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***Theoretical Paper***

# India and Russia: An Investigation of Relational Equations (1991-2020)



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## Abstract

India's relations with Russia has marked by ambiguity and uncertainty in the post-Cold War period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was an uncertainty in India's foreign policy about the direction of its Russia policy. The nature of global politics and power equation structure had posed a serious challenge to the nation-states whether they would be closer to the leader of the unipolar world or not. India was not an exception. India had face a lot of problems and challenges in the early 1990s regarding searching for alternative ways in reviving its fall-downed economy and acceptance of globalization. Bilateral trade is relatively low, but Russia is India's largest supplier of weapons. Both countries have strong strategic relations and military engagement. Moreover, Russia plays an important role in India's civilian nuclear program. India-Russia relations are multi-dimensional and on some issues it is complicated. This paper intends to investigate the relational equations between New Delhi and Moscow critically.

**Keywords:** *Cold War; Diplomatic; Strategic; Economic; Technological; Globalization*

## Introduction

India's relations with the Russian Federation since 1991 have witnessed friendly accommodations. The relationship between New Delhi and Moscow is a very old continuation of friendship. During the Cold War era, although India adopted a policy of non-alignment yet it took a pro-Soviet foreign policy and maintained a distance from the USA. There was no

doubt during the Cold War era, the U.S could help India economically and strategically, it was not done. Since 1971, India was receiving enormous assistance from USSR. During the Cold War era, global events had brought New Delhi and Moscow together due to their convergence of perceptions. During that time, India identified itself as a follower of the Soviet path, on the other hand, Pakistan was closely linked with the

USA. After the collapse of the erstwhile USSR, the successive state of Russia became a very weak state in terms of all aspects. From an economically crippled old friend, it was very uncertain for India to get financial and technological support. Francis Fukuyama said, “The end of the Cold War was the end of history”. Ideological rigidity was abolished in world politics very quickly just after the end of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War long-lasting confrontational bloc politics was ended. Russia became free from ideological compulsion. After the conclusion of START-I and Start-II between the USA and Russia, it was clear to India that the intensity of hostility between the two superpowers has been abolished. That is why India decided to tilt towards the USA without discarding its relations with Russia. But, viewing Moscow’s weaker diplomatic standpoint and compromising approach and absence of say in world politics New Delhi decided to shake diplomatic hands with Washington. Despite India’s closeness with the USA India never went against Russia on any issue in international politics. Moreover, India has established economic, technological, and defense relations with Russia. In some cases, India has gained good experience and in some cases, India has to be a sufferer.

However, India is trying to balancing its Russia policy with new complex equations with the changes in time. India’s relations with Russia have been very complex in recent times. Cohen (2005) said:

...in negotiating a large number of contacts and arms purchases from the Soviet Union, Indians found Moscow though. Yet even questionable deals became politically palatable because the Russians were silent about the terms of a deal once it was completed. (p. 266)

The paper addresses three research questions:

1. Why India is continuing her relations with Russia?
2. Is there any reciprocity in India-Russia relations?
3. Are China and the US factors are pivotal in India-Russia relations?

Methodologically, the current paper is based on content analysis method. This paper is based on secondary data. I have used books, journals, newspapers, etc.

## **Diplomatic Relations**

In the post-Cold War era, diplomatic relations between India and Russia have

been a very complicated one. But, the relational pattern is not hostile. President Boris Yeltsin had paid a visit to India in January 1993 to rejuvenated multi-dimensional bilateral relations. Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao also visited Moscow in 1994. Both countries agreed to cooperate to fight against international terrorism, investment, joint enterprise, economic and scientific cooperation, peaceful nuclear cooperation, and laser technology (Chenoy, 2005). A renewed effort to strengthen the bilateral relationship was made at the beginning of the presidency of Vladimir Putin in 2000 when the annual summits between India and Russia were instituted. In 2010, marking a decade of the 'Declaration on Strategic Partnership' between the two countries, the joint statement proclaimed that the relationship had reached "the level of a special and privileged strategic partnership." Indo-Russian diplomatic relations got setback on the issue of CTBT (1996) and the explosion of a nuclear bomb at Pokhran in 1998. Russia was agreed with Western countries including the USA that India should sign on CTBT. Most of the countries of Europe, the USA and China had imposed economic sanctions on

India, but Russia opposed it. The USA led West European countries had pressurized Russia to discontinue its nuclear assistance to India, but Russia refused to accept the American dictation in this regard. This was diplomatic support for India.

Russian Prime Minister visited India at the end of 1998. This visit was diplomatically very significant to India after Pokhran-II. During his visit, he gave a proposal to India to form a strategic triangle including China. India and Russia had set up a joint working group in Afghanistan to assist the Northern Alliance to fight against the Taliban. The process of re-establishing the multi-dimensional relationship has been long; it has also had to contend with the geopolitical and geo-economic shifts both at the regional and global levels. This has required the two countries to overcome the old romanticism of the Indo-Soviet ties and engage at a pragmatic level. Today there is no denying the mutual trust and friendship that exists between the two countries.

In a recently published research work, Kapoor (2019) has mentioned India and Russia shared decades of close linkages at the highest levels during the Soviet

era. The tumult of the immediate post-Soviet years, however, reverberated through the Indo-Russia relationship as well, as the newly established Russian Federation sought to rebuild its foreign policy. The years immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union saw the Boris Yeltsin administration adopting a pro-Western foreign policy orientation (Kapoor, 2019). Both New Delhi and Moscow had tried their best to rejuvenate the old friendship. After 22 years of Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation (1971), both had concluded a “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” in January 1993. India and Russia went for Although in early 1990s India did not purchase much volume of arms from Russia, but continued its defense connectivity with its old friend. By the mid-1990s, Russia’s exports to India and China were contributing 41 percent of the total revenue of its defense industry (Conley, 2000, p. 11).

After the end of the Cold War, Russia took a policy to reduce its arms manufacture. But, at the same time, to generate revenue by selling arms was a source of national income of Russia. To survive its arms industry Russia tried to conclude arms selling treaties with

several countries. In 1992, India and Russia had negotiated for arms agreements worth Rs. \$650. A particularly high point since then has been the evolution from “a purely buyer-seller relationship to joint research, design development, and production of state of the art military platforms” (The Embassy of India, 2019) a successful example of it being Brahmos missile. The two are also involved in the indigenous production of tanks and fighter jets, along with the upgrade of existing systems. In 2017, on the occasion of 70<sup>th</sup> years of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Russia, PM Modi invited Russia as the Guest of Honour for the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF). During his visit, he tried to normalize bilateral relations.

### **Indi-China standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in 2020 and Role of Russia**

After the June 15, 2020, clash between Indian and Chinese troops in Galwan Valley, Ladakh Indian Ambassador to Russia D Bala Venkatesh Varma had a conversation with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov on

June 17 (Roy, 2020). Both had discussed regional security, and tension on the Indo-China border, especially, line of actual control(LAC). Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman had mentioned that Russia is watching the situation and very much concern over the issue. Russia can be a key factor to resolve the issue because it has good relations with India and China. Russia has hosted a meeting on 24th June 2020 with the Chinese and Indian foreign ministers in Moscow as part of the Russia-India-China trilateral grouping (RIC). Both India and China did not agree to discuss border disputes, they only focussed on the COVID-19 pandemic. The conflict between India and China is posing a fundamental challenge to Russia's foreign policy. The China-India standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Himalaya on June 15, 2020, emerged as a serious test for Russia's policy in Asia. Despite Moscow's proximity to Beijing, the Russia-China connection is still far from an alliance relationship. India and China are both strategic partners, so Moscow has been following the situation with a cautious approach toward their border crisis (Zakharov, 2020).

## **Economic Cooperation**

The Russian economy's downslide, alongside competition from other fast-developing nations, as well as the opacity of laws in the post-Soviet state, all contributed to the decline in the share of India in Russian trade. By 1996, Russia's trade with India contributed a mere one percent of Russia's overall trade (Gidadhubli, 1998, pp. 91-92). There is no direct road link between India and Russia and geographically in a distanced position. That is why trade potentiality between the two countries never could be able to reach the expected goals. Between 1992-96, Indian imported defense equipment worth 3.5 billion USD from Russia. Trade between Russia and India fell to \$9.5 billion in 2014 compared to \$10.1 billion a year earlier. India was 18th in the list of Russia's top exporters while it's ranking in the latter's imports was at 23rd (Exim Bank of India, 2019). India and Russia have set-up a joint study group to examine the ways to increase bilateral trade and also to study the feasibility of a Comprehensive

## Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

The bilateral trade between the two countries could not able to achieve the expected goals. In 2010, the trade volume between the two was 8.5 billion USD, in 2011 8.5 billion USD, in 2012 11.04 billion USD, in 2013 10 billion USD, in 2014 9.51 billion USD, in 2015 7.83 billion USD, in 2016 7.71 billion USD and 2017 10.17 billion USD (Source: Ministry of External Affairs, the Indian embassy in Moscow). In 2005-06 FY, Russian trade with India only 1.1% of its total trade. In 2016, as a trade partner of Russia India's ranked 17th position. Several factors have contributed to this weakness in India and Russia's economic ties: (1) lack of involvement of the private sector, (2) absence of logistics. (3) Import and export between India and Russia are time-consuming. (4) poor connectivity, (5) obstacle to growing economic cooperation between Moscow and New Delhi were the differences in taxation rules (<https://russiabusinesstoday.com>) and (6) more recently, the stalling of the International North-South Economic Corridor, resulting in higher costs. Russia's main exports to the world consist of energy – oil, gas, nuclear – and arms sales. The balance of trade

remains in favor of Russia and the deficit has risen two times in the last decade to reach \$3.1 billion in 2014. Russia mainly exports pearls and precious stones, machines, electronic equipment, fertilizers, photo and technical apparatus to India. Meanwhile, Indian exports consist of pharmaceuticals, electrical equipment, coffee, tea, apparels and pearls, and precious stones.

## Energy Cooperation

India and Russia have made energy cooperation through various channels. In 2015, an MoU was signed between the two countries regarding the exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Russia. Important agreements in the field of nuclear energy were finalized during 2014 and 2015. It was decided that Russia will construct at least 12 nuclear power plants in India and will also supply crude oil to India. In 2016, several deals in the hydrocarbon sector were also signed, the most important of which was a 23.9-percent stake in Vankorneft by Oil India Limited, OVL acquiring 11 percent more in Vankor oilfield and Rosneft buying a 49-percent stake in Essar Oil. The acquisition of Essar Oil India by the Rosneft of Russia is the

largest FDI in this field. The amount of acquisition was worth Rs. 12.9 billion USD. It was also Russia's largest outbound deal. For India, Russia is the largest oil and gas investment destination, with a total of \$15 billion in cumulative investments. In 2016, Indian companies had invested a big amount in the oil and gas sectors in Russia. In that year, the total amount of investment was USD 5.4 billion. Russia has become one of the major destinations of India's LPG import. In June 2018, the first Russian Cargo with LNG reached Dahej, Gujarat.

## **Bilateral Technological Cooperation**

India and Russia have a strong and cooperative bonding in the field of science and technology. Since the conclusion of India-USSR "Science and Technology Agreement" of 1972 both countries are exchanging so many things and helping each other in this field. New Delhi and Moscow had signed another agreement on Long Term Programme (ILTP) of Scientific Cooperation at the highest state level by the then Prime Minister of India and General Secretary of Communist Party of Soviet Union in 1987. In 1992, ILTP was renamed as the "Indo-Russian

Programme" by the joint Council in its 5th meeting held in Moscow. In 1994, another agreement was signed between Moscow and New Delhi on Science & Technology. Now, the cooperation between India and Russia in the field of Science and Technology being implemented based on certain mechanisms— (1) Working Group on Science & Technology, (b) Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP) of Cooperation in Science and Technology, (3) Basic Science Cooperation programme, (4) Inter-Academy Exchange Programme, (5) Indo-Russian S&T Centre, (6) Inter-Ministerial Science, Technology, and Innovation Cooperation.

Indo-Russian Working Group for Cooperation in Science & Technology (IRWGS&T), one of the major Working Groups under the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC). It was established in 1993. In the research of biotechnology and medical science, joint research projects and R and D are being conducted. In the field of Metrology and Oceanology, both countries are working together. Science and Technology Cooperation was renewed in 2010 to enhance more scientific research and joint projects in various sectors. This cooperation



encourages to conduct research projects, holding joint seminars/workshops, visits of scientists in the field of Physics, Mathematics, Hydrology, Computers, Oceanology, Chemical Science, etc. Some joint initiatives have been taken by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the government of India, and the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). Both countries have decided to set-up eight joint Centres of an excellence exchange programme to conduct joint research projects. The elite scientific research centres of both countries are conducting collaborative research. The important joint research centres are:

- Indo-Russian Centre for Advanced Computing Research (Moscow)
- Indo-Russian Centre for Biotechnology (Allahabad)
- Indo-Russian Centre for Gas Hydrates Studies (Chennai)
- Indo-Russian Centre for Earthquake Research (New Delhi)
- Russian Indian Centre on Ayurvedic Research (Moscow)
- Indo-Russian Centre for Biomedical Technology (Thiruvananthapuram)

India and Russia cooperating in space science, defense technology, and

nuclear science. For a long time, India's space science and nuclear power plants were immensely dependent on Russia's scientific assistance. Although India has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Russia has been supplying the required fuel to India to generate nuclear-powered electricity. India has set-up a new nuclear reactor at Kudankulam with the help of Russia to generate 1000 MW electricity. In 2014, in a joint statement, both countries promised to do many things together as a premier vision for the upcoming decade. As per the joint statement, Moscow and New Delhi will cooperate in various areas, such as-- energy, technology, and innovation and economic cooperation as focal points.

### **Joint Mechanism in Combating International Terrorism**

Both India and Russia are suffering from continuous terrorist attacks. Several joint initiatives have been taken by both countries to combat international terrorism. Russia is well-aware of the role of Pakistan in flourishing and sponsoring terrorist groups. But, Russian gradual engagement in military cooperation raises a big question about the actual

willingness of Russia in the elimination of terrorism from South Asia and other parts of the globe. The two sides also underlined the urgent need for meaningful, credible, irreversible, verifiable, and sustainable action against terrorists and terrorist groups. Both sides are very much scared about international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and emphasized the need for strengthening international cooperation to combat terrorism in a comprehensive and sustained manner without any double standards. Both countries paid efforts on some of the world's most challenging counter-terrorism challenges including countering radicalization and extremism, misuse of internet for terrorist purposes, movement of foreign fighters, and combating the financing of terrorism including drug trafficking.

## **Defense and Strategic Equation**

There are several aspects of Indo-Russian defense and strategic equation, which are as follows-

### **Cold War Era**

During the Cold War era, India's strategic dependency on USSR was a

very controversial issue in global politics. During that time, New Delhi's over-dependency for strengthening its military power and security of the Indian Ocean were immensely dependent upon Moscow. India was very suspicious of Western powers and their influence, especially to the USA. During the Bangladesh war (1971) India had realized the fact. In the post-Cold War era, India's standpoint towards Russia is very realistic. Many times it is less responsive. India is the only country with which Russia has a long term programme of military-technical cooperation, which was signed in 1994. On March 22, 1999, India and Russia signed an agreement to train Indian defense personnel in key Russian defense establishments for maintaining advanced equipment (Yadav, 2017, p. 49). To strengthen its defense system India had purchased 44,500 tonnes of Kiev class Admiral Gorshkov aircraft carrier from Russia. India also parched MiG-29 Fighters from Russia.

Both countries had signed a defense deal worth 2.9 billion USD during President Putin's visit to India in December 2012. India decided to purchase 270 Sukhois along with the medium-lift M-17 V5 helicopters from Russia (Yadav, 2017, p. 49). As a part

of 'Enduring Partnership in some of the defense deals signed with Russia in 2019 include a \$3-billion deal for a nuclear submarine to replace INS Chakra, the approval for the purchase of 464 T-90 tanks for \$2 billion, and the launch of the joint project to manufacture of AK-203/103 rifle in Amethi in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Further, under emergency procurement, the defense ministry has approved the purchase of \$1.47 billion 'Igla-S Very Short Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORAD)' from Russia.

India has conducted defense cooperation with Russia, such as the as- (1) Cruise missile programme. (2) 5th generation fighter jet programme, (3) INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier programme. (4) Tu-22M3 bombers (4 ordered). (5) Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme (230+ to be built by Hindustan Aeronautics). (6) Kamov Ka-226 200 to be made in India under the 'Make in India' initiative. On Ukraine and Crimea issue India was not sided with Russia. As C. Raja Mohan points out, India has always been ambivalent about non-intervention, as its position has been often driven by the realist logic of national interest rather than inviolable foreign policy principles (Rajamohan, 2012).

## Pakistan Factor

Pakistan factor has been a very complicated issue between India and Russia in recent times. In earlier, there was no strategic and diplomatic cooperation between Russia and Pakistan. But, the growing synergies between Islamabad and Moscow since 2016 makes confusion among the foreign policymakers of India. In Russia's view, it is military-technical cooperation with Pakistan is not only intended to improve counter-terrorism and anti-drug capacities are not directed against third countries and will not endanger the military balance in the region. India has always contested such a rationale by any country for the supply of arms to Pakistan (Ahmed, 2017). There is an allegation against Russia that Russia has adopted a double standard policy in establishing defense ties with a state-sponsored country. The navy and air force chiefs of Pakistan visited Russia for further military deals. Pakistan is the seventh-largest importer of military equipment. So, looking at Pakistan's potential market, Russian has shown keen interests in Pakistan.

## China Factor

China Factor is another irritancy between India and Russia. In many issues, Russia and China are holding the same view and India is opposing it. Strategically, China is a great threat to India in the Indo-Pacific region. Russian active presence in the Pacific region for the last few years makes another tension for India. India joined into Quadrilateral forum to counter the Russian and Chinese influence. Some like to suggest that India has appeared therefore to be 'engaging in soft balancing' in the Asia-Pacific and still holds onto the idea of 'strategic autonomy' (Pant & Super, 2015, p. 759).

### **Russia-India-China Strategic Tringle**

During his visit in December 1998, the former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov proposed a 'Russia-India-China Strategic Tringle,' which envisaged closer strategic cooperation. The immediate response from China was positive. India's response was cautious considering sending a wrong signal to the West. On behalf of India, it was tried to handle this issue very tactfully. The then Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee said, "Russia is a longstanding partner of India with which we have traditionally

enjoyed friendly relations. At the same time, India is working to normalize the relations with China". The future of the proposed 'Russia-India-China Tringle' is not so optimistic.

### **India's Central Asia Policy**

There is no doubt that India's Central Asia Policy is immensely dependent upon Russian cooperation and support.

### **Russian Middle-East Policy**

India's response to Russian Middle-East policy is highly diplomatic. There is a question on the Syria issue whether India is sided with the USA or not. Russia is still India's main arms supplier. But, India is not supportive of Russia's standpoint on Middle-east in the recent past. India is trying to maintain its strategic autonomy is through its foreign policy. Modi's government may have preferred a successful rapprochement between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. However, there is no doubt, regarding Iran's policy, India immensely depends upon Russia.

## **India and Russia in Multi-Lateral Forums**

Political relations between India and Russia have historically been steady and cordial. The two countries have had the advantage of what analysts refer to as a “problem-free environment” (Trenin, 2015). India and Russia are common members of various multilateral organizations like BRICS, SCO, and G20. Through these organizations, India and Russia are continuing their multi-layered mutual economic diplomacy.

### **BRICS**

Russia and India’s different approaches to the multi-polarity nature of BRICS. It is an inter-continental forum, basically aims to serve the economic interests of the m5 member countries. Through this forum, economic diplomacy can be done. Both India and Russia are doing the same. For Russian leaders, the informal BRICS association is a representation and the embodiment of the multi-polarity ideal. Some scholars argue that BRICS serves to help Russia to exercises its power against the US and its allies. Because of Russian recent conflict with the West, it is trying to politicize this forum. India should not be trapped by Russia and should not

lose its autonomy in exercising its foreign policy. Bharat Karnad has stated in his recently published work,

...while the dip in India-Russian relations is troubling for realizing an effective BRIS and an independent role for India in the world, there is no way its potential can be ignored. For instance, concerning a prospective greater defense industrial cooperation among the four-member states which could produce an enormous defense-industrial combine of Russia, India, Brazil(RIB) to match anything in the West. (Karnad, 2018, p. 179)

### **Shanghai Cooperation Corporation (SCO)**

Indeed, it was Russia that pushed for India’s entry into SCO; India became a full member in 2017. SCO could be seen as a tool for achieving multi-polarity because it strengthens ties with other great powers, perhaps even to the extent that it could be used for soft-balancing against NATO through regional alliances (Cooley, 2012, p. 182). India’s Central Asia policy and Afghanistan policy are significantly dependent upon its presence in SCO. Russia can take an active role within

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SCO to give leverage to India in the free execution of its foreign policy in Central Asia.

### G-8

Both are a member of G-8. It is an opportunity for both countries to work together and exchange their economic views belonging under an umbrella. By this forum, New Delhi and Moscow are pursuing 'umbrella diplomacy'.

## Cultural, Educational and Tourism Linkages

There are strong traditions of cultural cooperation between the two countries. Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Center (JNCC) of the Embassy of India, Moscow maintains close links with Russian institutions such as the Institute of Philosophy, Moscow, that has a Mahatma Gandhi Chair on Indian Philosophy; Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow; Institute of Asian and African Studies of the Moscow State University; School of International Relations, St. Petersburg University; Kazan State University; and Far Eastern National University, Vladivostok. Hindi has been popularized as a modern language in Russia. Around 20 leading Russian institutes offer the Hindi course and Curriculum. About 20 Russian

Institutions, including leading universities and schools, teach Hindi to over 1500 Russian students. Besides in Hindi, other Indian languages, like Bengali, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Gujrati, and Urdu are taught by Russian experts. India music, dance, cinema, Yoga are very popular among the Russians. Every month, JNCC conducts classes for 800 students to teach yoga, music, and Hindi. Through cultural events, India is trying to enhance people to people contacts. It is a method of 'soft diplomacy'.

In September 2011, a mini Festival of Indian Culture was organized in Russia through cultural programmes and academic conferences. The basic objective of that festival is to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. In 2012, on the eve of the 65th anniversary of Indo-Russian diplomatic relations, the Indian Embassy at Moscow had organized several cultural and academic events. The Indian Community in the Russian Federation is estimated at 15,000. They are playing a key role in promoting the Indian culture and heritage in Russia. The Hindustani Samaj is the oldest Indian organization in Russia. It was set up in 1957, it works in close co-operation with the Indian Embassy.

Apart from this, branches of Indian social and religious organizations are very active in Russia in promoting India's spiritual, Philosophical, and social values. The main organizations of India in Moscow are Brahma Kumaris, ISKCON, Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, and Ramakrishna Society, Vedanta Centre, etc. Approximately, 11,000 Indian students are studying in Russia and most of them are admitted into medical and technical courses. Tourism is another sector to promote people to people contacts. Russian tourists to India in 2016 were 2,27749 and in 2017 was 2,78,904 (Ministry of Tourism, 2018). On the other hand, in 2016, Indian tourists to Russia were 59,000 and in 2017 it was 71,000 (Russian Tourism, as cited in Kapoor, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Russia has been a longstanding and time-tested partner for India. Relational continuity with a cordial approach is a key pillar of India's foreign policy. With the conclusion of "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000, India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with an enhanced level of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral

relationship including, political, security, trade and economy, defense, science and technology, and culture. However, the growing strategic relations between India and the USA are affecting India-Russia relations. Despite India's closeness with the USA, it is purchasing an adequate quantity of defense equipment. Russia is very much concerned about India's strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. This development leads Russia to make a friendliness with China in the South China Sea and adjacent region. However, India should not assert any reactive attitude towards Russia viewing its long-lasting relations. The positive side is both states have agreed in developing ties with third countries will affect bilateral relations. Moscow and Beijing have developed a closer military collaboration. India should try to maintain a balance between Russia and China in exercising strategic and diplomatic relations.

## **Disclosure Statement**

The author declares that no potential conflict of interest exists.

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