



New India-Russia Ties

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This article is based on “**Bridge the geopolitical distance with Russia**” which was published in The Hindustan Times on 16/02/2021. It talks about the importance that Russia and India hold for each other in the present geopolitical scenario.

The year 2020 saw several geopolitical events that impacted both India and Russia. For instance, the sharpening rivalry between the US and China, the India-China border tussle, the continuing decline in ties between the West and Russia, and now change of leadership in the US.

As Russia and India both desire a multi-polar world, they are equally important for each other in fulfilling each other's national interests. However, due to the changing geopolitical scenario, the relationship between both countries is not as good as it used to be in the cold war era.

In this context, the forthcoming visit of India's Foreign secretary to Russia is a good occasion to examine the relevance of **Indo-Russian ties** in a world of changing geopolitical equations.

Importance of Russia for India

- **Balancing China:** The Chinese aggression in the border areas of eastern Ladakh, brought India-China relations to an inflection point, but also demonstrated that Russia is capable of contributing to defusing tensions with China.

Russia organized a trilateral meeting among the foreign ministers of Russia, India, and China following deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley in the disputed territory of Ladakh.

- **Emerging New Sectors of Economic Engagement:** Apart from traditional areas of cooperation such as weapons, hydrocarbons, nuclear energy, and diamonds, new sectors of economic engagement are likely to emerge — mining, agro-industrial, and high technology, including robotics, nanotech, and biotech.

India's footprint in the Russian Far East and in the Arctic is set to expand. Connectivity projects may get a boost too.

- **Combating Terrorism:** India and Russia are working to close the gap on Afghanistan and are calling for early finalization of the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**.
- **Support At Multilateral Forums:** Additionally, Russia supports India's candidacy for permanent membership of a reformed United Nations Security Council and of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Importance of India For Russia

- **Balancing China:** Russia and China are currently in a quasi-alliance setup. However, Russia repeatedly reiterates that it does not see itself as anybody's junior partner. That's why Russia wants India to act as a balancer.
 - For Instance, Russia's Far East is a huge landmass that is rich in resources but is sparsely populated and underdeveloped.
 - Till now, its development has primarily revolved around Chinese dominance and so Russia wants to diversify with the help of India to lessen Russia's growing dependence on China.
- **Reviving Eurasian Economic Union:** Russia seeks to leverage India's soft power to gain legitimacy in the success of the Eurasian Economic Union, and re-establishing its hegemony, as it existed during the cold war era.

Main Challenge

- **India Going West:** China's expansionist foreign policy forced India to shed past hesitations and actively pursue closer ties with the West, particularly the US.

This can be reflected in a determined restart of the Quad process and a clearer enunciation of a free and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- **Russia Going East:** The Western countries have imposed harsh economic sanctions towards Russia after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.
 - Russia responded to these efforts to isolate it, by revving up its own "Pivot to the East".
 - The most distinct results of which are markedly improved relations with China, and better ties with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.
 - Russia's Pivot to the East policy is not in synergy with that of the US and subsequently, the relationship between India and Russia suffers.

Way Forward

- **India Engaging Russia Into Indo-Pacific Narrative:** India should pursue and facilitate Russia's engagement in the Indo-Pacific. However, Russia's role in the Indo-Pacific will depend on how successful it is in dealing with the fundamental problems hindering its economic development.

Russia's active engagement in the region would contribute to making the Indo-Pacific truly "free and inclusive".

- **Prioritizing RIC in Indian Foreign Policy:** India must promote a mutually beneficial trilateral cooperation between Russia, China, and India that could contribute towards the reduction of mistrust and suspicion between India and China.
- **Cooperation At Multilateral Forums:** India and Russia continue to share a common strategic rationale for their relationship.

Apart from bilateral synergies, the two are members of various multilateral organizations including BRICS, RIC, G20, East Asia Summit, and SCO—where avenues for cooperation on issues of mutual importance exist.

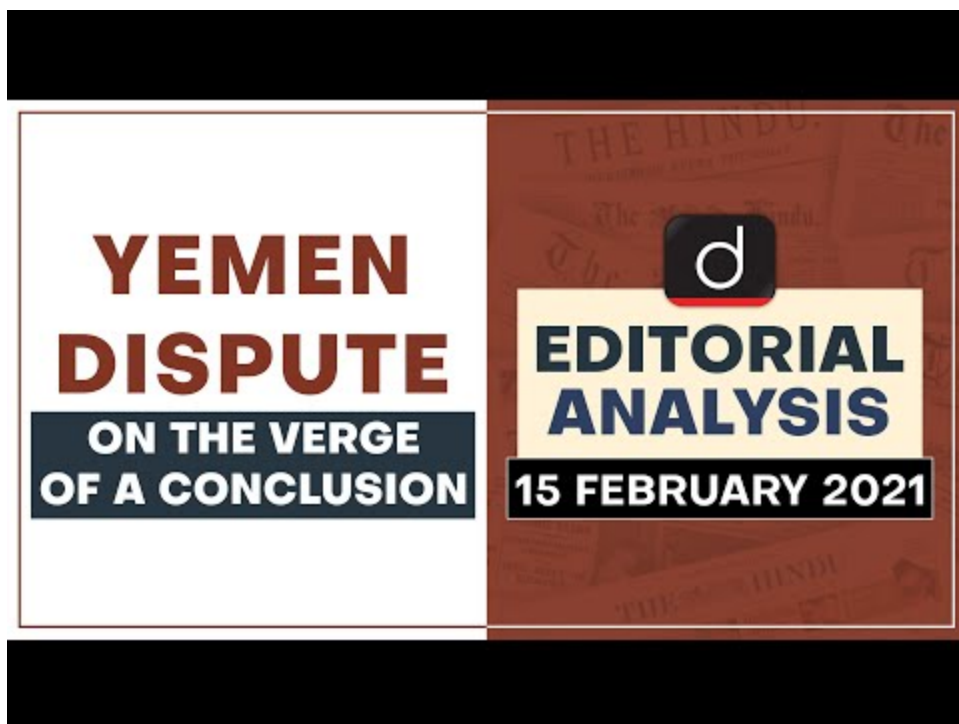
Conclusion

It is clear that India & Russia still regard each other as valued partners with a friendship built on deep mutual trust, their foreign policy goals are taking them in different directions.

However, neither India nor Russia wants to be a junior partner to China or the United States. Thus, both countries can turn back to and bolster ties as existed in the cold war era.

Drishti Mains Question

Despite the foreign policy, goals are taking them in different directions, it is imperative for India and Russia to bolster their ties. Discuss.



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This editorial is based on “**Endless war: On why Saudi Arabia should end its Yemen blockade**” published in The Hindu on February 15th, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.

