

India-Russia Relations

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. Since the signing of the “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, including political, security, defence, trade and economy, science & technology, culture, and people-to-people ties. During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.”

2. 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. The India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission (IRIGC) has two divisions – the Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) co-chaired by the EAM from India and First Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Denis Manturov from Russia; and the Military & Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC) headed by the Defence Ministers of the two countries. In December 2021, a new dimension to the bilateral cooperation was added with the first 2+2 Dialogue (Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries) taking place alongside the Summit-level talks between Prime Minister & President Putin.

Leadership-level engagements:

3.The Annual Summit between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between India and Russia. So far, 21 Annual Summits have taken place alternatively in India and Russia. The last Summit was held on December 6, 2021 in New Delhi where 28 MoUs and agreements were signed. The last in-person bilateral meeting between the two leaders took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in September 2022. Since then, the leaders have maintained regular contact through telephone conversations to review progress on bilateral cooperation and exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest: 5 telephone conversations in 2022, 2 telephone conversations in 2023 (June 30 and August 28) and 3 in 2024 (January 15, March 20 and June 05).

Ministerial engagements:

4.Both countries remain in touch at ministerial level as well. EAM & Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meet regularly bilaterally as well as on the sidelines of major events. In 2023, they met seven times, most recently in Moscow on December 27, on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit and FMs meeting in Jakarta (September 6 and July 13), BRICS in South Africa (August 23 and June 01), SCO (May 04 in Goa) & G20 (March 01 in New Delhi) meetings. EAM visited Russia in December

2023, and had meetings with President Putin, FM Lavrov and First Deputy PM Denis Manturov, his co-Chair of IRIGC-TEC.

5. Similarly, the Defence Ministers, NSAs and other ministers regularly meet their counterparts. NSA last visited St. Petersburg on 24 April 2024 to attend the 12th International Conference of High Officials Responsible for Security Matters, where he met the then Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev. Indian delegation to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) 2023 was headed by Minister of State for Steel & Rural Development Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste and in 2022 by Minister of Health & Family Welfare Shri Mansukh Mandaviya. At the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) 2023, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways & AYUSH Shri Sarbananda Sonowal led the Indian delegation.

Inter-Governmental Commission:

6. The primary mechanism for enhancing trade and economic cooperation is the IRIGC-TEC, which had its 24th session in New Delhi on 18 April 2023. EAM met his Russian co-chair Deputy PM Denis Manturov on December 26 in Moscow and reviewed matters related to bilateral cooperation in trade and economic, energy, defence and connectivity. IRIGC-M&MTC, co-chaired by the Indian and Russian Defence Ministers last met in New Delhi on 6 December 2021 during the Summit between the leaders and the inaugural 2+2 Dialogue. Both

the Defence Ministers had also met on the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers Meeting in New Delhi on 28 April 2023.

Multilateral engagement:

7. India & Russia cooperate closely at several multilateral platforms such as the UN, G20, BRICS & SCO. Russia is the BRICS Chair for 2024. India's Presidency of the G20 & SCO in 2023 afforded the opportunity for Officials and Ministers of both countries to meet on the sidelines of various events in India. Russian participation at SCO events in India in 2023 included: Foreign Minister Lavrov (4-5 May), the then Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev (29 March), Minister of Emergency Situations Alexander Kurenkov (20 April) and the then Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (28 April). During its Presidency of the G20, India hosted Foreign Minister Lavrov (1-3 March & 9-10 September) and Head of the Federation Council (Upper House of Russian Parliament) Ms. Valentina Matvienko (12-15 October). Both the countries have a history of close cooperation in the UN. Russia has consistently expressed support for India's candidature for a permanent seat at the UNSC.

Trade & Economic relations:

8. Intensifying the trade and economic relations has been identified as a priority area by both the leaders, who had earlier set the targets of increasing bilateral investment to \$50 billion and bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025. As per figures of Department of Commerce, in FY 2023-

24, bilateral trade has reached an all-time high of \$ 65.70 billion [Total bilateral merchandise trade for FY 2023-24: USD 65.70 billion; India's exports: USD 4.26 billion; and India's imports: USD 61.44 billion]. Major items of export from India include pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, electrical machinery and mechanical appliances, iron & steel, while major items of import from Russia include oil and petroleum products, fertilizers, mineral resources, precious stones and metals, vegetable oils, etc.

9. Bilateral trade in services has remained stable during the last 5 years with trade balance in Russia's favor. It amounted to \$1.021 billion for the year 2021. Bilateral investments between the two countries remain strong and surpassed the previous target of \$30 billion in 2018, leading to revised target of \$50 billion by 2025. The major bilateral investments by Russia in India are in the oil and gas, petrochemicals, banking, railways and steel sectors, while Indian investments in Russia are mainly in oil and gas and pharmaceuticals sectors.

Defence & Security Cooperation:

10. India has longstanding and wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in the field of defence. The cooperation is guided by the IRIGC-M&MTC mechanism, headed by the Defence Ministers of both countries. The 20th IRIGC-M&MTC meeting was held in December 2021. India & Russia participate in bilateral and multilateral military exercises across the three services. The bilateral exercise INDRA was last held in 2021.

They also participate in multilateral exercises such as Vostok 2022 held in September 2022 in Russia.

11. Bilateral projects include the supply of S-400, licensed production of T-90 tanks and Su-30 MKI, supply of MiG-29 and Kamov helicopters, INS Vikramaditya (formerly Admiral Gorshkov), production of Ak-203 rifles in India and BrahMos missiles. India-Russia military technical cooperation has evolved over time from a buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research and development, co-development and joint production of advanced defence technology and systems.

Parliamentary Cooperation:

12. The Inter-Parliamentary Commission, between the Lok Sabha and the Russian State Duma (lower house), has played a key role in facilitating parliamentary cooperation. It has met five times since its inception (2000, 2003, 2015, 2017, 2018). The Commission is co-chaired by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairperson of the State Duma. The 5th India-Russia Inter Parliamentary Commission was held in India on 9 December 2018. On the Russian side, both houses of parliament, the State Duma (Lower House) and the Federation Council (Upper House), have their own "Group of Deputies for Asia", which includes sub-group of Deputies focusing on India. Similarly on the Indian side, there is an India- Russia Friendship Group in the parliament. At the P20 Summit in October 2023, Chairperson of the Federation Council, Valentina Matvienko, led the Russian delegation to New Delhi, she had a bilateral meetings with Hon'ble Vice President of

India and the Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha. On 11-12 Apr 2024, an Indian Parliamentary delegation participated in Meetings of Chairs of Committees on International Affairs of BRICS Parliaments held at the Russian Federation Council (Upper House) in Moscow.

Science & Technology Cooperation:

13. Science & Technology has played a key role in the bilateral India-Russia partnership, especially in the early days after India's independence. Today, India & Russia work together on basic sciences, materials science, mathematics and cutting-edge areas like India's manned spaceflight program (Gaganyaan), nanotechnologies and quantum computing. India's only nuclear power plant established with another country is the Kudankulam Nuclear Plant in Tamil Nadu. The bilateral cooperation is guided by the new roadmap for Science, Technology & Innovation signed during the 21st Annual Summit in New Delhi in December 2021. It is expected to boost innovation-related engagements between the two countries and focus on commercialization of technologies and full-cycle support for joint projects of economic and societal impact. In January 2023, the 12th meeting of the Russia-India Working Group on Science and Technology took place with representatives of the relevant ministries, universities and scientists of both countries.

Education:

14. Indian students are enrolled in various courses in disciplines such as engineering, economics, sciences and other subjects in other universities. Medical students comprise the largest group among Indian students studying in Russia. Indology is taught in several Russian universities apart from Indian languages such as Hindi, Sanskrit & Pali. At the school-level, the Atal Innovation Mission of India and SIRIUS Center collaborate together as part of an initiative envisioned by Prime Minister and President Putin. They collaborate on innovations in different focus areas like smart mobility, agri-tech, clean energy, space research and healthcare. PM and President Putin jointly visited the presentation of these students in Sochi, Russia (2018) and at IIT Delhi (2019).

Cultural Cooperation:

15. India and Russia have deep and historic cultural linkages. The famous Russian artist and philosopher Nicholas Roerich eventually settled in Himachal Pradesh. Writers like Leo Tolstoy & Alexander Pushkin had a profound influence on Indian literature and thought. The Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre (JNCC), Moscow, maintains close cooperation with leading Russian institutions. Prominent Russian universities and institutions, teach Indian languages. Indian cinema remains popular in Russia with frequent film screenings across the country. Yoga is also immensely popular across Russia. The X International Day of Yoga (2024) was celebrated in more than 60 regions of Russia.

Diaspora & people-to-people ties:

16. The people-to-people ties remain strong with gradual increase in bilateral tourism. The facility of e-visas for both countries has helped accelerate this process. Prominent Indians have been conferred Russian state awards for their contribution to building and strengthening Russia-India political, scientific and cultural ties. PM himself has been conferred the highest Russian state honor (Order of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First).

Conclusion:

17. The bilateral relationship has remained strong and stable over more than 75 years. The India-Russia partnership has been among the steadiest of the major relationships in the world in contemporary era with a shared commitment to a multipolar world and continues to expand beyond the traditional areas of military, nuclear and space cooperation. In the past two years, the bilateral trade has expanded significantly, far exceeding the target of \$30bn set earlier for 2025. There are discussions on ways to increase exports from India as well by developing new models of cooperation. Several connectivity initiatives are also increasingly central to the bilateral cooperation, especially the International North-South Transport Corridor and the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor. Moreover, both countries remain committed to strengthen cooperation in the development of the Russian Far East region and working together in research, logistics and training in the Arctic region. There is a synergy

between Russia's pivot to the East, its resource and technology and India's own flagship initiatives such as Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India.

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