

India- Russia Relations

December 15, 2021

Manifest pedagogy:

The recently concluded 21st India Russia Annual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin saw a host of agreements signed. The very fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in India for an in-person summit was the most important takeaway from his six hours in New Delhi. Putin hasn't stepped out of Russia during the pandemic, except to meet Joe Biden in Geneva. In this background let us explore the India-Russia relations in-depth.

In news: India, Russia reinvigorate bilateral ties

Placing it in syllabus: Foreign Affairs

Static dimensions:

- 50 years of Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation
- Key takeaways of the 21st India Russia Summit

Current dimensions:

- India Russia – Defence and Security relations
- India Russia – Cultural relations
- India Russia – Trade Relations
- Act Far East Policy
- Why is Russia Important for India ?

Content:

50 years of Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation:

- India and Russia have completed 50 years of friendship.
- Recently, the two countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation.

- On 9 August 1971, India and the then Soviet Union (present-day Russia) signed the **Chiranjeevi Friendship Papers**.
- The strength of the relationship between the two countries was such that it radically changed the equation of the then world.
- Not only this, it influenced the foreign policy not only of South Asia but also of America and European countries.
- In 1971, the situation was not favorable for India at all.
- On the one hand, in the then East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh), the people suffering from the atrocities of the Pakistani army were entering India to take refuge in India. At the same time, the alliance of Pakistan, America and China was getting stronger.
- In such a situation, there was a big threat to the security of India surrounded by three directions.
- Despite the sanctions, both the US and China were providing military aid to Pakistan by secretly giving weapons.
- Russian Foreign Minister came to India and signed the agreement
- In such a situation, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union Andrei Gromiko came to India and on this day in 1971, he signed the Soviet-India Peace, Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the then Foreign Minister of India, Sardar Swaran Singh.
- This treaty became a milestone in the friendly relations between the two countries.
- Soon after this treaty, the Soviet Union declared that an attack on India would be considered an attack on it.
- This is cited as the reason why the US naval fleet did not dare to attack India during the 1971 war.

- 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 "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000 (during the visit of President Putin), India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, defence, trade and economy, science and technology, and culture.
- Under the Strategic Partnership, several institutionalized dialogue mechanisms operate at both political and official levels to ensure regular interaction and follow up on cooperation activities.
- During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership."

Key takeaways of the 21st India Russia Summit

- 28 agreements/MoUs were signed during the 21st India-Russia Annual Summit in New Delhi
- PM Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed regional & global developments, including post-pandemic global economic recovery, & the situation in Afghanistan
- PM Modi thanked President Putin for the welfare of the Indian community in Russia, especially during COVID pandemic.
- Both leaders discussed the need for **mutual recognition of vaccine certification** to enable easier travel by our citizens to each other's countries
- On the trade & investment side, there are some specific plans which include **long-term corporation in the areas of inland waterways, fertilizers, coking coals, steel, skilled manpower.**

- The **issue of RELOS (Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement) has been put off** for some time because there are still a few issues that need to be discuss further
- India will be manufacturing the AK 203 assault rifle here and S-400 deliveries have started.
- Fossil fuel imports from Russia, including coking coal for India's steel industry, investments by Vostok Oil have been renewed and broadened.
- Connectivity, the most important being the Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor, was discussed, not yet actioned.

Evaluation:

- 21st India Russia summit dispelled the impression that India-Russia ties were on the wane because the two countries were moving closer to different partners in today's primary international confrontation – the United States (US) and China, respectively.
- It showed that both leaderships are quite realistic about their relationship and where it is placed in this ongoing churn.
- The joint statement showcased the breadth and depth of the relationship as well as its nuanced responses to the several challenges that exist in areas where bilateral ties are affected by external developments.
- India and Russia clearly demonstrated the need to post-haste deal with the lack of economic traction between the two economies.
- This reflects Modi-Putin's understanding that the relationship can only last, despite their close defence cooperation and similarity of long-term strategic views, if it has a robust economic foundation.
- The extension for another 10 years of the agreement on military cooperation is an indication that the two countries will continue to be important to each other's defence sectors for several more years, even decades

- The two sides did not sign the widely expected Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS), which is similar to the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) between India and the US. This gives access to both countries to designated military facilities on either side for the purpose of refuelling and replenishment.
- Both Modi and Putin appear to have reduced vexing divergences significantly on a variety of important international issues – Afghanistan, the Indo-Pacific Quad, rapidly developing close ties between India and the US, and Russia's growing relations with China and Pakistan.

India Russia – Defence and Security relations

- India has longstanding and wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in the field of defence.
- The Soviet Union was an important supplier of defence equipment for several decades, and this role has been inherited by the Russian federation.
- India-Russia military technical cooperation has evolved from a buyer – seller framework to one involving joint research, development and production of advanced defence technologies and systems.
- BrahMos Missile System as well as the licensed production in India of SU-30 aircraft and T-90 tanks, are examples of such flagship cooperation.
- Furthering this cooperation, an agreement on the cooperation in the production of spare parts for Russian/Soviet military equipment was signed during the 20th Annual Bilateral Summit in Vladivostok in September 2019.
- In October 2018, India inked the historic agreement worth US\$5.43 billion with Russia to procure five S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile defence system, the most powerful missile defence system in the world ignoring

America's CAATSA act.

- The first-ever Tri-Services exercise – '**INDRA** 2017' took place in Vladivostok from October 2017.
- Bilateral Russian-Indian naval exercise **Indra Navy-2018** was held in the Bay of Bengal.

India and Russia have several major joint military programmes including:

- BrahMos cruise missile programme
- 5th generation fighter jet programme
- Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme (230+ to be built by Hindustan Aeronautics)
- Ilyushin/HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft
- KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters
- some frigates

India Russia – Cultural relations

- Indo-Russian relations in the field of culture are historical.
- One of the first Russian visitors to India was Afanasiy Nikitin a merchant from Tver in Russia. His famous journey (1466-1472) was documented in the book A Journey Beyond the Three Seas.
- Astrakhan in Russia has historically been a trading centre for Indian merchants since the 16th century.
- There is a strong tradition of Indian studies in Russia.
- JNCC maintains close cooperation with leading Russian institutions. About 20 Russian Institutions, including leading universities and schools, regularly teach Hindi to about 1500 Russian students.
- Apart from Hindi, languages such as Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Sanskrit and Pali are taught in Russian Institutions. There is strong interest among Russian people in Indian dance, music, yoga and Ayurveda.

- Traditionally, there has been strong collaboration in the field of cinema between India and the USSR. Several generations of Russians grew up watching subtitled Indian films (mainly Bollywood) and vice versa for Indians watching Russian films
- Yoga in Russia has been growing and becoming increasingly popular since the 1980s, particularly in major cities and urban centres, mainly due to its reputation for health benefits
- As per the reciprocal agreement, regular cultural exchange between India and Russia has been taking place since 2015.
- Russia has been an active partner country for ITEC scholarship with around 76 Russians taking the benefit in 2018-19. The number of ICCR scholarships has been steadily growing every year.

India Russia – Trade Relations

- Bilateral trade between both countries is concentrated in key value chain sectors.
- These sectors include highly diversified segments such as machinery, electronics, aerospace, automobile, commercial shipping, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fertilisers, apparels, precious stones, industrial metals, petroleum products, coal, high-end tea and coffee products
- Intensifying the trade and economic relations has been identified as a priority area by the leaders on both sides as is clear by the revised targets of increasing bilateral investment to US \$ 50 billion and bilateral trade to US \$ 30 billion by 2025.
- In the aftermath of general economic slowdown and Russia's ongoing dispute with the West over Ukraine issue, Russia has emphasized on import substitution due to which, there has been a significant reduction in Russia's external trade.

- India has also been affected by this contraction in Russian exports and imports.
- Bilateral trade in services has remained stable during the last 5 years with trade balance in Russia's favour.
- Hydrocarbons is an active area for exploring cooperation between the two countries.
- In the second and third quarter of 2016, Indian companies invested close to US\$ 5.5 billion in Russia's Oil and Gas sector, which included acquisition of 23.9% stake in Vankorneft and 29.9% in Taas-Yuryakh by an Indian Consortium

Act Far East Policy

- The Far East as a geographical term refers to East Asia (including Northeast Asia), the Russian Far East (part of North Asia), and Southeast Asia. The Russian Far East comprises the Russian part of the Far East, the easternmost territory of Russia, between Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2019 launched 'Act Far East' policy while addressing the plenary session of the 5th Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok.
- He announced a USD one billion line of credit for the development of the resource rich region. He was the Chief Guest at the Eastern Economic Forum.
- 'India's new Act Far East' is an extension to India's Act East policy, Act East Plus- as it includes Russia's Far East. The goals are to consolidate the strategic and commercial relations.
- 'Act Far-East' policy does open a host of opportunities for India, Russia, and Japan as they aim to increase trade and balance relations with China.
- It also helps India to take a more considered stand regarding the South China Sea since the proposed

maritime route with Russia goes through it.

- It also fulfills India's view on 'Indo-Pacific' as "free and inclusive."
- Initiatives taken, especially by India and Russia, could lead to a more robust economic relationship.
- 'Act Far East' allows India to look towards Russia as an alternative source of energy supplies as the situation in the Middle East is escalating with threats to essential oil trade routes.
- Rosneft's involvement in the South China Sea allows India and Russia to collaborate in the region.
- Moreover, it gives Russia an opportunity to diversify from China. Russia has been worried about the growing presence of China in its Far East. If Indians are allowed as well as Indian businesses, it could offset the demography change that Russia is concerned about.

Why is Russia Important for India?

- ***Russia's status in international sphere:*** Russia remains, and will remain a pre-eminent nuclear and energy power and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council
- ***Multipolar World Politics:*** Since the world is becoming increasingly multipolar, maintaining close and strategic relations with Russia and the US at the same time is indispensable for India. Strong partnership with Russia provides India leverages to deal with other countries.
- ***Support for UNSC seat:*** Russia has stated publicly that it supports India receiving a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.
- ***Counterbalance to China Aggression:*** India has no option but to have a close relationship both with the US and Russia and to manage its difficult relationship with China. So long as Russia's relationship with the West remains strained, Russia will look towards China. So long as Sino-Indian relations remain troubled, Russia's

going into the Chinese sphere of influence will not suit India.

- **India's energy security:** Russia has huge reserves of oil. India to look towards Russia as an alternative source of energy supplies as the situation in the Middle East is escalating with threats to essential oil trade routes
- **Important Technology supplier:** Russia can help India build its technological potential by providing access to its technologies especially in the defence technology and nuclear technology.

Areas of Concern:

- The increasing hostility between Russia and the West has pushed the former closer to China. Both countries insist on multi-polarity to resist US hegemony. That is why they insist on RIC (Russia-India-China), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- Russia also feels that India, because of its growing links with the US, is not fully committed to these Forums.
- Further, the 'Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act', or the CATSAA, and Iran sanctions restrict and adversely impact Indo-Russia relations.
- India has to find a way of navigating through the Russia-US tension.
- The growing strategic partnership between India and the US has also caused concerns in Russia where the perception is that India is surely and steadily going into the Western camp.
- Russia has sought to keep India on its side by inviting it to join the BRICS and the SCO.
- But it remains concerned that strengthening of Indo US partnership will impact Russia adversely.

Mould your thought:

1. India has no option but to have a close relationship both with the US and Russia. Evaluate.

Approach to the answer-

- Begin with brief intro history of India's relations with US and Russia
- Discuss India's needs
- Mention the current geopolitical situation (Multipolar world /climate change/trade etc)
- Discuss why India needs both US and Russia
- Conclusion