



RELOS and India-Russia Relation

For Prelims: [The Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971](#), [Quad](#), [Indian monsoon](#), ([GSOMIA Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership](#), [Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership](#), [Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant \(KKNPP\)](#)), Agreement on the Programme for Military-Technical Cooperation, [MiG-21](#), [Su-30](#), [Ukraine Crisis](#)

For Mains: Strategic Significance of India-Russia Relations, Key Issues and Way Forward.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the India-Russia mutual logistics agreement named the **Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS)** is now ready for finalisation. It will facilitate military cooperation between India and Russia, including **joint exercises, training, and disaster relief efforts**.

What is Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS)?

▪ About:

- The Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) between India and Russia is a significant administrative arrangement that will enhance **military cooperation between the two nations**.

▪ Purpose:

- This agreement is designed to **streamline military logistics support**, making joint operations and **long-distance missions** more efficient and **cost-effective** for both India and Russia.

▪ Significance:

- **Sustained Operations:**
 - It will facilitate the replenishment of **essential supplies (fuel, rations, spare parts)** thus enabling continuous, uninterrupted military presence in crucial regions.
 - It will provide **berthing facilities for troops**, warships, and aircraft.
 - It will be applicable during **both wartime and peacetime missions**.
- **Strategic Advantages:**
 - It will enable smoother utilisation of the host nation's **existing logistics networks**. Enhances ability to **respond swiftly** to crises.
 - It will provide a **strategic edge to the military operations** of both countries thereby reducing overall mission costs.
- **Expanded Military Reach:**
 - Enhances India's maritime outreach and influence in strategically important regions.
 - Boosts **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** and shared logistics facilities could enable **better information exchange** about maritime activities, enhancing both countries' situational awareness.
- **Balancing Quad Agreements:**

- RELOS balances India's logistics agreements with [Quad](#) countries and Russia's non-Quad stance.
- Strengthens Russian presence in Indo-Pacific without Quad involvement.
- It Counterbalances US influence and China's regional role for both India and Russia.
- **Scientific Interconnections:**
 - India's primary engagements in the Arctic are focused on understanding scientific interconnections between Arctic sea ice melting and changes in Indian monsoon systems.

What are India's Logistics Agreements with Various Countries?

- **India and USA:**
 - [General Security of Military Information Agreement \(GSOMIA\)](#): It was signed in 2002, to facilitate sharing military intelligence between **India and the USA**.
 - **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), 2016**: Allows mutual **use of military logistics facilities**.
 - [Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement \(BECA\), 2020](#): Provides India access to U.S. **geospatial intelligence data**.
 - **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), 2018**: **Enables the transfer of encrypted communication equipment**.
- **India and France:**
 - Facilitates **logistical support during joint exercises**, port visits, and humanitarian efforts
 - Promotes stability in the Pacific and **Indian Ocean regions**.
 - Enables maritime intelligence sharing.
- **India and Australia:**
 - Comprehensive **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA), 2020**.
 - Emphasises shared vision for Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation.
- **India and Japan:**
 - **Allows Close Coordination of Services (ACSA), 2020** and supplies between armed forces.

How has the Relationship Between India and Russia Evolved?

- **Historical Genesis:**
 - [The Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971](#): In the wake of the Indo-Pak war (1971), Russia supported India while the US and China supported Pakistan.
 - [Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership](#): In October 2000, India-Russia ties acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship.
 - [Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership](#): 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"**.
- **Bilateral Trade:**
 - Bilateral trade has been substantial, with India's total reaching **approximately USD 13 billion in 2021-22**.
 - Russia ranks as **India's seventh largest trading partner**, a significant rise from its position in previous years.
- **Political Engagement:**
 - Politically, both countries engage through annual meetings of two **Inter-Governmental Commissions: One focused on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological, and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC)** and another on Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC).
- **Defence and Security Relations:** Both countries regularly conduct the Tri-Services exercise '[INDRA](#)'.
 - The joint military programs between India and Russia include:

- [BrahMos cruise missile](#) program
- 5th generation fighter jet program
- Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme
- 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 program](#)
 - [AK-203 Rifles](#)
- **Science and Technology:**
 - The partnership dates back to the early days after India's independence when Soviet assistance was pivotal in establishing institutions like the **Bhilai Steel Plant and supporting India's space program**.
 - Today, collaboration extends to advanced fields such as **nanotechnologies, quantum computing**, and India's manned spaceflight program ([Gaganyaan](#)).

What are the Key Challenges in India-Russia Relations?

- **Strategic Shifts:**
 - **Closer Ties with China:** Russia seeks to avoid **conflicts on two fronts** (West and China).
 - **Increasing Sino-Russian military** and economic cooperation affects India's strategic calculations.
 - **Improved Relations with Pakistan:** It can be due to strengthening **US-India ties** and it complicates India's regional strategy.
- **India's Diplomatic Balancing Act:**
 - India's great **power calculations create the dilemma** to choose between a "comprehensive global strategic partnership" with the US on one hand, and its "**special and privileged partnership**" with Russia on the other.
- **Russia-Ukraine Crisis Response:**
 - India faced significant **criticism in the West for refraining from condemning** the [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#) and for its continued expansion of energy and economic cooperation with Moscow.
- **Declining Defence Imports:**
 - There has been a gradual **decline in the defence purchase of India from Russia** because of its desire to diversify its defence imports which heightened competition for Russia.
 - It will also force it to explore other potential buyers like Pakistan.

Way Forward

- **Enduring Defense Partnership:** Russia is expected to remain a crucial defence partner for India in the foreseeable future, likely for several decades, due to the substantial **Russian inventory in India's defence forces**.
- **Collaborative Export Strategy:** India and Russia are **exploring ways to leverage India as a manufacturing hub for Russian-origin defense** equipment and services.
 - The **goal is to export these products to third countries**, expanding their market reach.
 - Examples like discussions about producing **Russian Ka-226T helicopters** in India for export to third countries.
- **Diversification of Economic Ties:** Expand cooperation beyond defense, focusing on areas **like energy, technology, and space**, like the ongoing partnership in the **Sakhalin-1 project**.
- **Strategic Balancing:** Maintain the '**special and privileged partnership**' while balancing relations with other powers. Continue participating in forums like [BRICS](#) and SCO while also engaging with Quad nations.
- **Space Collaboration:** Enhance cooperation in space exploration and satellite technology. Joint missions for **deep space exploration** or **satellite-based navigation systems**.

Drishti Mains Questions:

What is the Significance of RELOS and how does the changing global geopolitical landscape affect the dynamics of the India-Russia relationship? Suggest measures to ensure the continued positive trajectory of these bilateral ties.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries? (2019)

- (a) Japan
- (b) Russia
- (c) The United Kingdom
- (d) The United States of America

Ans: B

Mains

Q. What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (2020)

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