



India and Russia Relationship

For Prelims: Brahmos Missile, Indra exercise, Kamov ka-226, S-400 Triumph

For Mains: Changing trends in Indo-Russia relations

Why in News?

Recently India and Russia celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. This has come amid [Russia-Ukraine war](#).

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What are the Different Aspects of Indo-Russia Relations?

▪ Historical Background:

- The India and Russia ties have been a longstanding relation. Since the signing of the **“Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership”** in October 2000, 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.
- During the **Cold War**, India and the **Soviet Union** had a strong strategic, military, economic and diplomatic relationship. After the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited its close relationship with India which resulted in both nations sharing a Special Strategic Relation.
- However, the **relations have taken a steep downfall** over the past few years, especially in the post-Covid scenario. One of the biggest causes for this is [Russia's close relations](#)

[with China and Pakistan](#), which have caused many geopolitical issues in the past few years for India.

▪ **Political Relations:**

- The **Annual Summit meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation** is the highest institutionalised dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between India and Russia.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin held their **first informal Summit** in the city of Sochi in the Russian Federation in 2018.
- In 2019, President Putin signed the Executive Order on awarding PM Narendra Modi **Russia's highest state decoration - The order of St Andrew the Apostle**. The order was presented to PM for his distinguished contribution to the development of a privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India and friendly ties between the Russian and Indian peoples
- **Two Inter-Governmental Commissions** - one on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (**IRIGC-TEC**), and another on Military-Technical Cooperation (**IRIGC- MTC**), **meet annually**.

▪ **Trade Relations:**

- The two countries intend to increase bilateral investment to US\$50 billion and bilateral trade to US\$30 billion by 2025.
- Bilateral trade during FY 2020 amounted USD 8.1 billion.
- From 2013 to 2016 there was a major decline in the trade percentage between the two countries. However, it increased from 2017 onwards and a constant increase was noticed in 2018 and 2019 as well.

▪ **Defence and Security Relations:**

- 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
- Both countries regularly conduct the Tri-Services exercise '**INDRA**'.
- The joint military programmes between India and Russia include:
 - **BrahMos cruise missile programme**
 - 5th generation fighter jet programme
 - Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme
 - Ilyushin/HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft
 - **KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters**
 - some frigates
- The military hardware purchased/leased by India from Russia includes:
 - **S-400 Triumph**
 - **Kamov Ka-226** 200 to be made in India under the **Make in India initiative**
 - **T-90S Bhishma**
 - **INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier programme**
- Russia also plays a very important role in assisting the Indian Navy with its submarine programmes:
 - Indian Navy's first submarine, '**Foxtrot Class**' came from Russia
 - India is dependent on Russia for its nuclear submarine programme
 - **INS Vikramaditya**, the sole aircraft carrier operated by India, is also Russian in origin.
 - Nine of the fourteen conventional submarines operated by India are Russian.

What are Other Important Areas of Relations between India and Russia?

▪ **Nuclear Relations:**

- Russia is an important partner for India in the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy. It recognizes India as a country with advanced nuclear technology with an impeccable non-proliferation record.
- **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP)** is being built in India .
- Both India and Russia are implementing **Rooppur Nuclear Power Project in Bangladesh**

▪ **Space Exploration:**

- Both sides cooperate in the peaceful uses of outer space, including satellite launches,

[GLONASS navigation system](#), remote sensing and other societal applications of outer space.

- An MoU ISRO and ROSCOSMOS on Joint Activities in the field of [Human Spaceflight Programme](#) was signed during the 19th Bilateral Summit.

▪ **Science and Technology:**

- The Working Group on Science and Technology functioning under IRIGC-TEC, the Integrated Long-Term Programme (ILTP) and the Basic Science Cooperation Programme are the three main institutional mechanisms for bilateral Science and Technology cooperation, while the Science Academies of the two countries promote inter-academy exchanges.
- A number of new initiatives in this sphere include India-Russia Bridge to Innovation, cooperation in telemedicine, creation of a **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)**, and the Russia India Network (RIN) of universities.

▪ **Cultural Relations:**

- 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
- Indian dance, music, yoga and Ayurveda are among few other interests that people of Russia enjoy.

What is the Significance 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 can contribute 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.
- **Russia's Military Exports:** Russia has been **one of the largest arms exporters to India.** Even as Russia's share in India's arms imports fell by over 50% in the last five-year period compared to the previous five years (2011-2015).
 - In the last 20 years, India imported arms and weapons worth USD 35 billion from Russia, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute which tracks global arms trade.

Way Forward

- **Russia To Provide Timely Maintenance Support:** Timely supply of spares and support to the large inventory of Russian hardware in service with the Indian military has been a major issue from India.
 - To address this, Russia has made legislative changes allowing its companies to set up joint ventures in India to address it following an Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in 2019.
 - This agreement **needs to be implemented in a time-bound manner.**
- **Acknowledging Importance of Each Other:** Russia will remain a key defense partner for India for decades to come.
 - On the other hand, Russia and China are currently in a quasi-alliance setup. 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.**
- **Joint Military Production:** The two countries have been discussing how they can cooperate in

using India as a production base for exporting to third countries Russian-origin equipment and services.

Source: IE

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