

Bibhuti Bhusan Biswas
Abu Salah Md. Yousuf

INDO-RUSSIAN PARTNERSHIP: EMERGING DYNAMICS

Abstract

The collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War and changed the global balance of power and, the geo-political map of the world. It created a number of confusions in the relations between India and Russia. In fact, a pro-Atlantic shift in the post-Soviet Moscow's foreign policy sidelined the strategic character of its ties with India. Besides, India's position in international politics suffered a major setback by the loss of a 'time- tested' strategic partner. But, Russia intends to strengthen its traditional friendship with India, including their role in the international affairs, and to aid overcome security concerns persisting in South Asia thereby strengthening stability in the region. Therefore, New Delhi and Moscow renewed the Indo- Soviet Treaty of 1971 in 1991. In this context, the paper focuses on the nature and geo-strategic compulsions of Indo-Russia relations in the contemporary world. Furthermore, it elaborates the emerging cooperation between two countries in different levels of strategic, military, economic and scientific issues. Finally, it evaluates the new geo-political dimensions of Indo-Russian relations.

1. Introduction

Indo-Russian relations are known as 'time-tested' one in international politics. Since the independence in 1947, India continued an all-weather relation in diverse spheres with the former Soviet Union. Though India was one of the leading architects of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), but in the context of strategic and military cooperation, India and Russia enjoyed close friendship during the Cold War period. The collapse of the Soviet Union came as a setback for Indo-Russian relations. Both were in dilemma as to how they would reframe

Bibhuti Bhusan Biswas, Ph.D and Abu Salah Md. Yousuf are Post-doctoral Research Associate at Southern Asia Studies Programme, UNESCO MISARC, Pondicherry University, India and Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka respectively. Their e-mail addresses are: bibhuti.bhusanb@gmail.com and yousuf@biiss.org

their bilateral relations without any hindrance. Moreover, India's perceived threats from Pakistan and China made New Delhi more concerned about the post-Cold War international scenario. It was also not clear what would be the role of the new Russian Federation in international politics. However, India renewed the Indo-Soviet Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1971 with Russia for a further period of twenty years in 1991. But it became evident soon when Russia was no longer in a position to continue to extend material support to India as done previously by the Soviet Union. The Soviet hardware constituted about 70 percent of India's weaponry including military hardware, nuclear science and space science.¹ But in the post-Cold War world the supply of military spare parts was seriously disrupted.² Besides, India's position in international politics suffered a major setback by the loss of a 'time tested' and reliable strategic partner. The support that India got from the former Soviet Union in the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral forums on issues of its vital national interest, such as the one related to Kashmir, could no longer be expected from Russia.³ In fact, a pro-Atlantic shift in the post-Soviet Moscow's foreign policy sidelined the strategic character of its ties with India.⁴

The new Russia accorded higher priority to the Asia-Pacific region than South and West Asia, in which India did not find a high place in its list of priorities. The massive sales of weapons by Russia to many Asian countries, especially China, indicated the transitions in Russian priority.⁵ The fact that Russian dependence on the US for its economic reconstruction brought about changes in Russia's foreign policy in general and its policy towards India in particular became evident when Russia refused to supply Cryogenic rocket

¹See, for details, Ramesh Thakur, "The Impact of the Soviet Collapse on Military Relations with India", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.45, No.5, 1993, pp.840-41.

²*Ibid.*

³Nalini Kant Jha, "Security Environment in South Asia in the 1990s", in Arun Kumar Banerji (ed.), *Security Issues in South Asia: Domestic and External Sources of Threat to Security*, Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1998, pp.186-87. See also, Shekhar Gupta, "India Redefines its Role", *Adelphi Paper*, No. 293, 1995, p.61.

⁴A Russian Foreign Ministry publication on the "Concept of Russian Federation's Foreign Policy" in January 1993 put Russia's priorities in this order: (1) The CIS (2) Arms control and international security (3) Economic reform (4) The United States (5) Europe (6) The Asia-Pacific region (7) West and South Asia (8) The Near East (9) Africa (10) Latin America. Thus, in the list of ten priorities, India and South Asia ranked seventh.

⁵For details, Shashi Kant Jha, "India's Relations with New Russia: From Soviet Disintegration to Strategic Partnership", in Nalini Kant Jha (ed.), *South Asia in 21st Century: India, Her Neighbours and the Great Powers*, New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 2003, pp. 207-10.

technology to India in 1993 under American pressures.⁶ Besides, there were indications of shifts in the Russian stance on issues such as non-proliferation, human rights and the environment.⁷ The disruption of the Russian economy and also of the defence industry started adversely affecting the economic and defence cooperation between the two countries. This setback reflected a short and medium term reality, which India had to acknowledge and adjust. India's own liberalization and economic reform programmes, and its policy of setting up links with Western powers after the end of the Cold War too contributed to create some distances in its relations with Russia. Besides, the opening of the Indian market after 1991 attracted multi-national companies into India. Moreover, the US offer to forge a strategic partnership with India made latter comfortable in the post-Cold War world.⁸ India's sudden move towards the US induced the policy makers of the western capitalist world to be friendly with India.⁹ India also changed its 'pro-socialist' slogans of the Cold War era because of her overall developments. In addition, India's historical rival Pakistan lost its importance to the US in the post 1990 period.¹⁰ Nonetheless, in the process of emerging uni-polar system, the US emerged as superpower, which was not convenient for India. As Pakistan is a traditional ally of the US, the policies of the US in the region perceived by India always with certain motives that the US might try to help Pakistan against India's national interest.¹¹

But within a short span of time, Russia again emerged as an international player in a new world order. A desire for a multi-polar world system emerged in the international scenario as well.¹² As it was common interest of both the countries, New Delhi and Moscow came closer. India and Russia signed the Declaration of Strategic Partnership in October 2000, during President Vladimir

⁶See, for details, Nalini Kant Jha, "Reviving US-India Friendship in a Changing International Order", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 12, December 1994, pp. 3035-46.

⁷Nalini Kanth Jha, "India and Russia: New Realities and Equations", *Defence and Security Alert*, New Delhi, Vol. 2, No. 5, February 2011, pp. 25-28. See also, Subhash Shukla, *Foreign Policy of India*, New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2007, p.66.

⁸In January 1995, the US Defense Secretary William Perry visited India and launched a 'strategic dialogue' between the two countries, but several disruptive factors prevented its achievement. Former US President Bill Clinton's visit to India in March 2000 added impetus to forge a strong Indo-US strategic partnership.

⁹When the USA offered India for strategic partnership, India also accepted it as an opportunity to promote its position at the regional and international levels.

¹⁰For detail see, Peter R Blood, "Pakistan-US Relations", Congressional Research Service (CRS), 10 March 2002.

¹¹Janne E. Nolan, "India, Pakistan and American Nuclear Diplomacy", Working Group Reports, No. II, Georgetown: Institute of Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, 5 January 2007.

¹²Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009, p. 33.

Putin's visit to India. The document spells out in detail the long-term nature of all aspects of Indo-Russian relations. Both sides have made it clear that the strategic partnership is not a new alliance; it can be traced back to the close linkages that existed between the two countries for the last 50 years.¹³ Since 2000 to 2010, eleven summits took place between the two countries. The relations were termed as "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership". The old friends, India and Russia agreed to strengthen their relations in a changed international environment.

Against this backdrop, the objective of the paper is to evaluate emerging dynamics of Indo-Russia relations in the contemporary context. The paper focuses on the nature and geo-strategic compulsions of India-Russia relations. It describes the emerging cooperation between two countries at different levels of strategic, military, economic and scientific cooperation. Finally, it will evaluate the new geo-political dimensions of Indo-Russia relations.

2. Renewal of Equitable Partnership and New Dynamics

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, an economically declining Russia started an uneasy transition towards market economy.¹⁴ The country's fight to achieve a healthy economy and vibrant democracy drove it closer towards the US and European Union. After undergoing an eclipse lasting over a period of less than one year, when Moscow under the alternative spells of first pro-Atlantic and then pro-China policies sidelined the strategic character of its ties with New Delhi, the situation gradually began to change. Russian think tanks came up with the opinion that there was no need to preserve the special relationship with India, which existed in the Soviet era; a special relationship with India was likely to undermine Russia's interaction with other countries in South Asia, and more particularly with Pakistan.¹⁵ A shift of Moscow's policy towards New Delhi was its belief that Moscow could no longer be a stable partner.¹⁶ On the other hand, India's new status as an emerging economic power made India more confident to compete in the international system.¹⁷ As regards

¹³John Cherian, "A Strategic Partnership", *Frontline*, Vol. 17, No. 21, 14 – 27 October, 2000.

¹⁴Rajiv Sikri, "Why Russia and India Matter to Each Other", available at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2007/jan/23guest.htm>, accessed on 12 October 2011.

¹⁵R.R. Sharma, "Indo-Russian Relations in the Emerging Context", in M. K. Rasgotra and V.D. Chopra (eds.), *India's Relations with Russia and China: A New Phase*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1997, p.66.

¹⁶Anuradha M. Chenoy, "India and Russia: Allies in the International Political System", in P. Stobdan (ed.), *India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Common Perspectives*, New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), 2010, p. 134.

¹⁷Umma Salma Bava, "India's Role in the Emerging World Order", FES Briefing Paper 4, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, March 2007.

its relationship during the Cold War period, Russia was not getting enough importance from India.¹⁸ But a new understanding brings India and Russia closer again. This new dynamics of relations are not based on ‘unqualified or speculative futuristic projections,’ but on ‘time tested and empirically verified calculations.’¹⁹

Firstly, in the post-Cold War world the US emerged as sole superpower and a unipolar system was dominating the global order.²⁰ India, Russia and China felt a necessity to show their presence in the emerging international order.²¹ After an impasse, Russia again expressed its ambition to be a player in the international power game.²² On the other hand, emerging India felt a necessity to ensure the autonomy of its position in the international order. A desire to establish a multi-polar world system, brought India and Russia closer, and both the countries raised their voice for multi-polar system, where the United Nations (UN) would be the legitimate institution to solve international issues.²³ The idea has also emerged from many other countries including China. China in many occasions declared its commitment to establish a multi-polar world system.²⁴ As a time-tested friends, New Delhi and Moscow thought that their common interests would be able to challenge unipolar world system and that would ensure their interests at the global level in a better way.

Secondly, India and Russia felt that in the emerging international system the continuation of their relations would enhance strategic advantage for both the countries. The military and strategic relations between them would help to curtail dependency on any other nation in terms of security, energy and influence in the international order. However, in the emerging international order the strategic calculations are getting new dimensions. Each country tries to acquire more involvement in the international order and the more links a country can open; the more benefits it can accrue. In this context, India and Russia realised that the enhancing partnership between the two countries would increase

¹⁸M K Bhadrakumar, “Russia, India and China Go Their Ways”, *Asia Times*, Thailand, 5 November 2009.

¹⁹Anuradha M. Chenoy, *op. cit.* n. 16.

²⁰Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz, “The New World Order: An Outline of the Post-Cold War Era”, *Alternatives*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Winter 2008.

²¹R N Das, “Russia-China-India Trilateral: Calibrating A Fine Balance,” *IDS Comment*, New Delhi: Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis (IDSA), 15 November 2010.

²²Fyodor Lukyanov, “Rethinking Russia: Russian Dilemmas in a Multi-polar World”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 2, Spring/Summer 2010.

²³Anuradha M. Chenoy, *op. cit.* n. 16.

²⁴Surjit Mansingh, “India-China Relations in the Context of Vajpayee’s 2003 Visit”, *The Sigur Center Asia Papers*, Washington D. C.: The Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University, 2003.

strategic advantage for both the countries in the regional as well as in the international levels.

Thirdly, Russia's position on Kashmir and the terrorism faced by India has been consistent and unconditional over time and regime change.²⁵ Russia never changed its position on the issue that Kashmir is an integral part of India. Russian consistent position on Kashmir made it a reliable friend of India. It raised confidence in the policy making bodies of India to rely on Russia more than any other country. On the other hand, while the US is more concerned about terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, Russia and India consider Kashmir and Chechnya as their priority, due to their long history of unrest which could pose greater security threats than anything else. Hence, both the countries agreed for countering terrorism in the international arena. On the issue of terrorism, the threats perceived by Russia and India are more unique than any other country.²⁶ Therefore, both countries feel the necessity to cooperate on the issue of terrorism.

Fourthly, as an emerging power, India's interests in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are increasing continuously.²⁷ Developing strong and long term relationships with CARs and SCO are important for India in the context of India's strategic and material interests of energy security and relations with China. India has already developed a long term, independent and autonomous relations with CARs. As a hub of oil and natural resources, the Central Asian countries are getting more importance in the international arena. Beyond natural resources, India has geo-strategic interests in this region, since the Central Asia share border with Afghanistan, Pakistan and the West Asia. However, for continuing Central Asian relations, Russia is the indisputable power. Increasing the US influence in this region on the name of 'colour revolutions'²⁸ has been challenged by Russia. In this context, India has to continue effective relations with Russia to ensure its relations in Central Asia.

²⁵Anuradha M. Chenoy, "India and Russia," in Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta, (eds.), *Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities*, New Delhi: Foreign Service Institute, 2007, p.733.

²⁶ Vijay Sakhuja, "India-Russia Strategic Partnership: Hallmark of Enduring Credibility", New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 2009.

²⁷ Meena Singh Roy, "Changing Dynamics of India-Russia Relations", *The Financial Express, India*, 2 September 2002.

²⁸ Colour Revolutions are democratic movements in the Central Asian countries. The revolutionists take one colour to unite people for democracy. However, most of the colour revolutionists are tilt with the USA.

Fifthly, India is dependent on Russia for almost 70 percent of its military hardware.²⁹ Both the countries also developed their joint production of weaponry equipments. During the Cold War period, India-Russia relations were mostly dominated by supplier-client relations. Similarly, after the Cold War, India's import from Russia helped sustain the economies of the Russian military industrial complex and 800 Russian defence industries kept working on Indian (and Chinese) orders.³⁰ However, India is still one of the world's most lucrative arms markets, where Russian share is \$4.8 billion.³¹ Similarly, the US is keen to replace Russia as India's defence supplier. India and Russia, both are aware of the issue and New Delhi wants checks and balances for continuing its relations with Russia. Russia is also not willing to leave the Indian arms market. A mutual dependency between India and Russia in the defence areas are determinant of their relations in the contemporary period.

Sixthly, India is an energy deficit country. Energy security has been defined by India's political leadership as being able to "supply lifeline energy to all our citizens as well as meet their effective demand for safe and convenient energy . . . at affordable cost."³² The 2006 Integrated Energy Policy report of India estimated that to sustain a growth of 8 percent till 2031–32, India's total primary energy requirement would increase to about 1,536 million tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe) in the most energy efficient scenario.³³ For ensuring India's energy security, the relation with Russia is therefore, essential.

Seventhly, the strengthening Indo-US relations did not change Indian elites' perceptions about India-Russia relations.³⁴ The US is going to be one of the most important friends to the Indian elites and emerging middle class. But the historical friendship with Russia is still influencing the mainstream perception in India that Russia is the reliable partner for India. On the other hand, Russian elites believe that India is the reliable ally for Russia in Asia.³⁵

In the post-Cold War world, India was baffled about its place in the international politics. But the liberalisation of its economy and then its

²⁹ Subhash Kapila, "Russia-India Strategic Partnership Continues to be Vibrant", *South Asian Analysis Group*, paper no. 2868, 3 October 2008, available at: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers29%5Cpaper2868.html>, accessed on 5 November 2010.

³⁰ Anuradha M. Chenoy, "India and Russia: Allies in the International Political System," *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 1, January/June 2008, p. 55.

³¹ Anuradha M. Chenoy, *op. cit.* n.25, p. 739.

³² *Integrated Energy Policy: Report of the Expert Committee*, Planning Commission, Government of India, August 2006, p. 57.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ K. P. Singh, "Indo-Russian Relations: From Friendship to Strategic Partnership", in V. D. Chopra, *Significance of Indo-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2008, p. 31.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

emergence as an economic power in the international arena reshaped India's foreign policy priorities. The emergence of new compulsions and the experiences of past goodwill relations opened up a new age of relationship between India and Russia. Both the countries share common perception of multi-polar world system. Therefore, the desire of economic and strategic opportunity created a mutual understanding between the two countries for forging a strong relationship.

3. Strategic and Military Cooperation

The signing of the Strategic Agreement of 2001 lessened the stalemate of Indo-Russian relations that commenced after the Cold War. The agreement deepened strategic and military cooperation between the countries. India always wants Russia's support on Kashmir as its integral part—a support that New Delhi received from Moscow persistently. Russia's continuous support on Kashmir helps India to prevent any international debate on the issue. The resurgent and separatist movements in the territory of both the countries are perceived more-or-less same by the political elites of two countries.³⁶ In Indian case, the issues of Kashmir and North Eastern region's insuregency, and in the Russian case the resurgent groups of Chechnya are considered same in nature by New Delhi and Moscow.³⁷ However, the other global powers, like the US and China, have different perspectives on these issues. In addition, Russia and India had bitter experiences on terrorism and currently several separatist groups are disrupting smooth functioning of governments with constant support from their neighbouring countries. New Delhi and Moscow have agreed to help each other to curb terrorist groups in their countries.³⁸ Besides, both the countries are trying to draw world attention towards terrorism and safety of nuclear weapons.

In the post-Cold War world, where the US desires to prove as a responsible superpower and wants to lead global system without any challenge, India and Russia with the cooperation of China want to make the international order more legitimate and multi-polar.³⁹ These countries want to strengthen UN mechanisms for solving the international issues. India and Russia established "Joint Working Group on Global Challenges," where they have agreed to work together on the

³⁶B. Raman, "Counter Terrorism: India-China-Russia Co-operation", *South Asian Analysis Groups*, Paper No. 830, 11 November 2003, available at: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers9%5Cpaper830.html>, accessed on 24 October 2011.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Ashok Tuteja, "Joint Fight: India, Russia Call for Stamping Out Terror", *The Tribune*, India, 9 May 2011.

³⁹Amresh Chandra, "Strategic Triangle among Russia, China and India: Challenges and Prospects", *Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2& 3, April-September 2010, pp. 40-60.

global issues.⁴⁰ The establishment of the “Eminent Persons Group” in 2000, with the objectives of ‘rendering assistance’ and ‘preparing recommendations’ indicate the essential cooperation between New Delhi and Moscow on the global issues. Hence, both the countries are forging strategic networks in favour of them. India is trying to achieve strategic presence in the Central Asia. India’s rivals China and Pakistan already developed good strategic relations in the region. Nevertheless, India is trying to ensure and strengthen its position in the region for her economic as well as meeting energy needs.⁴¹ In this context, the idea of Russia, China and India triangle are getting more relevance.⁴² Without affecting its relations with the US, India is eager to be part of the triangle.⁴³ The prosperity because of the cooperation within BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) is also influencing and promoting Indo-Russian relations.⁴⁴ In addition to that the post-Taliban Afghanistan is also a concern for India and Russia. Both the countries set up a “Joint Working Group” (JWG) on Afghanistan.⁴⁵ The two countries are cooperating to ensure their presence in Afghanistan for its development and peaceful settlement of its peoples. As New Delhi and Moscow are having similar concern towards Afghanistan, hence, they are not feeling any threat from each other on Afghan issues.

The military and defence cooperation has traditionally accorded the most prominent status in the Indo-Soviet relations. The first deal of India-Soviet military cooperation was signed in 1962, when India purchased helicopters, transport aircrafts and MIG-21 jet fighters from Russia. In mid-1990s, 70 percent of the Indian Army, 80 percent of the Indian Air Force and 85 percent of the Indian Navy was equipped by the Russian arms.⁴⁶ The cooperation in the military issues was continued after the collapse of the Soviet Union. By the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the nations in 1993, long term cooperation was achieved till 2000. In 1998, an integrated long term programme on military cooperation was adopted with validity till 2010. In 2000, both the countries reached an agreement on the

⁴⁰The first meeting of the India-Russia Joint Working Group on Global Challenges was held in New Delhi on 13-14 October 2003.

⁴¹Fazal-ur-Rahman, “Pakistan’s Evolving Relations with China, Russia, and Central Asia,” in *Eager Eyes Fixed on Eurasia*, Vol. 1, in Iwashita Akihiro (ed.), *Russia and Its Neighbours in Crisis*, Hokkaido: Slavic Research Centre, Hokkaido University, 2007, p. 211-29, and Shah Ram Akbarzudeh, “India and Pakistan: Geostrategic Rivalry in Central Asia,” *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 3. No. 2, 2003.

⁴²Amresh, *op. cit.* n. 39.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ambassador Ranendra Sen, “The Evaluation of India’s Bilateral Relations with India,” Policy Paper No. 2, India: ASPEN Institute, February 2011.

⁴⁵The Working Group was established in October 2000.

⁴⁶ Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov’s interview, *RIA-Novosti*, New Delhi, 30 November 2004.

creation of an Inter-governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation. The Inter-governmental Agreements have been signed between the two countries on the purchase and production in India of cutting-edge Russian tanks, armoured vehicles and fighter aircraft under Russian licenses. The final accord on the transfer of *Admiral Gorshkov* to India was signed in January 2004. The value of the deal was US\$ 1.5 billion.⁴⁷ It had stipulated to allocate US\$ 974 million for the modernisation and refurbishment of *Admiral Gorshkov* aircrafts carrier, US\$ 530 million for the delivery of 16 MIG-29K multi-role carrier based fighters, and Ka-31 and K-27 maritime reconnaissance helicopters. In October 2007, an Inter-governmental Agreement was signed in Moscow on joint development of an advanced multi-functional fighter aircraft of the fifth generation. The project is the largest collaboration ever between India and Russia on the military technical issues. The data provided by the Russia's Federal Service on Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC), the Military Technical Cooperation with India till 2010 comprises around 200 projects. Its total value is estimated at approximately US\$ 18 billion.⁴⁸ During the New Delhi visit of Russian President Medvedev in December 2010, both the countries agreed for joint development of a fifth generation fighter aircraft, the Sukhoi T-50.⁴⁹ The total cost of this project alone, which includes production of 200-250 jets, stands at over US\$ 30 billion.⁵⁰ It has implications that extend beyond the immediate deliverables for the armed forces. Indian Air Force will eventually acquire a technologically advanced aircraft as good as any being developed in the US or Europe. Besides, by signing such deals, New Delhi has enhanced its market's competitiveness at the international level.⁵¹

India's space research programme has always been linked to Russia. India became the seventh member of the international space club in 1980. New Delhi always is very keen to enhance its position in the air space research. Russia-India space cooperation is mainly related with space navigation, lunar exploration and man-controlled space flight programmes. In 2008, during the visit of Vladimir Putin, an unparallel Agreement on Long-Term Cooperation in Joint Development and use of Russian Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) was entered into. India approached Russia for a space flight for its astronaut as part of India's preparation for launching its own manned space vessel. Russia agreed on the issue and it is planned that an Indian astronaut will go to a space mission onboard a Russian space vessel tentatively in 2013. It will

⁴⁷Brian Kenneth Hedrich, *India's Strategic Defence Transformation: Expanding Global Relationship*, USA: Army War College, 2009, p. 17.

⁴⁸Anuradha M. Chenoy, *op. cit.* n. 30, p. 50.

⁴⁹Nalini Kant Jha, *op. cit.* n. 7.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹“A Very Special Partnership”, Editorial, *The Hindu*, Chennai, 23 December 2010; and “Old Ties Renewed,” Editorial, *Times of India*, Chennai, December 23, 2010.

be followed by an Indian manned spaceflight in 2015. Apart from that Russia agreed to support India in her air space programme to develop its own space vessels.⁵²

4. Economic and Trade Cooperation

Indo-Russian economic and trade cooperation is considered important by both the countries for enhancing their economic benefit and trade expansion. India was the largest trading partner of the former Soviet Union among the developing countries. During the Cold War, share of the former Soviet Union in India's foreign trade was US\$ 5.5 billion, which suffered a setback after the collapse of Soviet Union.⁵³ At present, the Indo-Russian trade touched US\$ 8.5 billion in 2010, thrice as much the figure for 2005.⁵⁴ Both countries made a target of bilateral trade worth US\$ 20 billion by 2015.⁵⁵ However, one of the weak features of India-Russia trade has been the narrow base of the trade basket. Compositions of the Indian exports to Russia are dominated by tea, coffee, rice, tobacco, textiles and pharmaceutical products that constitute almost 80 percent. Similarly, in the case of Russian exports to India are limited in metals, newsprints, chemicals and fertilizers. The countries are optimistic to extend their areas of bilateral trade and cooperation. Two countries have agreed to cooperate in a number of areas and identified potential areas for trade enhancement.

During the visit of Russian president Vladimir Putin in 2000, Moscow and New Delhi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for bolstering in the area of gold trade. Experts expressed opinion that India can import a huge amount of coal from the Russian Siberia and Far East.⁵⁶ India invited Russian companies for her huge highway construction and Russian construction companies are successfully taking part in highway constructions.⁵⁷ Here, it is worthwhile to say that Russian participation in India's multi-lane highway constructions is significant. India is also eager to take help from Russia for laying its gas and oil pipelines. The involvement of Russia in these sectors can be a major factor of trade growth. The cooperation in the Information Technology (IT) is considered another area where both the countries are willing to cooperate. India is the world's leading country in IT with a 40 percent annual

⁵² Kanwal Sibal, "Between the Old Friends," *Times of India*, India, 17 December, 2009.

⁵³ Vidya Nadkarni, *Strategic Partnerships in Asia: Balancing without Alliances*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 98.

⁵⁴ *The Financial Express*, New Delhi, 19 October 2011.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Robert E Ebel, "The Geopolitics of Russian Energy: Looking Back, Looking Forward", USA: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2009.

⁵⁷ Report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group, 2007, available at http://commerce.nic.in/publications/Report_India_Russia_Joint_Study_Group_10_9_2007.pdf?id=15, accessed on 24 October 2011.

growth.⁵⁸ Indian software export is compared with the Russian gas export to the Europe. President Putin visited India's IT hub in Bangalore in 2004. After that New Delhi and Moscow started cooperation in this sector also as well.

For opening a sound legal foundation to promote trade and economy, India and Russia signed mutual investment protection and avoidance of double taxation agreement.⁵⁹ Hence, both are trying to limit the obstacles in this respect. The opening of banking facilities, facilitating shipping arrangements, ensuring insurance coverage and solving the visa problems are under consideration of both countries.⁶⁰ India and Russia have now set an ambitious goal of doubling the two-way turnover to US\$ 20 billion by 2015.⁶¹

The energy cooperation is one more significant area of Indo-Russian cooperation. India is an energy deficit country and Russia has surplus energy. Russia can contribute in ensuring India's energy security in the coming days. India has invested US\$ 2.8 billion in the Sakhalin Energy Project of Russia.⁶² Russian gas giant Gazprom has entered into a strategic cooperation agreement with Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) and has also signed an MoU with Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh Ltd. for projects to supply gas and hydrocarbons.⁶³ Gazprom and GAIL also signed MoU for joint cooperation in each other's country as well as in any third country. Russia is the traditional partner for India in the electricity production. In this respect, Russian participation in the mini—hydro projects is significant. India is also eager to take help from Russia in the Coal and Metallurgy industry modernisation.⁶⁴

The nuclear energy cooperation is also significant. The Kudankulam nuclear plant with two reactors is under construction in Tamil Nadu of India with the Russian assistance. During President Medvedev's first ever visit to India in 2008; they signed an agreement for the construction of four more reactors with Russian technical assistance. Russia is likely to be involved in building several more nuclear plants in the east-coast of India. Experts talk about construction of about 20 nuclear reactors in India with Russian help.

⁵⁸Sanjay R Singh, "Information Technology in India: Present Status and Future Prospects for Economic Development", Kanpur: Indian Institute of Information Technology, May 2006, available at <http://www.iitk.ac.in/directions/may2006/PRINT~SANJAY.pdf>, accessed on 23 October 2011.

⁵⁹The agreement was signed on 21 August 1998.

⁶⁰"Report of the Working Group on Foreign Investment," Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, India, 30 July 2010.

⁶¹*The Financial Express*, New Delhi, *op. cit.* n.52.

⁶²Arun Mohanty, "Energy: Russia Eyes Asia-Pacific, India Markets," *Russia & India Report*, 7 October 2011.

⁶³The MoU was signed in 2004.

⁶⁴Nalini Kanth Jha and Subash Shukla, *op. cit.* n.7.

The visits of the US President Barack Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India in 2010 may have yielded a bigger and more immediate harvest for the economic development of India. But the 30 agreements signed by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Dmitry Medvedev during the latter's visit to New Delhi in December, 2010, will, if fully implemented, pave the way for full-spectrum progress across a range of key sectors from nuclear energy and hydrocarbons to R&D, pharmaceuticals, and information technology. It will provide new quality of cooperation between India and Russia.

5. Scientific and Technological Cooperation

The cooperation in the areas of science and technology are diversified and multifaceted between India and Russia. Bilateral cooperation between the countries was initiated at the level of individual projects, such as the creation of a vaccine against poliomyelitis. Soviet researchers and experts were involved in the establishment of more than 30 R&D centres and laboratories in India, including the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay, Indian R&D Institute of Petroleum at Dehradun and Ahmedabad. More than 100,000 Indian nationals were trained by the Soviet experts in different institutions. Through the 1980s-1990s, certain initiatives were introduced for scientific and technological cooperation between India and Russia. Within the framework of Integrated long-term Programme for Cooperation in Science and Technology (ILTP), from 1984 through 1989, India and Russia jointly developed 112 themes in 22 priority scientific areas, including solar energy use, anti-corrosion metal protection, power metallurgy, foamed metals manufacture, high pressure physics, meteorology and oceanography. At present, 70 institutions in Russia and 55 institutes and laboratories in India are being implemented.⁶⁵

As part of the ILTP, India and Russia agreed for scientific exchange in laser and aerospace industries, biotechnologies, immunology and computer engineering. Both the countries agreed for cooperation in the six fundamental areas in science, such as: mathematics, applied mechanics, physics and astrophysics, environmental monitoring and protection, and general chemistry. Apart from above, Russia has agreed to help India in different scientific areas.⁶⁶ In Medicine, Russia is helping India to set up the National Centre for Production of Vaccines against Poliomyelitis to fully meet the demands of the Indian market. Further, Russia is willing to help India to develop new generation immune-modulators and is establishing a specialised anti-tuberculosis centre

⁶⁵See Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India web site http://dst.gov.in/whats_new/press_releases05/india-russia.htm, accessed on 15 February 2011.

⁶⁶Tatina Shaumyan, "Russia-India Bilateral Cooperation", in Stobdan, (ed.), *op. cit.* n. 16, p. 154.

where Russian lasers will be used.⁶⁷ The cooperation is extended among the medical personnel in the studying and applying *Ayurveda* method and joint research in immunology, epidemiology, biophysics, oncology, endocrinology and cardiology. For producing new materials with unprecedented characteristics, India established a powder metallurgy centre in Hyderabad by the design and technology recommendations supplied by Russia.⁶⁸ India is also opening a radio-chemical research centre in Mumbai by the help of Siberian Division of Russian Academy of Sciences. Indian-Russian biotechnologies centre was commissioned in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. The centre is trying to generate high-yield transgenic plants resistant to adverse conditions to be used for food production purposes. Besides, they are also in process to develop a large scale production of semi-conducting silicone for microelectronics, power electronics and solar energy applications. The joint Saras-Duet project is being undertaken for developing a light transport aircraft for passenger carriage along routes up to 2000 km. India and Russia set up a centre for geophysical instrument making in Chandigarh.⁶⁹ It is a globally coordinated monitoring network in India for forecasting earthquakes.

The cooperation in High Tech technology between India and Russia is also of greater importance. India is manufacturing multi-role transport aircraft, fifth generation combat aircraft, and supersonic BrahMos missile by the help of Russia. They are also coordinating in the areas of space exploration, industrial accelerators, high-temperature synthesis, earth science and semi-conducting materials. The historic and traditional relations are helping them to forge their ties in extended way.

6. New Geo-Political Dimensions

A new geo-political dimension is developing in the Indo-Russian relations. India wants a close partnership with the US to deal with the challenge of a rising China.⁷⁰ But Moscow believes that the new US strategy of containing China is fraught with new tensions and security risks in the Asia-Pacific region.⁷¹ Russia arranged an important meeting in July 2009 with Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, what had come to be known as Dushanbe Four. The main objective of the meeting was ensuring energy security for Russia's neighbours and sharing of hydro-electric power. The agreement opened an opportunity for Pakistan to enter into the energy resources of Central Asia. However, the meeting has raised many questions in the international arena. Some analysts argued that Russia may be trying to take Pakistan as a partner in the region, where India is tilted with the

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸ It was established in 2009 under ILTP.

⁶⁹ It is under ILTP.

⁷⁰ Nalini Kanth Jha, *op. cit.* n.7.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

US.⁷² But, Russian response to India proved that Russian relations with Pakistan would not replace its relations with India.

On the other hand, the increasing influence of the US in the Central Asian countries is not perceived by Russia and China in a positive manner. Russia is competing in the Central Asia with the pro-American forces. The US influence in Georgia is one of the examples in this context. However, Russia responded to the US policies in a clear manner that Russia would not tolerate US influence in the region especially those that are affecting Russian interests.⁷³ On the other hand, China is aware about the US policy of ‘containment of China.’ China is also aware that India and the US may try in a same manner to contain China at the regional level as well as at the international arena. In this context, Russia wants to promote a framework of cooperation among India-Russia and China.⁷⁴ But India’s response to the issue is not clear yet. However, though India and China are important trade partners, China’s confusion about India’s relations with the US is still affecting China’s policy towards India.⁷⁵ Hence, it would be a challenge for India to continue its relations with all the players of international arena. But the historic India-Russia relations may be the determinant of the emerging India’s engagement in the international arena. At the geo-strategic level India may not be so close to the US that can create confusion among the elites of Russia. It seems that India is still successful to ensure its position in the international arena to pursue its national goals. Russia is convinced that Indo-US relations in any way could not affect the geo-strategic interests of Russia in the region. On the other hand, India is also not feeling any inconveniency by Russia’s new relations with Pakistan. The interests in the Central Asia made a compulsion for India to continue strong relations with Russia.

President Medvedev’s visit to India in December 2010 injected fresh contents in the Indo-Russian partnership.⁷⁶ On the eve of Medvedev’s visit, there were tendentious reports that Moscow was wary of India’s deepening defence cooperation with the US. Russia’s support for India’s permanent membership in the UN Security Council was said to be weakening. There were also hints that Moscow was reaching out to Islamabad to compensate for its declining status in New Delhi. The results from his visit, however, prove that India and Russia have

⁷² Tayyab Siddiqui, “Pakistan-Russia Relations — A New Beginning,” *The Tribune Express*, USA, 30 November 2010.

⁷³ Ariel Cohen, “Rethinking Reset: Re-examining the Obama Administration’s Russia Policy,” The Heritage Foundation, 21 July 2011.

⁷⁴ The notion of “strategic triangle” comprising of *Russia, China and India* was used by former Premier of *Russia* Mr. Primakov, when he visited *India* in 1999.

⁷⁵ Lisa Curtis, “US–India Relations: China Factor”, *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, No. 2209, 25 November 2008.

⁷⁶ M. K. Bhadrakumar, “India-Russia Ties in the Neo-liberal Era”, *The Hindu*, India, 1 January 2011.

chosen to work together. The Russian leaders are realistic enough to recognise that in order to retain their historic standing in New Delhi, they must adapt. Hence, a popular elite perception of goodwill relations will improve relations between the two countries in the coming days.

Needless to add, by endorsing India's bid for permanent membership in the UN Security Council, inclusion in the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and other technology control regimes, SCO, and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as well as by calling upon Pakistan to bring to justice the perpetrators of 26/11⁷⁷ attack on Mumbai, President Dmitry Medvedev re-confirmed time-tested friendship with India. He also put to rest the doubts that had begun to creep in involving defence ties at a time of increasing the US, European and Israeli presence in the Indian defence market, as well as Russia's increasing security cooperation with Islamabad.

7. Conclusion

Indo-Russian partnership is getting more importance for both the countries in the contemporary contexts. Traditionally, India was only recipient country from the Soviet Union. But at present an emerging India can contribute more in the economic development of Russia. On the other hand, India needs Russia for multi-dimensional purposes: for scientific and technological cooperation, for modernisation of Indian military and for ensuring sufficient flow of energy. However, after a setback, during the transition of Russia from socialism to capitalism, a new framework of cooperation has emerged between India and Russia in the last decade.

In addition, Russia has shown the political will to transform the old buyer-seller relationship into a defence industrial collaboration that emphasizes joint development of weapons. That in turn has enormously increased India's bargaining power with the US and European suppliers of advanced conventional weapons. It is thus, clear that whereas ten years ago, the twin-headed eagle of Russia's national emblem had both heads turned West, today they look West and East as originally conceived. As Andrei Volod of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations says, "India has re-emerged as a kingpin of Russia's policy in the East, along with China."⁷⁸

In a new system of international relations, the multi-faceted relations are not affecting Indo-Russian relations. Rather, as a time tested one, India-Russia

⁷⁷ India's largest city Mumbai was attacked on 26 November 2008 by the terrorists with eleven coordinated shooting and bombing. The attackers allegedly received reconnaissance assistance from Pakistan. The day is referred to as 26/11.

⁷⁸ Vladimir Radyuhin, "Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty?" *The Hindu*, India, 17 December, 2010.

relations are getting more relevance in the contemporary contexts. India's emerging relations with the US are not creating any challenge for Russia. In another way, India's energy interests in the Central Asia convinced India that a traditional friend Russia is more essential friend for India. Hence, the areas of cooperation are extending between the two countries. However, India's desire to be a global power made it to enhance its relations with all powers of the world in all significant areas. India considers Russia as a time-tested reliable partner in this regard.