

# India Russia Relations

India's diplomatic relations with Russia began before India achieved independence. Russia was one of the first countries to recognise Indian independence in 1947 to strengthen its image as anti-imperialist. By the mid-1950s, India and the Soviet Union (Russia, before disintegration, was known as Soviet Union/USSR) appeared all poised to establish closer relationships and help India in attaining economic self-sufficiency through investment in heavy industries.

- The Soviet Union invested in various new enterprises in energy production, mining, steel plants, and heavy machine building.
- The two countries, in 1962, agreed to begin a program of military-technical cooperation. In 1971, a historic moment in relations between both countries was the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in August, 1971.
- In the 1990s, relations between both countries severely changed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as India- Russia entered into a new Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1993 and a bilateral Military-Technical Cooperation agreement in 1994.
- When Putin became President, the relationship between both countries transformed into Strategic Partnership.
- The Strategic Partnership institutionalized annual meetings and, in 2010, India Russia Relations elevated the relationship to the status of a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.

## India Russia Political Relations

A major political initiative between India and Russia started after the collapse of the Soviet Union by signing the Strategic Partnership in 2000. India Russia collaborates on shared national interests at multilateral organizations such as the UN, BRICS, G20, and SCO.

- The annual summit between the prime ministers of India and the Russian Federation is where the strategic alliance between the two countries reaches its highest level of institutionalised communication.
- President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met for the first time informally in Sochi, Russian Federation, in 2018.
- 2019 saw President Putin award Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the order of St. Andrew the Apostle, Russia's highest state decoration. The prime minister was awarded the order in honour of his remarkable contributions to strengthening amicable India-Russia ties and the development of their unique strategic alliance.
- As of 2022, 21 Annual Summit meetings have taken place alternatively in India and Russia.
- Russia has been vocal about supporting India's seat at the United Nations Security Council. Russia has shown interest in joining SAARC with observer status.
- Russia has backed India joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and is sensitive towards India's position on Jammu and Kashmir vis-a-vis Pakistan.
- Two intergovernmental commissions- the IRIGC-MTC for military-technical cooperation and the IRIGC-TEC for trade, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural cooperation, meet annually.
- The most comprehensive government institution in charge of managing issues at the national level is the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC).

## Economic Relations Between India and Russia

As demonstrated by the updated targets of boosting bilateral trade to US\$30 billion and bilateral investment to US\$50 billion by 2025, improving trade and economic cooperation between India and Russia is a top priority for the political leadership of both nations. According to data from India, USD 8.1 billion in bilateral commerce was conducted between April 2020 and March 2021. India imported 5.48 billion USD from Russia while exporting 2.6 billion USD.

- Trade between countries concentrated on various diversified segments such as machinery, aerospace, Commercial shipping, chemicals, petroleum products, precious metals, and mineral products.
- India Russia is making efforts towards achieving the target of mutual investment of \$15 billion each way by the year 2025. Both countries set up \$1 billion in funds to promote mutual investment in infrastructure and technology projects.
- Russia's cooperation with India on its "Make in India" and the development of smart cities.
- Both countries are significantly increasing cooperation between regions of Russia and the States of India. As of now, there are nine sister State and sister city arrangements.
- The North-South Transport Corridor for better connectivity and trade relations for India, Russia and other neighbouring countries.
- Both countries developed an economic strategy that involves using several economic components such as FTA and EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) for the promotion and protection of investment.

## India Russia Relations: Defense Partnerships

Russia is India's principal defence partner. The defence was the major pillar of Indo-Russia relations and has stood the test of time. With Russia's help, India achieved capacity building in defence areas through the development and acquisition of weapons.

- India is the largest buyer of Russia's military equipment. As of now, India has purchased various military hardware from Russia, such as the S-400 Triumph Missile system, Kamov 226 helicopters to be jointly manufactured under the Make in India initiative, INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier program, etc.
- India and Russia have several major joint military programs such as BrahMos cruise missile, Sukhoi Su-30 fighter aircraft.
- INDRA AND AVI-INDRA are joint military exercises conducted by India and Russia.

## India Russia Relations: Energy Security Partnership

India-Russia's energy security partnership theoretically appears to be most attractive, but because of geographical reasons, there is limited feasibility. Although India Companies does explore the potential energy partnership. For example, companies are trying to access the Sakhalin III in the Siberia gas field. However, there are several areas for exploration. Russia has the world's largest natural gas and other areas like oil and coal reserve.

- Nuclear energy is the most strategic area. Post Paris Agreement on climate change, India considers nuclear energy as a viable and important option to meet its energy requirement and climate change obligations.
- Russia has built nuclear reactors (Kudankulam reactors in Tamil Nadu) and is expected to build 12 new reactors.

- India and Russia are jointly working on establishing Nuclear Power Plant in Bangladesh. India now emphasises local manufacturing equipment and components for upcoming Russian-designed nuclear projects.
- Recently, MoU has been signed on cooperation on LNG supplies to India and a maritime route from Chennai to Vladivostok, which will be used for energy trade and agreed for cooperation on hydrocarbon exploration and LNG in the Arctic as well as far east.

## Indo Russia Scientific and Technological Cooperation

India and Russia have various ongoing cooperation activities in education, space technology, science and technology, and research. India and Russia have set up a network of universities, and cooperation is going on a different aspect of space technology.

- Russia has helped India is launching its first two satellites, Aryabhata and Bhaskar, and has also helped in developing the cryogenic engine for heavy rockets.
- Both countries cooperate on Arctic areas with a lot of energy potential, and India has pledged \$1 billion lines of credit in developing Russia's far east region.
- India's ambitious mission Gaganyaan, Astronauts, will be trained by Russia. Russian State Space Corporation 'Roscosmos' and the ISRO will cooperate on human spaceflight and satellite navigation programs.
- The three main institutional mechanisms for bilateral Science and Technology cooperation are the Working Group on Science and Technology operating under IRIGC-TEC, the Integrated Long-Term Programme (ILTP), and the Basic Science Cooperation Programme. At the same time, the Science Academies of the two countries encourage inter-academy exchanges.
- The Russia-India Bridge to Innovation, telemedicine collaboration, the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), and the Russia India Network (RIN) of universities are a few recent projects in this field.

## Indo Russia Cultural Relations

India and Russia relations have strong cultural ties, contributing to a strong relationship between countries. Cultural relations started in the medieval time when Afanasy Nikitin visited India during the Mughal Period. Russia was the first country where Indology started, and many thinkers like Leo Tolstoy had profound influence and contributions to Indian literature.

- Communist Revolution in India has inspired many leaders. Lenin was a supporter of the Indian Freedom Struggle.
- Indian movies and Yoga have a great influence and are very popular among Russian people.
- Several programs like "Namaste Russia", where people-to-people connect the educational brilliance of both countries, have good cultural links.

## Issues in India Russia Relations

The area of concern regarding India Russia relations are discussed below:

- Costs have increased as a result of the absence of the private sector, a lack of logistics, insufficient connectivity, and, more recently, the stalled International North-South Economic Corridor.
- Due to India's determination to diversify its defence imports and the resulting increased competition for Russia with other suppliers, orders from Russia have gradually decreased.

- India has previously expressed worries over the supply and maintenance of defence supplies. One of these was the delivery of INS Vikramaditya, which was delayed for five years.
- Russian government representatives have frequently questioned the QUAD and the Indo-Pacific ideas. India, according to Russia, is currently a subject for Western nations.
- The ongoing issues that Russia has in its relations with the US are the root of the conflict between Indian and Russian interests. As a result of this conflict, Moscow has turned more and more to China for assistance and a means of undermining American influence.

It can become challenging to keep the balance in India-Russia relations at a time when there are more promising opportunities for engagements between the two countries.

## Significance of Russia for India

There is no hesitation that a renewed standoff between the West and Russia has ramifications. These events have often put India in an awkward diplomatic situation. India has to rebuild its strength and revitalize its earlier agreements.

- Energy diplomacy can replace the waning defence business and bring rationality to India and Russia relations. India is yet too to explore Russia's vast technological potential.
- Russia could refurbish India's strategic assets, and it has a strong scientific and technological base that can be taken advantage of by India.
- Russia is still politically, diplomatically, and militarily critical for India, and its veto power in the UNSC acts as a useful counterweight against global hegemony. India also cannot ignore the geostrategic calculations, where the US can never replace Russia politically and operationally in case of a national crisis.
- Russia's diplomatic support to India in the context of the issue of Kashmir cannot be lost sight of, especially when the traditionally strong US-Pakistan relationship and the growing Russia-China-Pakistan axis persist.

## Future of India Russia Relations

Defense and historical ties alone cannot sustain India Russia relations. To create a strong economic and strategic partnership, new forms of cooperation must be discovered as structural changes in international relations occur. The Afghan conflict, cyber security, outer space, and climate change are the areas where the two countries may work together.

- Promoting Joint projects in third countries in areas of convergence. For Ex: Rooppur Nuclear Project in Bangladesh.
- Increasing cooperation with Eurasian Countries by increasing speed for completion of proposed projects like INSTC.
- Utilizing India's Make in India program for greater economic cooperation with Russia and can also utilize its vast population dividend to provide a workforce to Russia.
- Further cooperation in multinational groupings like BRICS, SCO, G20, East Asia Summit, etc.

Overall, as both nations work to enhance their positions during a period of change in the international order, India and Russia will need to learn to navigate their relationship in the face of obstacles brought on not only by bilateral reasons but also by regional and global ones.