



## 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 24<sup>th</sup> 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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