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Indo-Soviet Relations: Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

Ever since 1971 when the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between India and Soviet Union (then USSR), relations between the two countries have been marked as gesture, goodwill and understanding which continue even today. It was the charismatic leadership of Nehru who incorporated Russian Socialist Model that became an integral to Indian economic system. India's economic, political, diplomatic, cultural and strategic relations with Russia are based on strong faith and commitment. Disintegration of USSR and democratic triumph over socialism in Eastern Europe dramatically changed the political landscape with India and rest of the world. Consequently, India lost the traditional relations with Russia at several fronts. Unemployment, social insecurity, economic erosion and image of 'USSR as Superpower' ceased to exist during the age of globalization and economic liberalization. Despite odds and challenges, India's bilateral ties with Russia have served as the stabilizing factor in global peace and security. Even today, Russia remains the most loyal partner of India in various odds and challenges. By all means and ends, Indo-Soviet Relations encompass the great scholarly debate during the age of globalization, Economic liberalization and ICT Revolution.

Keywords: India-Russia, Partnership, Prospects, Bilateralism, Economic Security

Introduction

Indio - Soviet Relations are characterized by history, culture, economy and political stability. Both powers continue to emphasize that the strong and bilateral relations promote peace, and security in the region and the world. Indo-Soviet Relations are marked by cultural, economic, defense, technology, and diplomatic developments; and remain a unique example in the world. Ever since the independence of India in 1947, Nehru's visionary Socialist Model of Russia, and the subsequent infrastructure growth in India's various sectors are duly acknowledged and acceptable in several regional and international forums. Bilateral efforts at various fronts: health, education, social security, environment, technology, up space programme, nuclear energy a host of other sectors in India continue to remain under the expert guidance of Russian Federation. It is rather difficult to put the volumes of services and supports rendered to India by Russia. Let us have a brief overview of Indo Russian Relations.

Political and Diplomatic Relations

Diplomacy traditionally deals the folded documents, exchange of official papers, sensitive dealings through exchange of information and secrecy to achieve peaceful resolutions through facilitated actions. When the question comes about India's diplomatic relations, Soviet Union remains the top most priority. Ever since the independence of India, Russia (USSR before 1991) has been the most loyal partner since the reign of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister whose successive visits to Russia has been a source of inspiration for India's democratic socialist economy. Russia became the first country to support India against cold war rivalry (1945-1990). Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in August 1971 became the watershed in the development of Indo-Soviet relations when India started dozens of projects related to trade import-export, cultural exchange, diplomatic, nuclear issues, science and technology which were marked as "special and privileged strategic partnership". Indo-Soviet Relations earned rich dividends in August 1971 following the sign-up of Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty promoted mutual strategic cooperation under various heads which briefly include: enduring peace and friendship (article 1), strengthening peace in Asia and throughout the world (article 2), and

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condemnation of colonialism and reclaims in all forms of discrimination (article 3). Besides, the other provisions like scientific and technological co-operations, commitment for art, literature, education, public health, press, radio, television, cinema, tourism and sports and eradicate of arms conflict are the spirits of Indo-Soviet Peace Treaty.¹ Nehru who left remarkable impression, was strongly in favour of promoting socialist economy for the betterment of working classes and social justice. Following Indo-China War (1962), Indo Pak War (1971), and Liberation of Bangladesh (1971); Russia continued to support India, supplied MIG Fighter Technology to India and Moscow mission served as peaceful dialogue.

Even after the death of Indira Gandhi in October 1984, relations between the two powers remained as good as normal. Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Moscow (July 1987) and the bilateral dialogue with Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev, helped to develop Asian Collective Security system and even referred India as Second Homeland of Russia. During the beginning of post-cold war (1990s) following the break of Soviet Union, collapse of Berlin Wall, formation of European Union, disintegration of Warsaw Pact and emergence Commonwealth of Independent States; Indo-Soviet relations underwent major challenges. Russia was no longer an economic and military superpower leaving its economy in doomsday. India had no option but to tie up with the west European powers leaving Russia far behind at the time of economic turmoil. On humanitarian and social grounds, Indian government supported the Russian policy. The setbacks of Indo - Soviet Relations were conditioned by political environment and economic vulnerability. However, situation changed during Manmohan Singh Ministry in 2004, where economic liberalization became the subject of debate. Thus, Indian Diaspora with Russian professionals and their alignments undergone several ups and downs. During the emergence of post-cold war (after 1990), beginning of new millennium and phase of globalization, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpai opened new chapter of friendship through declaration of Strategic Partnership in October 2000 marked as new historic step with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.² Revision of Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in January 1993 and a bilateral Military-Technical Cooperation agreement in 1994 ushered new era of relationship during Bajpai Ministry.

Again in 2012 during Manmohan Singh Ministry with Russian President Vladimir Putin; India-Russia strategic partnership was given as the priority areas. Both countries collaborated on matters of shared national interest which include: Brazil Russia India China South Africa (BRICS) Forum, G20 and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Russia also strongly supported India for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. In addition, Russia has vocally backed India for joining the Nuclear Supply Group (NSG) and Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC). Moreover, Russian Federation also expressed interest in joining South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as an observer status in which India is a founding member.³ the unique political proximity between the nations is reflected in congruence with global priorities. Both countries share similar views on fighting against terrorism without maintaining double standards, a more representative multi-polar world order based on international law with UN playing a central role,

and resolving threats to international peace and security. On Syria and Afghanistan, both countries have called for resolute action to bring about a lasting and peaceful solution, and defeating the forces of terrorism. Both powers cooperate on other global challenges such as cyber security, de-escalation weaponisation of outer space and prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

According to a 2014 BBC World Service Poll, 85% of Russians view India positively, with only 9% expressing a negative view. Similarly, according to 2017 opinion poll by the Moscow-based non-governmental think tank Levada-Center states that Russians identified India as one of their top five "friends", with the others being Belarus, China, Kazakhstan and Syria.

Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) is one of the largest and most comprehensive governmental mechanisms that India has had with any country internationally which also encompass Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Co-operation. Its' applied agencies like Indo-Russian Forum on Trade and Investment, India-Russia Business Council, India-Russia Trade, Investment and Technology Promotion Council and India-Russia Chamber of Commerce. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow (May 2017) to mark the 70th anniversary of Indo Soviet Peace Treaty, no Defense Pact committed by the principle of neutrality, accelerated the partnership, displaying the role of interaction and cooperation between India and Russia. Meeting with Modi and Vladimir in 2018 at Sochi (Russia) was a concrete step forward to reconstruct Indo-Soviet New Model of Peace and Stability.

Defense and Strategic Relationship

India being a loyal member and followers of Panchasheel based on the five principles of nonaggression, territorial sovereignty, peaceful coexistence, mutual cooperation and economic security, has never been the supporter of any military and defense policy for destructive purpose. Since 1971, after signing of Indo-Soviet Peace Treaty, India continues to remain loyal for nonalignment. Due to changes in the global system, India had to review its defense policy. Indo-Soviet Defense ties is the pillar to achieve buyer - seller strategic capacity under 'Make in India' programme. At this crucial juncture, India potentially requires the galaxy of scholars and specialists to finalize alternative security paradigm essential for de-escalation of nuclear threat to maintain regional and international peace.

Considering odd developments, especially India's relations with suspicious neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; India decided to review its defense policy since 1997 which included joint development, production and marketing of arms bazaars with support of Russia. It was then extended to join research, development, joint marketing, common exercise, and naval exercise under the supervision of Inter-Governmental Commission in October 2007. India continues to import aircraft and other military hardware from Russia for the expansion of business ties including nuclear energy and hydrocarbons, civil nuclear technology and enrichment of uranium. Since 2009, Protocol between Indian and Russia has decided to conduct 'Year of Russia in India', and 'Year of India in Russia' under National Organizing Committee where both New Delhi and Moscow Officials agreed to work on bilateral basis.

In the year 2012, Russian President’s Vladimir Putin’s visited India and agreed to sell 230 Sukhoi (Russian Aircraft) and medium-lift Mi-17 V5 helicopters with joint venture of Hindustan Aeronautics, a project of worth US\$ 11 billion. So if India inducts over 200 of these 5th Gen fighters, as it hopes to make operational from 2022 onwards, the overall cost of the gigantic project for India will come to around US\$35. 4 The Sukhoi Su-30MKI and KA-226T twin-engine fighters were the welcome move by India’s defense Minister Manohar Parrikar (2014-2016). In October 2018, India signed the historic agreement worth US\$5.43 billion with Russia to procure five S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile defense system, the most powerful missile defense system in the world ignoring America's CAATSA act. The United States threatened India with sanctions over India's decision to buy the S-400 missile defense system from Russia.4 In short, Indo-Russian defense relations prominently support: BrahMos cruise missile, 5th generation fighter jet, Sukhoi Su-30MKI, Ilyushin/HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft and KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters. India is likely to get 100 passenger aircraft by 2030 which will open wider avenues of economy between India and Russia under Special Notified Zone.

Economic and Trade Cooperation

During cold war phase (1945-1990), Indo-USSR Relations were based on government sponsored rupee-double credit agreements. After the disintegration of USSR in 1991, the value of Ruble dramatically devalued due to global economic competitions. Large number of Indians were either returned to India or moved to elsewhere for prospective jobs. As a result, India’s trade with Russia fell from 19.20% in 1980 to 3.30% in 1992.5 However, there was gradual improvement in 2000 which marked 4% growth that gradually touched to 6% by the end of 2018. During the year 2018-2019, bilateral trade relation between

India and Russia stood \$8.3 billion which is likely to achieve worth \$30 billion by 2025. 5

India’s economic relations continued to grow through diversified means of imports which prominently include: machinery, electronics, aerospace, automobile, commercial shipping, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, apparels, precious stones, industrial metals, petroleum products, oil, gas, rough diamond, coal, high-end tea and coffee products. There has been continuous appreciation of demands which touched 2002 (\$1.5 billion) to \$11 billion in 2012. Modi Government has targeted to \$30 billion by 2025.6 Such economic activities are being promoted through corporate ventures that include: Indo-Russian Forum on Trade and Investment, India-Russia Business Council, India-Russia Trade, Investment and Technology Promotion Council, India-Russia CEOs' Council and India-Russia Chamber of Commerce.7

In order to promote better economic relations, India continues to insist for joint venture with Russia’s corporate, banking, insurance and trade sectors under various forums. Supports come from Free Trade Agreement, European Economic Union, India -Russia Integrated Economic Forum, and India-Russia Economic Management. Modi Government in September 2019 pledged for one billion \$US to credit the concessional loans for the development of Russia’s far eastern regions up to Vladivostok. India-Russia Business Groups continue to work with corporate companies. Prominent ones include: Rosneft, Gazprom, AFK Sistema, Essar & Alrosa as the major stakeholders. Projects like Make India, Smart Cities, Industrial Parks, Metal led Highways and Green Technology, are being given due incentives. New technologies for Digital India has earned tremendous support from joint Indo-Russian Federation. The prominent ones include: E-Governance, SMART Move, E-Direction and IT Based Query-Less Support services. The following table gives an overview of Business Ventures between the two.

Table I: India-Russia Business Ventures

SL. No.	Business Ventures/ Exhibitions	Objectives/Areas/India’s Stand & Business Support
1.	Moscow International Business Center	Multilateral Trade with India/ Hotel & Catering Ventures
2.	Gazprom Group (Russian) and GAIL (Indian)	LNG shipment Projects
3.	ONGC-Videsh	Major Oil Company Stakeholders
4.	India's Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC)	250 Indian producers of engineering goods, including auto components, rolled steel, industrial, textile and construction equipment, cables, instruments and machines
5.	European-Russian Business, Technology Centre (EU-RU BTC)- Russian Technology Transfer Network, Moscow	-energy efficiency and conservation, including the development of new fuels -nuclear technology, -space technology, primarily related to telecommunications -medical technology, especially diagnostic equipment and drugs, -strategic information technology, including the creation of supercomputers and software

		development-coordination/ links with EU-RU bodies-projects-networks
6.	Moscow & Russian Federation Chamber- f Commerce and Industry in India	Inter-state trade offices in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Moscow and Leningrad/ Areas Bangalore, New Delhi, Kamaz Vectra Motors Limited-Hosur Tamil Nadu, New Delhi, NOIDA, Russian Railways, New Delhi, Russian Insurance Centre, Mumbai and VTB Bank, New Delhi.

Source: <http://in.ruschamber.net/eng/commoninfo.php?cat=131616>

India continues to play leading role in promoting business thorough export polices. The prominent export items from India include: Pharmaceuticals (top most) followed by Electronic equipment, Machines, engines, pumps, Iron & steel, garments, Coffee, tea, spices, tobacco, and varied food stuffs. On reciprocal basis, Russia exports to India include: gems, precious metals, coins, machines, engines, pumps, electronic equipment, fertilizers, medical, technical equipment, oil, iron & steel, paper, inorganic chemicals, sulphur, stone & cement. The list is only an indicate ones. There are dozens of more projects dealing independent economic relations between India and Russia which are handled through varied channels. These include: Joint Study Group, Free Trade Agreement, Eurasian Economic Union and Indo-Russian FTA. In a nutshell, Indo-Russian Economic Relations is marked by goodwill, memorandum of undressing and peace.

India-Russia: IT Revolution

Indian being the fifth largest economy, next to that of USA, China, Japan and Germany has potential resource for IT lovers and professionals that benefit the stakeholders in number of ways. The Electronic Knowledge Management Culture (EKMC) offers new avenues and wider prospects for Indian IT professionals in Russia. Moscow Business Centre, Moscow State University, St. Petersburg University, Altai State Technical University, Altai State Medical University, Baltic State Technical University, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Moscow Agricultural Academy, Moscow Architectural Institute, Moscow Engineering Physics Institute, Moscow Institute of

Electronic Technology, Moscow Medical Academy, Moscow State Technical University, Moscow State Institute of Radio-engineering Electronics and Automation are the host agencies where Indians are working in different capacities.

Indians in Russia are making serious bilateral efforts to intensify economic cooperation in IT related sectors. Non-traditional knowledge-based sectors therefore have acquired great prominence and promise in bilateral relations. Nearly 27 Indian IT companies, mostly Moscow and St. Petersburg based, will continue to grow and acquire even greater diversity in the coming years despite stiff conditions imposed by the Russian Immigration Department. The discussion about the ‘Brain Drain’ is motivated by political agenda and prejudices that needs much academic conversations. Indian IT Skills in Russia, is being investigated at many levels which can also be seen as an ‘Ideal Model’ of mutual economic benefits. For successful partnerships and business ventures, Russian and Indian companies need to respect each other’s concerns, commitment and objectives that strive to gain trust and transparency. Indians have played greater role in promoting IT based companies in India as well as Russia that prominently include: Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, Intel’s R&D, Phoenix, ABB, IBM, Russia Online, Chase, and Lucent Technologies which are successfully running in Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai, NOIDA, Delhi and other major cities of India. The following table gives an overview of Indian skills in Russia.

Table II: IT Sectors- India and Russia Compared

Parameters	India	Russia
Export Industry Size	9500 (\$US Million)	165 (US \$ Million)
Export Focused Professional Numbers	195000	5500
IT Employee Cost (US\$ Per Year)	5000 to 12000	7000
Number of Certified Companies	60	3
Quality of IT Labour Force	High	High
Infrastructure	Average	Poor
Unique Positives	Highly Skilled and Abundance, Qualified, Robust, Project Management Experience	High Quality Engineers
Main Negatives	Poor Infrastructure	Unstable Economy

Source: Data Extracted from NASSCOM

<http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/~subhash/pdfs/Indian%20software%20industry.pdf> dated 16 October 2011

For successful partnerships and business ventures, Russian and Indian companies need to respect each other’s concerns, commitment, objectives and strive to gain trust and transparency. This is an excellent piece of work which

highlights the perceived and real challenges in Russia-India business partnerships. There is now a mutual desire to develop more collaborative relationships, and to discover how to establish truly effective strategic partnering

relationships. Most companies participating in the research – in India and the Russia - expressed a positive view that partnering with each other can be extremely beneficial. Trust emerged as the foundation of a successful partnership. There is a greater need of alignment in objectives, collaborative mindset, sponsorship, commitment, environment, engagement approach, and value added principles. In this turbulent and competitive global market, it is absolutely essential for Indian and Soviet companies to assess the nature of their critical business relationships. Never before have organisations had to rely on their partners to such an extent and such research will help them to identify the areas where change is required in order to create world-class partnering relationships.

Socio-Cultural Relations

It is truly said that no economic activity is possible without support of Socio-Religious Alignments. Indian Cuisine is now regarded as part of Moscow's favourite choice, probably nowhere in the world. Indian community today maintains a vibrant and dynamic socio-cultural life within the framework of its numerous organizations and association which are based mainly on their Indian religious or regional origin. In addition, there are a number of social, cultural and religious organization through nearly 100 organization is reported by the Federal Registration Service, Moscow.⁸ the prominent ones are: Bhartiya Sanskritik Samaj, ISKCON, Brahma Kumari, Ramakrishna Mission, Vedanta Society, Ananda Marga, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Chinmaya Mission, and Russian Tantra Sangha. There are also some social and ethnic based organizations like Tamil Cultural Association of Russia, Bharati Bengali Association, Maharashtra Mandal, Russian Sindhi Association and South Indian Association.

Indian community in Russia have maintained a vibrant and dynamic socio-cultural life within the framework of its numerous organizations and associations. There are number of social, cultural and political organizations. The prominent ones: Moscow Association of Indian University Graduates (MAIUG), Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), and Society of Medical Graduates of India and Russia (SOMGRIR). Moscow State University has maintained a Department of Indian Studies which focus extensive on Indian languages, Bollywood films, culture, dance and music. Jawaharlal Nehru Centre run by the Indians Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) works as a channel of communication between the two countries. There are number of Indians who are studying in various universities and academic bodies for higher learning and excellence. Most of them get placements and now have become the part and parcel of Russia's academic credential and other professional bodies. Unfortunately, however, racism and cultural alienation from the host India society, illegal immigration and transit movement of immigrants to other destinations, problems relating to education, business and settlement remain serious concern for Indians. Presently, there are 10,000 medical students in Moscow, the highest single medical learning profession of Indians anywhere in world and most of these students come through 'Invitation' through agents, mediators and agencies. Besides Indian students, there are number of businessmen in St Petersburg, Novgorod, Kazan and Kursk. Half of the total figure may be residing in St Petersburg in

comparison with 2.5 million Indo-Americans, 1 million Indo-Canadians, 1.5 million Indians in the United Kingdom, and 1.5 million Indian citizens currently resident in Saudi Arabia. Thus, 40,000 Indians in the Russian Federation is a small figure. 9

Co-operation in the Energy, Space, Science & Technology

Civilian based Energy Sector remains the key of Indo-Russian that acquired great in foot India in 2001 with coordination of ONGC-Videsh (foreign) where Russian company Gazprom with collaboration of Gas Authority of India remains active. Bay of Bengal, Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project with two units of 1000 MW each is a good example of Indo-Russian nuclear energy co-operation.¹⁰ By the end of 2019, India-Russia Energy Sectors have already entered into crucial phase where water resource, flora-fauna, petroleum, coal and hydro power.

While talking about Space, Russia has been a historical collaborator since 1975 when India's first artificial satellite Aryabhata was launched during Indira Gandhi Ministry from Soviet base 'Kapustin Yar'. India's first 'Space Man' Rakesh Sharma entered in space in 1983 when Indira Gandhi asked: 'How does India look from Space', the Astronomer Rakesh replied: 'Sare Jaha se Accha Hindustan Hamara' (India looks the most beautiful country from Space). In due course of time, India signed several pacts with Russia that included: Inter-Governmental umbrella Agreement, Navigation System GLONASS, Joint Lunar Exploration, MoU with Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) - Russian Federal Space Agency (RKA), Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), and finally launch of Chandrayaan-2 (July 22, 2019).

Apart from Japan and China with respect to Science & technology, India is equally benefited from Russia. Major programmes and collaborations in this direction include: Integrated Long-Term Programme of Co-operation: ILTP (Russia) and Department of Science and Technology (India). Development of Duet aircraft, semiconductor products, super computers, poly-vaccines, laser science and technology, seismology, high-purity materials, software & IT and Ayurveda have been some of the priority areas of co-operation under the ILTP. Major focus on joint collaboration and Council with Technology & Russian Foundation of Basic Research, and Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow) continue to play significant role for scientific and technological research.

Conclusion

It is the right time to redesign the structuring of Indo-Soviet Trade Relations through bilateral understating and democratic governance. Russian is now an ideal Trade Model rather than political bargainer for betterment of all. Based on several analysis and interpretation of multi-functioning and allied bodies of Russia, adequate planning needs to be prepared to provide operational objectives. Wholehearted participation of community based on productivity and managerial ability can help significantly to prepare 'India-Soviet Economic Model'.

Whereas Russia's liberal economic programme is a boon in disguise for India in particular and the world in general. At the same time, Russia has prospective future for India which is also an ideal destination for Russians in several streams like art, theatre, culture, education, R&D, catering

technology, tourism, Bollywood, and many more. In fact, there is an intensification of global between double track strategies: Pressure and Dialogue personified as China-India -USA; but the recent depth of global debate on Russia's changing perception about India and Soviet Union have brought new theories. Besides, both powerful nations have identified several new areas of cooperation that remain the unique example in the field of diplomacy, economy, technology, innovation, robotics and artificial intelligence. There is a greater need to work together by forgetting all ideological, political and economic difference between two economic powers. Time has come to redesign the Indo-Soviet Relations through bilateral understating due to entry of large number of economic powers like China, Japan, Germany, South Korea and USA. Effective and transparent in ensuring environmental safety as per international standard need to be continuously monitored for evolving preventive measures. Wholehearted participation of community based on productivity and managerial ability can help significantly to prepare 'India-Soviet Peace Model'.

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