Indo-Russian Inter-Ministerial Consultations on economic issues and the World Trade Organization was held in March 2003 in New Delhi (Nadkarni 2010).

The 2004 summit at the background of India's enhanced strategic partnership with the US was titled "Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership". Russia had concerns about the defence cooperation. India confirmed significance of partnership with Russia reaffirming India's support to Russia's early entry into WTO. India's strengthening relations with the US was viewed with concern in Russia. Russia viewed it as India's tilt towards western orbit (Embassy of Russian Federation in the Republic of India 2004). During the 2005 summit meeting Pranab Mukherji cleared the doubts saying that "India is the largest importer of military equipment, platforms, arms and systems from Russia. This cooperation is set to expand in the future. There is no danger of our cooperation in the area weakening" (quoted in Nadkarni 2010: 93). Any sign of stress remained absent and joint statement issued specified priority areas of cooperation: energy security, trade and economy, high technology, exploration of outer space, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and

military. India's efforts to strengthen relations with the US continued in 2006, and there was no special summit meeting in Moscow in 2006 (Ibid 2010).

India understood the need for neutralising India-Russia ties and in the summit held in January 2007 in New Delhi. President was invited as Chief Guest in the Republic day celebrations. Indian side called the ties "tension-free" as Russia did not "create problems" for India in its neighbourhood. Russian side addressed the Indian concern over the Chinese supply of fighter aircraft equipped with Russian engines to Pakistan "by invoking the end user provisions in its agreement with China to prevent this from happening" (Subrahmanyam quoted in Ibid: 94). Joint Statement on Cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy and a Memorandum of Intent was initiated between the Indian Department of Atomic Energy and the Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency for the construction of additional nuclear power plant units in Kudankulam. Three agreements dealing with cooperation in Space and a protocol for cultural exchanges with Year of Russia in India in 2008 and Year of India in Russia in 2009 (Embassy of Russian Federation in the Republic of India 2007).

In 2008 summit, the relations seemed to be stabilized as Medvedev emphasised that relation with India is of "utmost importance" to Russia. Besides joint declaration nine agreements of cooperation on priority areas were signed. Three important agreements were Inter-Governmental Agreement on Cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plant units at Kudankulam and construction of Russian designed nuclear power plants at new sites and a MoU between ISRO and Russian Federal Space Agency on joint activities in the field of human space flight programme (MEA2009). In the 2009 summit held in Moscow Prime Minister visited and bilateral cooperation in key areas such as defence, space research, science and technology, and energy security (including hydrocarbons and nuclear energy) intensified (MEA 2010). Eleventh summit held in 2010 in New Delhi reviewed the partnership of a decade and elevated to high level.

From Friendship to "Special and Privileged" Strategic Partnership

In the eleventh annual India-Russia summit in 2010 India-Russia relations had been elevated to "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership" in 2010 (MEA 2011). Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that "The tradition of annual summits with Russia symbolises the richness of our relationship with Russia. Russia is a time-tested friend of India that has stood by us in our times of need in the past ... Ours is a very special and privileged strategic partnership. It is a partnership that has and will continue to develop independently of our relations with other countries" (Singh 2010). Now what is special and privileged over the other relations is a natural query.

A joint statement titled "Celebrating a Decade of Indo-Russian Strategic Partnership and Looking Beyond" signed by Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh and President Medvedev was adopted in the 11th summit. Eleven agreements of mutual

cooperation were signed in the areas concerning the field of Elections, Simplification of Travel Documents for Certain Categories of Nationals, Cooperation in the Field of Emergency Management, Enhancement of Cooperation in Oil and Gas Sector, Science, Technology & Innovation, Atomic Energy Corporation, Combating Irregular Migration, Mass Communications, Information Technology, Hydrocarbon Sector, cooperation between institutions and Joint programmes in scientific and technical cooperation. Besides these, about 20 other contracts were concluded in the government and private sectors on the margins of the Summit, in a range of sectors including defence, banking, trade, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and petrochemicals and communications and Information Technology (MEA 2011: 32-33).

The year 2012 marks 65 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In 2013 the major focus was on trade, energy and defence, and deepening the strategic partnership for global peace and stability. 15th Summit was held in New Delhi in December 2014 in an environment of change in government in India western sanctions on Russia and global geo-strategic dynamics. The new BJP government continued “special and privileged” relation with Russia which is a key pillar of India’s foreign policy matrix.

15th Summit and *Druzhba-Dosti* Vision: Roadmap of Future Cooperation

Russia, as India’s ‘special and privileged’ strategic partner, continues to occupy an important place in India’s foreign policy priorities. Bilateral relations with Russia struck a high note with the successful visit of President Putin to India for the 15th Annual Summit in December 2014. During the visit, the Russian President and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi outlined an ambitious vision of bilateral cooperation expected to guide the future relationship. In the summit India and Russia signed twenty agreements in priority areas of cooperation. Two vision documents are signed in the 15th annual summit in December 2014: (i) *Druzhba-Dosti*: A Vision for strengthening the Indian-Russian Partnership over the next decade, and (ii) Strategic Vision for Strengthening Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation (MEA 2014). *Druzhba-Dosti* joint declaration is a roadmap for taking the time tested relationship to new heights in the years ahead. It also aims at both countries’ contribution to a more stable and secure world order. Already established cooperation priority areas are reviewed and new focus on areas of cooperation is defined.

Twenty agreements and commercial contracts were signed in the key areas and various sectors such as defence, energy and space, nuclear energy, technology and innovation, fertilizers, diamonds, expansion in economic engagement, business, culture, and people to people contact. Besides these, other potential areas have also been mentioned to enhance cooperation in pharmaceuticals, diamond industry, IT sector, clean energy, etc. A range of regional and global issues which affect Russia

and India directly and indirectly such as international terrorism, militancy, Afghanistan and foreign support to militants are specified to be addressed jointly. The new projects in both government and private sectors are signs of enhancement in the current status of bilateral cooperation.

In India's defence sector, Russia dominated and cooperation has grown from a consumer-supplier relation to joint projects and collaboration. India and Russia have joint military programmes like BarhMos, fifth generation fighter Sukhoi, etc. Military hardware in Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jets and T-90 tanks are already built. Production of Sukhoi Superjet-100 and MS-21 passenger aircraft in India is under discussion. INS Vikramaditya, the aircraft carrier purchased by India in 2004 was inducted into the Indian navy by PM Modi and dedicated to the nation in June 2014³ (MEA 2014).

At the energy sector, cooperation in joint nuclear energy projects aims at serial construction of nuclear power units, based on Russian design. Construction of more reactors at Kudankulam nuclear plant and at new sites is agreed. Many deals are signed between India's ONGC, Oil India, ISAR, and Tata Energy and Russia's power majors like GAZPROM, Rosneft and Zarobezhneft. India has invested \$2.8 billion in the Sakhalin-1 project and purchased Imperial Energy, the London-listed oil major in the Tomsk region. India has decided to start new acquisitions in Vankor oilfield (East Siberia) and Timan Pechora basin (Northeast European Russia) and to launch joint exploration in the Arctic (MEA 2014).

The space agencies of India and Russia will engage more actively on space technology applications, space transportation, satellite navigation, space science and planetary exploration. In 2015, the two countries will commemorate the 40 years of the launch of Indian satellite 'Aryabhata' using Soyuz launch vehicle. By the time of the 50th anniversary of the launch, the leaders would expect significant collaboration between India and Russia on peaceful uses of outer space (MEA 2014). Russia and India are looking to forge and develop cooperation in space monitoring and in the field of training forces to respond to emergency situations (Russia & India Report 2015). As responsible users of outer space, India and Russia share substantive interests in the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and in maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. They will work together in the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in Vienna, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the UNGA First Committee in New York and other fora to advance their shared interests.

Technology and innovation, information and communication technologies, nanotechnology, engineering science, bio-energy, nano-biotechnology, bio-equipment and affordable diagnosing equipment for healthcare and agriculture are other areas of cooperation. The sides will collaborate to promote safe, secure and sustainable use of ICTs globally, including through the UN. Trade and business cooperation remains still a weak link in India-Russia relations. India-Russia trade basket is only 9.5 billion in 2014. It is expected that Russian companies will utilize

the opportunities in a wide range of Indian sectors and will 'Make in India. Economic sector targets a trade level of US\$ 30 billion and investments in total by 2025 (MEA 2015).

The sides will promote further strengthening and increasing the effectiveness of our bilateral inter-regional cooperation. They noted with satisfaction that many cities and regions in the two countries have established linkages for cooperation in various fields such as trade and investment, tourism, cultural and people-to-people contacts (MEA 2014). Cultural Cooperation aims at enhancing people to people ties through cultural exchanges, annual festivals of culture, exchanges between cultural institutions, think tanks, tourism promotion events and other initiatives.

Air India resumed flights to Moscow on 18 July 2014, after a gap of about 15 years. The sides will take steps to strengthen education ties through facilitating and extending support to each other's students. They supported the establishment of institutional linkages between universities and academic institutions of the two countries. The sides will promote in this context the development of network partnerships between universities. The sides will encourage cooperation to promote health and fitness through traditional Indian forms of Yoga and Ayurveda, including through Yoga centres, camps and Ayurveda centres (MEA 2014). Indian private sector companies also began investing in Russia.

The positions of India and Russia converge in many of the regional and global issues. They face similar security issues. India and Russia oppose economic sanctions not approved by the United Nations Security Council. Russia will extend its support for India's candidature for permanent membership of the Security Council. The two countries will consult and coordinate in multilateral fora such as G20, EAS, BRICS and RIC. Russia looks forward to India becoming a full member of the SCO following the completion of all required negotiation procedures.

Both the countries are concerned about terrorist acts recently happened in Jammu & Kashmir, India and in Chechnya, Russia. The sides agreed to work together for the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism by the 70th Anniversary Summit of the UN. The leaders expressed hope that terrorism would be completely eradicated from the common region within a decade (MEA 2014). India and Russia had welcomed the peaceful transition of political authority in Afghanistan and called upon the international community to join efforts to support reconstruction and economic development in that country and to continue capacity building of its national security forces. As two states possessing advanced technologies, India and Russia have converging interests in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This is reflected in their participation and positions in international fora such as the Conference on Disarmament, IAEA, Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and stringent national export control measures. The Russian side confirmed its support to India's intention to seek full membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and its readiness to facilitate positive decision of the Group on this matter. Russia also supported India's interest in full

membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Wassenaar Arrangement (MEA 2014).

Modi's Russia Policy: Pragmatism, Strategic Autonomy and Continuity

The 15th India-Russia annual summit and Modi's approach to Russia remain as a test of India's strategic autonomy, pragmatism and continuity in foreign policy. Some analysts say that the vision "India First" is both ideology and pragmatism in Modi's foreign policy. India's civilizational grace is also important for him. He is showing a very committed focus on India's development in principle through his "Make in India" drive. In the initial few months he established international prestige in terms of his pragmatic diplomacy, independence and continuity in foreign policy matters. He was trying to enlarge his space of diplomacy in India's relationship with the rest of the world through his own way of making and articulating foreign policy.

Modi asserted the importance of Russia that India attached to her relations with Russia despite the pressure the US tried to put on India during President Putin's visit to New Delhi. His statements amply prove his foreign policy independence. During Putin's visit to India, the US State department spokesperson Jen Psaki said, "Our view remains that it's not time for business as usual with Russia. But beyond that, we'd have to take a closer look at what these agreements entail" (Psaki quoted in Haider 2014). During Putin's visit to India the US Deputy Secretary of State said, "I know there is a lot of rumours, often of trade deals, or economic deals, but let us see what is actually put into practice. Let us wait and see what comes from the visit". This was an atmosphere of warning that America tried to impose on India. India's Ministry of External Affairs refused to comment on US pressure, but Indian Ambassador to Russia, P.S. Raghavan made it very clear that "There is no question of India being pressurized by any country to change its behaviour to Russia or to change its attitude toward anything that concerns India-Russia relations" (quoted in Upadhyay 2014). Modi himself commented on the significance of Russia to India. On the side-lines of BRICS summit in Fortaleza, Prime Minister Modi said: "Every child in India knows that Russia is our best friend" (quoted in Mohanty 2014). The Prime Minister "reaffirmed that relations with Russia will continue to enjoy the priority that they always had in India's foreign policy and that he looks forward to working with President Putin to further deepen and broad-base the strategic partnership including in the areas of defence, nuclear energy, space, energy, trade and investment, people-to-people contacts and addressing regional and global challenges" (Press Information Bureau 2014a).

On refusal to condemn Russia's annexation of Crimea Modi said hinting US policy: "In the world right now, a lot of people want to give us advice. But look within them, they too have sinned" (Zakaria 2014). Modi said: "President Putin is a leader of a great nation with which we have a friendship of unmatched mutual confidence, trust and good will. We have a strategic partnership that is incomparable in content. The character of global politics and international relations is changing.

However, the importance of this relationship and its unique position in India's foreign policy will not change. In many ways its significance to both countries will grow further in future. President Putin and I agreed that this is a challenging moment in the world. Our partnership and strong sensitivity that we have always had for each other's interests will be source of strength to both countries" (News Nation Bureau 2014). Modi tweeted on 11 Dec 2014 "Wonderful day with President Putin. Our meeting was comprehensive. India's partnership with Russia is incomparable" (Modi 2014). Moreover the joint summit declaration signed by Putin and Modi clearly stated that "India and Russia oppose economic sanctions that do not have the approval of the United Nations Security Council" (Press Information Bureau 2014b). Modi's above statements are evident enough to show his determination to keep relationship with Russia in high priority.

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj also asserted in a comment on India's relations with Russia following the deadly crash of the Malaysian airliner in eastern Ukraine: "There is no change in our policy. We think that foreign policy is in continuity. Foreign policy does not change with the change in the government." Former National Security Advisor, Shiv Shankar Menon also observed that "It's a very successful foreign policy ... There's a large element of continuity in foreign policy that successive governments had expanded on" (quoted in *Hindustan Times* 2014). Therefore, as expressed by the Indian political elite, one can assume that the new government is following continuity in foreign policy and India maintains its independence and strategic autonomy in her engagement with the rest of the world.

Continuing India's special relationship with Russia, the new government established contacts with Russia immediately after assuming office. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi met President Mr Vladimir Putin on the side-lines of the Summit in Brazil (July 2014), followed by a bilateral meeting on the side-lines of the G-20 Summit in Australia (November 2014). Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi also met Russian Prime Minister Mr Dmitry Medvedev in Myanmar on the side-lines of the East Asia Summit held in November 2014. Fifteenth annual India-Russia Summit is another milestone for taking the time-tested, all weather, special and privileged strategic partnership to new heights as the *Druzhba-Dosti* joint declaration demonstrates. No spectacle of change or paradigm shift is present at the moment.

Conclusion

The India-Russia relation is evolving in the global and regional strategic contexts characterized by unipolarity, guided by American primacy principles, NATO's eastward expansion and terrorism. Political volatility in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Chechnya issues, and western containment policy II against Russia have implications for international security and Eurasian region. India and Russia viewed the above factors as dangerous trends and threat to global peace, stability and security. Both India and Russia challenge unipolarity and call for a new, equitable,

democratic, peaceful and just multipolar world order conducive for human development and prosperity. In this context India-Russia strategic partnership, which has a firm foundation based on deep rooted historical and civilizational affinities, mutual trust and confidence, convergence of interests and common perception on global issues, has global significance. India, an emerging global economic power and Russia, a rising great power in her struggle to consolidate independence and sovereignty confronting western sanctions and other humiliating punitive policies, are committed to improve the world.

After a short-lived neglect by Russia in the initial years until 1993, Russia began to re-consider upgrading relation with India. By 2000, when Vladimir Putin became President of the Russian Federation, his constructive and pragmatic foreign policy determined to reconcile Russia's "loss of position in India". India welcomed that change in Russia's policy to her wholeheartedly to mark the amity in future course of Indo-Russian relations. India responded to Russia's partnership initiatives positively and set the stage for bringing back the old Soviet era warmth in bilateral cooperation.

Both countries held as of now, 15 annual summits alternatively in New Delhi and Moscow, and strengthened cooperation in defence, energy, trade, science and technology, space research, culture, tourism and in the process enhanced cooperation in potential areas like pharmaceuticals, tourism and education. Putin's visit in 2014 for the India-Russia summit, signing of agreements and joint declaration by Narendra Modi and Vladimir Putin demonstrate that India-Russia relation will continue without any major constraints. Cooperation will continue over the coming years looking forward to make this world better, safer, more prosperous and multipolar. Several unsettled global and regional issues of strategic importance for both countries exist such as Afghanistan, Kashmir question, Ukraine, terrorism, and so on. In the changing international scenario India and Russia are facing many constraints in their way ahead for economic modernization and creation of multipolar world.

Although India-Russia relation is qualified as unique and time tested, at times short lived irritants appeared in India-Russia relations. Stalin's perception of Indian leadership as "bourgeoisie" and supporters of "Anglo-American imperialism" and India's preoccupation with addressing domestic issues delayed take off of the development of India's relationship with Soviet Union. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the position of the then Russian leadership was not in favour of developing special relationship with India. In 1998 when India conducted nuclear test without informing Russia, President Yeltsin sent message to India that she could not take it for granted. India's ties with the US were likely to have an indirect impact on her relation with Russia. Likewise, India had discontent with Russia's approach to Pakistan and China.

In 2004 India's tilt towards the US was not well taken by Russian leadership and they expressed their dissatisfaction on such a policy harming the Russian

interests. Since 2005, Russia resented to India's cooperation with the US in missile defence, participation in quadrilateral military exercise. As India is a big market for Russian armaments, Russia does not want others to dominate in this field. But both countries are diversifying their market. This shows that bilateral relation has only a strong foundation, but this doesn't mean that either partner takes the relation for granted. Though Indian leadership tried to conceal the Russian dissatisfaction in relationship, Russian side expressed their apprehensions. When looked at the economic cooperation, it can be seen that this crucial area significantly remains the weakest link in India-Russia relations.

In the way ahead several questions remain to be addressed for tapping the full potential of the relationship in the changing context of global politics and world order. Why does at present India-Russia relations remain less rich in content and limited mainly to defence and energy cooperation? Why haven't the trade and commercial relations between India and Russia taken off? Whether the improved India-US ties impinge on India's relation with Russia? Whether Russia's arms trade with Pakistan will have adverse implications on India-Russia relations? Whether China's rise in the Asian region and her relation with Pakistan has implications for India-Russia relations? How does the Russia-China strategic partnership influence India-Russia relations in the changing global and regional geopolitical situation? What has to be done to enrich the content of India-Russia relations in future? In the emerging global context, if the relations should continue friction-free as former Indian Vice President Krishna Kant qualifies it, as the waters of *Ganga* and *Volga*, the "great rivers represent two great civilizations and their perennial flow symbolises the permanence, the serenity and the continuity of our contacts", much has to be done by both sides to cement the relationship further ahead in the coming years.

End Notes

1. The emerging world order is considered as the third phase in terms of polarity in the new world order created after the end of Second World War. In the first phase the world order was bipolar. Bloc politics based on two opposing ideologies of socialism/communism and capitalism, military deterrence and cold war were the perceived characteristics in the world order during this phase. Soviet Union led the socialist bloc and the US with its European allies led the capitalist bloc with containment of communism in Soviet Union as one of its major foreign policy priorities.

2. Putin clarifies the definition of "strategic." He said: "Strategic" does not mean military. It does not mean the creation of any military alliance or bloc. When we say "strategic" we mean "long-term", "intended for a long period of time and based on the pragmatic national interests of the two states, especially in the context of globalisation and mounting international competition" (Putin 2000).

3. Russian ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin said: Mr. Putin called it “such a beautiful baby that we feel sorry to part with her”. The ambassador continued: “It was for the first time for the two sides that such a beautiful baby had to be born ... We wanted to provide our sister India with a healthy and beautiful aircraft carrier, which we have done” (Embassy of the Russian Federation 2013).

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