



Perspective: PM Modi in Russia

For Prelims: [Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor](#), [International North-South Transport Corridor](#), [Northern Sea Route](#), [Coking Coal](#), [Anthracite Coal](#), [Arctic Zone](#), [Nuclear Power Plant](#), [ISRO](#), [Human Spaceflight Program](#), [United Nations](#), [Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle](#), [Eurasian Economic Union](#), [Pharmaceutical Sector](#), [Trade Deficit](#), [BRICS](#), [G20](#), [Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Ukraine](#), [Human Rights](#), [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#), [Indo-Pacific](#), [Quad](#), [South China Sea](#), [Salami Slicing Policy](#).

For Mains: Significance of India-Russia relations in the wake of new geopolitical challenges.

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India paid a high-profile visit to Russia to hold the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with the President of Russia. This visit reflected India's underlying multipolar vision in its outreach to the rest of the world.

What are the Key Highlights of the 24th SCO Summit?

- **Political Relations:** Both sides emphasized that **India-Russia ties** have stayed strong despite the **complex** and **challenging geopolitical situation**. They have worked to create a balanced, mutually beneficial, sustainable, and long-term partnership.
- **Trade and Economic Partnership:** The leaders agreed to boost and sustain **bilateral trade** growth by setting a target of **USD 100 billion by 2030**. They also decided to promote using **national currencies** for bilateral trade.
- **Transport and Connectivity:** They agreed for faster completion of projects like the [Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor](#), [International North-South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\)](#), and [Northern Sea Route](#).
- **Energy Partnership:** Energy sector has emerged as a **significant pillar** of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership. Russia agreed to explore increasing the supply of [coking coal](#) and exporting [anthracite coal](#) to India.
- **Cooperation in the Russian Far East and Arctic:** Both countries signed an agreement for India-Russia cooperation in trade, economic, and investment in the **Russian Far East** from 2024 to 2029, as well as cooperation in the [Arctic zone](#) of Russia.
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** Both welcomed the progress in building the remaining [nuclear power plant](#) units at [Kudankulam](#) and agreed to stick to the schedule, including delivery timelines.
- **Space:** Both sides strengthened partnership between **India's ISRO** and **Russia's Roscosmos** for peaceful space exploration, including [human spaceflight programs](#), satellite navigation, and planetary exploration.
- **Military and Military Technical Cooperation:** Both agreed to promote joint manufacturing of defense equipment in India involving **technology transfer** and allow exports to friendly third countries.
- **Education and Science & Technology:** Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation under

the **Roadmap for Science, Technology & Innovation Cooperation 2021**.

- **UN and Multilateral Fora:** Both sides emphasized the importance of the [United Nations](#) and the need to respect international law. They reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of the **UN Charter**, including the principle of **non-interference** in the internal affairs of member states.
- **Counter Terrorism:** They strongly condemned the recent dastardly terrorist attack on an Army convoy in **Kathua** area (Jammu & Kashmir) and on the **Crocus City Hall** in Moscow.
- **Recognition:** President Vladimir Putin conferred PM Narendra Modi Russia's highest civilian honor, the "[Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle](#)," for his significant role in strengthening the strategic partnership between India and Russia.

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What is the Significance of This Visit?

- **Boosting Trade Linkage:** If traffic on the **INSTC, Northern Sea Route** and **Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor** increase, transit time could be reduced from 40 days to 20 days.
- **Increasing Regional Trade:** A free-trade agreement with the [Eurasian Economic Union](#) can result in India taking a more proactive role in Eurasian trade.
- **People to people Connectivity:** Establishing two new **consulates** in Ekaterinburg and Kazan reflects the increasing presence of an **Indian diaspora** across Russia.
- **Business Growth:** The Indian [pharmaceutical sector](#) has become a major supplier of medicines in Russia, surpassing Germany. Companies like Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Sun Pharma, and Cipla have partnered with Russian firms to produce **generic medicines** locally.
- **Capital Market Development:** Banks in Russia have invested the idle rupee in Russian accounts in Indian shares, government **securities** and **infrastructure projects** and the transaction cost involved in converting rupees to ruble have come down.
- **Repatriation:** Putin agreed to discharge and **repatriate** the Indians serving in the Russian armed forces is a significant **diplomatic victory** for New Delhi.

Why India and Russia Need Each Other?

- **Strategic Autonomy:** Despite Western efforts to attract India into its sphere of influence, India remains committed to its policy of **strategic autonomy**.

- **Show of Support:** Indian Prime Minister's visit has **revitalized Putin's global standing**. Unlike visits from leaders of pariah states like North Korea or nations lacking democratic norms like China, **India**, as a **democratic powerhouse** and **economic giant** currently ranked fifth globally.
- **Reliable Ally:** Russia remains an **all-weather friend** in the neighborhood that India can return to as a **moderating factor** in regional issues. During the **border standoff** between India and China, Russia played a mediator role.
- **Multipolar World:** Both Russia and India are members of **BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the **G20**, and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** and pursue an **"interest-based foreign policy"**.
- **India as Perfect Balancer:** India is in a **"geopolitical sweet spot"** due to its image as a **democratic counterbalance to China**. India aspires to be a **pole** in a **multipolar** world, so it will continue to maintain a **balance** between the **West and Russia**.

#INDIARUSSIA

A longstanding and time-tested partnership

- **1947** | Diplomatic relations established
- **1971** | Treaty of Peace, Friendship & Cooperation signed
- **2000** | Strategic Partnership established
- **2010** | Relations elevated to a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership

How does India do a Balancing Act with the US?

- **Skipping SCO Summit in Kazakhstan:** India **skipped** the meeting in **Kazakhstan** in a message to the US and the rest of the Western bloc that it was not siding with Russia when its action in **Ukraine** raises questions of **international law** and **human rights**.
- **Diversifying Defense Partnerships:** While Russia remains India's largest arms supplier, India has significantly increased its **arms imports** from the **United States** and other countries like **France** and **Israel**.
- **No New Arms Deals:** Despite renewed challenge to India's security along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, no new arms deals with Russia were announced during PM's visit.
- **Diverging Geopolitical Alignments:** India has strengthened security cooperation with the US through **nuclear deals**, **defense purchases**, and support for the **Indo-Pacific strategy**, despite

Russia's opposition. Meanwhile, Russia is deepening its ties with China, India's primary strategic competitor, and increasing engagement with Pakistan.

- **Bridge between East and the West:** India is a member of both **BRICS** and the **SCO**, as well as **Quad** in the **Indo-Pacific**. Putin's ally Xi Jinping views the Quad as a challenge to its monopolistic designs in the **Asia-Pacific region**.
- **Putin Reluctant to Xi Jinping Actions:** Despite the world expressing concerns over China's growing territorial claims and adventures in the **South China Sea** and the littoral nations, Putin does not condemn or criticize Xi's **salami slicing policy** in the region. India remains committed to the **Quad**.
- **Peace in Ukraine:** While India has not condemned Russia's war in Ukraine, it has consistently called for peace. India participated in the **peace summit** on the Ukraine conflict in **Switzerland** at an appropriate level.



What are the Challenges Associated with India-Russia Relations?

- **No Big Military Deal:** The **military-technical partnership** has been the **bedrock** of India-Russia relations. In recent years, no major military deal has been concluded between the two nations since the S-400 anti-missile defense system.
- **Delay in Supply of Weapons:** The war in Ukraine and western sanctions has also raised concerns about the **timely supply of weapons** exports to New Delhi.
- **Russia-China Congruence:** Russia's close relationship with China raises concerns that **China** might receive **priority** for Russian arms over India.
- **Over-estimation of Potential:** Despite New Delhi's efforts to engage with the Russian Far East and revive the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor, the region faces challenges in terms of **labor capacity** and **access to foreign markets** due to sanctions imposed by Japan and South Korea on Russia.
- **Hurdle due to Sanctions:** INSTC would involve Indian firms doing business with a sanctioned **Iran**, and the frequent loading and unloading of cargo may prove to be a hurdle.
- **Trade Deficit:** Russia has become India's **primary supplier of oil**, but Indian exports to Russia have encountered difficulties. It resulted in a significant **trade deficit** of **USD 57 billion** in bilateral trade valued at **USD 66 billion** for the fiscal year 2024.
- **Hamper Relation with West:** India has faced pressure from the West to distance itself from Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine. **US Ambassador** to India Eric Garcetti emphasized that "**there is no such thing as strategic autonomy**" during a conflict and said that in today's interconnected world, "**no war remains distant anymore.**"

Way Forward:

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Reinforce **strategic partnerships** through frameworks such as the **annual summit** and strategic dialogue mechanisms.
- **Enhancing Defense Collaboration:** Collaborate on **joint defense development projects** to ensure **technology transfer** and self-reliance.
- **Trade Diversification:** Expand trade beyond traditional sectors like defense and energy to include **technology, pharmaceuticals** and **agriculture**.
- **International Forums:** Work together in international forums like the **UN, BRICS**, and the **SCO** to address global challenges and promote **shared interests**.
- **Media Engagement:** Use media and **public diplomacy** to address **misperceptions** and highlight the benefits of the bilateral relationship.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains:

Q. 'The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well for India.' What is your opinion about this statement ? Give reasons and examples to support your answer. **(2023)**

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

Q. 'What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's National self-esteem and ambitions'. Explain with suitable examples. **(2019)**

Q. How is S-400 air defence system technically superior to any other system presently available in the world? **(2021)**

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