

India's Foreign Policy: Narendra Modi & Vladimir Putin

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Abstract: *India Russian relations have had to be significantly refashioned since the end of the cold war with the collapse of the USSR and, along with it, the foundation of India's decade's old foreign policy. The declining and uncertain relations of the 1990s have however, given way to a more durable relationship under Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress party in India. A strong relationship with Russia is essential for India's foreign policy. Economic cooperation is the most important of the upgrade of bilateral relations, in which Defence deals, is the core issue. Both sides realize that economic cooperation is beneficial for their economics respectively, and that cooperation plans are to set into action positively and persistently. Under Modi administration, India began the implementation of a distinct kind of international policy, that some academic scholars defined as a "particular Modi doctrine", while others considered rather to be a continuation of Modi's predecessors, with some "little changes of style and manner". But, it is important to notice India's present engagement into a type of foreign policy based on multi-alignment rather than on traditional non-alignment practices. Modi opened multiple and various directions in foreign policy (Acting East Policy, for example), while consolidating others (Indian Diaspora, privileged relations with the US, Japan, Russia, constructive relations with China, enlarged relations with ASEAN etc.). The comparison of the study is to attempt and examine the India's foreign policy with Russia under the Leadership of Narendra Modi.*

Keywords: Comprehensive Development, Concerted efforts, Future of Indian-Russian cooperation, Some Misgivings, India's point of view, Tried and Trusted friend, India's most valued ally, Joint Design, Higher priority to India

1. Introduction

India and Russia bilateral relations are based on deep mutual understanding and respect, similar priorities in economic and social development, as well as in foreign policy. India and Russia favour the same approaches to ensuring peace and security and shaping a global architecture that reflects the cultural and civilizational diversity and at the same time strengthens the unity of humankind. India-Russia relations have stood the test of time and have been immune to external influences. Russia unwaveringly supported India in its struggle for independence and helped it to achieve self-sufficiency. In August 1971, our countries signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, which outlined fundamental principles of mutual relations such as respect for each other's sovereignty and interests, good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence. Two decades later, in January 1993, India and Russia reaffirmed the inviolability of those provisions in the new Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation on 3 October, 2000, took the bilateral relations to a new level characterized by coordinated approaches towards ensuring international peace and security, addressing major global and regional issues, as well as close cooperation in economic, cultural, educational and other areas. This partnership was further elevated to the level of a special and privileged strategic partnership on 21 December, 2010.

Comprehensive Development

Advancing the comprehensive development of the Indian-Russian relations is an absolute priority of the foreign policy of both States. India and Russia will continue to widen their scope of cooperation by launching large-scale

initiatives in different spheres and enhance and enrich our bilateral agenda so as to make it more result-oriented.

The economies of India and Russia complement each other in the energy sector. We will strive to build an "energy bridge" between our States and expand bilateral relations in all areas of energy cooperation, including nuclear, hydrocarbon, hydel and renewable energy sources and in improving energy efficiency.

Concerted Efforts

With concerted efforts on both sides, there has been a series of steady and demonstrable achievements in India and Russia civil nuclear partnership, including advancing nuclear power projects at the Kudankulam site and transforming it into one of India's largest energy hubs. India welcome the conclusion of the General Framework Agreement and Credit Protocol for Units 5 and 6 of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. India and Russia will work towards the implementation of the strategic vision for strengthening cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy signed between the two countries on 11 December, 2014.

Future of Indian-Russian cooperation

The future of Indian-Russian cooperation holds great promise across a wide spectrum covering nuclear power, nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear science and technology. The growing partnership in the nuclear power sector between India and Russia has opened opportunities for developing advanced nuclear manufacturing capabilities in India in line with Government of India's Make in India initiative. India and Russia commit themselves to earnestly implement the "Programme of Action for Localisation in India" signed on 24 December, 2015, and

to encourage their nuclear industries to engage closely and foster concrete collaborations.

Some Misgivings:

India's relations with Russia have retained their fundamental stability though of late some misgivings have surfaced in both countries. Russia sees India as becoming too close strategically to the US, while its own relations with America have sharply deteriorated. India's growing purchases of defence equipment from the US are seen by Russia as cutting into an area that it has dominated historically. The China factor in India's growing strategic ties with the US, even as Russia's own strategic coordination with China has deepened because of the US factor, has resulted in gaps in India's respective understanding of the strategic challenges that each country faces.

India's point of view:

From India's point of view, greater China-Russia strategic coordination has opened up more diplomatic space for China to harden its postures on India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the designation of the Jaish-e-Mohamed chief Masood Azhar as an international terrorist by the relevant UN Security Council committee, as it puts constraints on the strength of Russian support to us in the concerned forums on both issues.

Tried and Trusted friend:

Besides Russia's stepped up sales of advanced weaponry to China, India cannot ignore its political and military overtures to Pakistan that include sale of offensive weapons, military exercises and according political legitimacy to the Taliban despite Pakistan's manipulation of this force for its geo-strategic aims in Afghanistan that include limiting India's role in that country.

Wisdom demands that the concerns that have surfaced in both countries should not be accorded exaggerated importance. Russia has its own concerns about China despite the two coming together on issues of shared interest. India too have concerns about some aspects of US policies towards Pakistan, and these will not change to India's satisfaction. India also aware that US-China ties are deeper than US-India ties and that Washington's priority would be to manage China with economic pressure and avoid a military conflict with it. India has therefore to calibrate its relationship with the US in the light of these realities. Because Russia is viewed as a "tried and trusted" friend of India by the public, any wrinkles in the relationship gets greater than warranted attention in the media

Joint Design:

Even today, Russia provides India around 70 percent of its defence needs. And importantly, the defence cooperation is not exactly restricted to a buyer-seller relationship; it includes now joint design, research and development, joint production, training, and service-to-service contacts.

Russia is always prepared to share its most sensitive and newest developments in technology to India that the United States and other Western nations have been reticent to do. Brahmos missile system is a shining example of this type of collaboration. Presently, several similar joint development projects in areas of cutting edge and frontier technologies are being pursued, the most important being the joint development of a fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA)

India's most valued ally:

Russia will continue to remain India's most valued ally for many more years to come. As strategic partners, India and Russia share the same global outlook that the existing architecture of global security, including its mechanisms based on international law, does not ensure the equal security of all nations. This has been emphasized by Russia's "military doctrine" (February 2010) and "security strategy" (May 2009). The essential features of these two highlight clearly that Russia is not happy with the eastward expansion of Nato, proposed Europe-based missile defence systems, secessionist insurgencies in its territory supported by external elements, rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the neighbouring regions such as Central Asia and South Asia, and the spread of global terrorism fuelled by religion and drugs etc. Needless to point out that almost all these features are also matters of great concern when India plans its overall security within the framework of a multipolar world that shuns unilateralism.

Russia still a big power:

Besides, the fact remains that though Russia may have lost its position as a superpower in Cold War equations, it is still a big power if one goes by any possible definition of the elements that constitute power. It is huge and possesses the largest landmass of the earth as a single country. It strategically abuts on Central Asia, China and Iran, an area of political, security and economic interests to India. Russia is endowed with enormous natural resources, technological capacities and trade potential. It still is the most important military power in the world after the United States.

Higher priority to India:

Russia, perhaps, gives a higher priority to India in its foreign policy and strategic calculations than the United States or other power centres of the world, their acknowledgment of India's rising importance notwithstanding.

All told, Russia never hesitates to transfer its most sophisticated technology to India. It is Russia, which gives its nuclear submarines on lease to India. It is Russia, which has unhesitatingly cooperated with India in its march towards becoming a major space power. It is Russia, which has unhesitatingly established nuclear power stations in India, something that cannot be said of the United States even after the conclusion of civilian nuclear deal. And it is Russia, which has provided the

most vocal support for India becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

India's most significant overseas investments:

India has invested heavily in Russia's hydrocarbon sector. One of India's most significant overseas investments (2.8 billion dollars) has been in Sakhalin—I (Siberia) for extracting oil. But this is not all. India has also invested more in that region through ONGC Videsh Limited—2.1 billion dollars was the investment for buying a British company called Imperial Energy in the Tomsk region in Siberia. India has been discussing with the Russian side on several more investments where ONGC Videsh Limited is willing to go along with Russian oil and gas majors like Gazprom and Rosneft to invest in different regions of Siberia and even North Russia. In Siberia the regions are Sakhalin-III and there is a region on Timan Pechora, as also there is an interest on the Indian side in the Yamal peninsula, which is a gas-rich area in Northern Russia.

2. Conclusion

It is not as if difficulties in India relations with Russia have not existed in the past only that a lid was kept on them officially. On the Russian side, India's emergence as a power in its own right has probably not been sufficiently internalised in policy making in Moscow, and therefore the imperatives on the Indian side to broaden the range of its strategic ties are not adequately appreciated. India needs to discuss many issues with Russia beyond the economic. To the extent needed India need to clear the air on some troubling Russian initiatives in India's region. Trump's election has created a great deal of uncertainty at the international level, with America's allies, friends and adversaries unsure about the direction of US policies under him. His inclination to mend ties with Russia and, at the very least, work with it to destroy the Islamic State is being vociferously resisted domestically. Putin's perspective on Trump's America would be of great interest. The Trump-Xi summit, slated for April, will indicate where US-China ties are headed, which has implications for both India and Russia. How the Trump administration deals with Iran would also have implications for both. Putin's views on Russia's relationship with a troubled Europe and Turkey would interest us.

Of course, in today's world nothing is free and Russia has its own reasons to ensure that India remains its close ally as well. Russia, of late, might have increased its ties manifold with China, India's principal strategic competitor. It might also open more for Pakistan in days to come. But then the fact remains that Russia needs India as much as it needs China. Likewise, India might have improved its equations with the United States, of late. But then the fact also remains that India needs Russia as much as it needs the United States

A strong relationship with Russia is essential for maintaining a balance in India's foreign policy and

preserving India's strategic autonomy. India's aspiration to be a leading power requires both.

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