

India-Russia Relations and Major Issues after Cold War Era

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Abstract:

India and Russia have been struggling to come to terms with a world that has changed fundamentally. Ties between them are broad, deep and durable. but due to disintegration of USSR in December 1991, there were various internal as well external disturbances, which adversely affects India's relation with Russia almost in every field and particularly in defense sector. The sudden collapse of the USSR in December 1991 dealt a blow to India's foreign policy framework at the time when India herself was going through a severe economic crisis and an internal turmoil of such a magnitude which changed the nature of the political complexion of India. The relations from then shows some fluctuations with full of issues bringing the two countries more closer.

Key Words: Kargil, Pokhran, Refuelers, Shakti, Sanctions, Veto

Introduction:

India's national security environment is determined by its geographical attributes, historical legacy, social-economic circumstances as well as regional and global

developments. India's relation with Russia has always been a subject of enduring interest for both the countries. . In fact, the friendly relations between India and Russia are rooted in their history. India's relation with Russia can be traced back to the 15th century when the Russian merchant Afanasy Niketan visited Northern India and published an account of his travel. In the 17th century Indian businessmen settled in Astrakhan from where they sent goods to Russia. Historically, the intimacy of the Indo-Russia relationship was based on a conjunction of political, military, and economic interests. These relations improved from 1953 onwards by the exchange of high level visits from both the sides. On bilateral relations, India and Russia are keen to further improve these relations. Both states are equally interested in the creation of a more democratic, multipolar world and want peace and stability.

Objectives:

1. To study Indo-Russian economic, political and cultural aspects during post-cold war era.

2. To study the bilateral relations between India and Russia after the disintegration of Soviet Union.
3. To assess the developments and prospective of Indo-Russia relations.

Methodology

For the purpose of the study, both published and unpublished secondary data has been utilized. The data of India-Russia relations were also analyzed. The data is collected from International Security. Centre for Policy Research, Indian Institute of Defense and Analysis etc and from various Books, News Papers and from Internet.

Discussion:

There were various issues on which India and Russia support each other at international level. Some of the major issues on which both the countries support each other are discussed below.

POKHRAN- 2 NUCLEAR TESTS

India conducted, for the second time, a series of nuclear tests in May 1988, at the same Pokhran test site in the Thar desert of Rajasthan, breaking a twenty four years of self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing ever since its Pokhran first nuclear test in 1974. These Pokhran second nuclear tests were conducted in two groups that were fixed at the same time. The first group consisted of the thermo-nuclear devices (Shakti-1), the fusion device (Shakti-2) and

a sub kilo ton device (Shakti-3). The remaining two sub kilo ton devices made up the second group (Shakti-4 and Shakti-5). It was decided that the first group consisting of three devices would be tested on 11 May and second group on 13 May.⁽¹⁾ A total of five nuclear tests were detonated at Pokhran during operation Shakti.

On the debate of other nuclear tests, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), DR. R. Chidambaram, has claimed that the five nuclear weapons tests of Pokhran in May 1988 have provided enough data to his scientists and engineers to be able to conduct computer stimulated sub-critical experiments (SCES) at the laboratory not in the field.⁽²⁾ Such a view has not been shared by many of his own former compatriots, such as DR. P. K. Iyengar who has favored conducting further nuclear tests. Addressing a group of scientists, including those who participated in Pokhran-1st and 2nd, DR. Iyengar said that from the scientific point of view “a survivable nuclear deterrent” envisaged in the proposed nuclear doctrine could not be achieved without further testing.⁽³⁾ Though, the initial reaction of Russian leaders to the Indian nuclear test was bitter, yet they did not take any concrete steps commensurate with their reaction. No one, Yeltsin, Primakov or Russian

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pokhran-11>, Accessed on 30-12-15.

² Vatsala, Shukla, "India's Foreign Policy. In New Millennium", Atlantic Publication, Delhi, 2005, Page No- 142.

³ *Ibid.* page-No.44.

parliament stressed on the big powers to intervene to resolve the Kashmir issue. The strategy of Moscow seemed to resolve the post Pokhran dilemma by condemning the nuclear test in the sub-continent along with the other members of P-5 countries but, at the same time, going ahead with business as usual with India. Russia did not impose any sanction on India and did not let the nuclear issue have any bearing on bilateral relations.

RUSSIA'S SUPPORT OF INDIAN EXPANSION IN NUCLEAR FIELD

While India continues to invest in the development of its indigenous aviation, navel and tank programs, notably the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) and Arjun Tank, it has been forced to continue to rely upon imports to meet its requirements for modernization of its conventional forces and the development of a nuclear trail. For strike air craft, India is acquiring forty SU-30 MKI's aircraft, plus IL-78 refuelers and IL-76 airborne early warning aircrafts for strike support. Additionally the purchase of four Russian TU-22 MS strike aircraft and 16 to 18 French 2000D mirage fighter aircraft "soft wired for carrying nuclear missile" is also being negotiated. To compensate for the high cost associated with the direct purchase of these systems, Russia has even offered to "Lease" IC-76 and TU-22s to India.

The most controversial area, however, where, India is reported to be receiving military assistance is in the development of its "indigenous" nuclear-powered submarine and sub marine and

Sub-Marial Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM). India's Advanced Technological Vessel (ATV) program dates back to 1988 when India leased a Soviet Charlic-1 class SSN for three years. The knowledge shared with the Soviet Navy during this period is reported to continue today as India struggles with the design of its propulsion plant and the installation of the reaction in the submarine hull. Additional reports indicate that the hull design and reactor design of the two unfinished ATV'S are based on the new Russian project 885 Severodvinsk class and its 190 MW pressurized water reactor. Additionally, the former "apprentices" of the Indian navy during the three year period of submarine lease "have taken key post in Indian design office developing nuclear submarines". Finally, an entire Indian submarine crew is reported to have spent at least six months during 1999 "on an official mission" in the closed northern Russian city of Severodvinsk. ⁽⁴⁾

The Russia policy on nuclear cooperation with India was based on the premise that India was already a nuclear weapons power denying its advanced technologies in the name of preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons made no sense. To illustrate this judgment, Putin visited the Bhabha Atomic Research Center

⁴ Conley, Jerome, "Indo-Russian Military and Nuclear Cooperation: Implication for U.S Security Interest," *ISSN Occasional paper February 2000, USAF Academy, Colorado, Page no. 33-34.*

(BARC) Trombay, the heart of Indian nuclear weapons program. His visit to BARC was the first by any political leader to a nuclear weapon state and it occurred less than two and half year after India proclaimed itself as a state in possession of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, during Putin's visit the two countries announced a protocol on nuclear cooperation.

During Putin's visit to New Delhi at the end of 2002, Putin reaffirmed the Russian commitment to expand nuclear cooperation with India by selling additional nuclear reactors, but he said that this will have to take place "within the frame work of our international obligation in the nuclear field. We also believe that the rules and regulations of this frame work require improvement. We have discussed our (nuclear) cooperation with India in detect. We are ready, prepared and willing to develop relation with India, including in nuclear field."⁽⁵⁾

KARGIL CONFLICT AND ROLE OF RUSSIA

Russia was the first country to come out openly in support of India, when hostilities on Indo-Pakistan border broke out as Kargil conflict in 1999, in keeping with the time-honored traditional Soviet position, Russia did not hesitate to brand Pakistan as the aggressor. Russia declares that it would

foil Pakistan's bid to internationalize the Kashmir issue whilst reiterating its support for New Delhi's action against the infiltrator in Kargil. A press resale by the Russian foreign ministry in June 1999 made an "earnest appeal" to Islamabad to 'refrain' from violations of the Pakistani-Indian accords on the location of the agreed line. Any attempt to change this line may have grave consequences. Russia did not hesitate to repeat the Indian phrases use for the Mujahedeen. Russia deputy foreign minister Gigory Karasin asked Islamabad withdraws the infiltrators. Thus, India won easily at least one major support in the world community though Russia's influence had been limited after the end of cold war. Even then Russia's sport was not less significant.

COORDINATION ON AFGHANISTAN

Both countries regarded Afghanistan as the hub of instability in the South and Central Asian region. Russia is apprehensive of an instable Afghanistan, since it may destabilize the Central Asian region as a whole, there by impacting on Russia itself. India believes that the Kashmiri 'insurgents' have a strong nexus with Afghanistan, and in the past received their training in camps in Afghanistan.

Apart from the so-called terrorist threats facing Russia and India from Afghanistan, the war-ravaged country holds political and economic importance for both Russia and India. According to the foreign secretary of Indian, the late J.N Dixit, ideal relations with Afghanistan "are of utmost

⁵ Parveen, Arifa, "Russia as a factor in India's, Nuclear Strategy: A strategy Analysis," *International journal of Advanced Research*, 2014, vol.2, Issue 6, ISSN 2320-5407, Page No. 571-72.

important to India not only in-terms of bilateral equations, but also as an area through which India's economic relations and cooperation in other fields with the Central Asian Republics will be facilitated.⁽⁶⁾

INDIA'S DEMAND FOR VETO POWER AND RUSSIAN RESPONSE

In 1992, the UN general assembly adopted resolution 47/62 entitled the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of UN Security Council. The resolution reflected three main complaints-one, the council no longer represented modern political realities; two, its decisions were made by a small percentage of the UN membership reflecting only Western values and interests ; and third, that is lacked 'equitable' representation. Since the UN charter came into force in 1945, there have only been five permanent members (P-5) in the council and each have the power to 'veto' decision of a majority of other member. Three of the five members are European, representing about ten percent (10%) of humanity, while only one in Asia, representing more than 30% of humanity. There is no African, state in the permanent membership. ⁽⁷⁾

⁶ "India-Russia Agree over Terror, Afghanistan," *The Times of India*, November 6, 2001.

⁷ Mathur, Shari, " *Voting for the Veto: India in a Reformed UN*," *The Foreign policy centre* 49 Chalton Street, London, 2005, Page No-18.

In the course of Primako's visit to India in 1998, Russia came out in full support of India's candidature for the Security Council as was reflected in the joint statement, according to which "Russia considers India as to be a strong and appropriate candidate for permanent membership of an expandable UN security council." However, later on the Russian attitude was confusing i.e. whether it is supporting or opposing India's entry in Security Council.

Conclusion:

Historically, the intimacy of the Indo-Russia relationship was based on a conjunction of political, military, and economic interests. These relations improved from 1953 onwards by the exchange of high level visits from both the sides. However the collapse of the USSR has affected India adversely in many sectors and the relations between the two hampered to some extent and several obstacles came into the way. Gradually the obstacles were overcome to an extent and from 1997 onwards Russia was again on the way towards establishing a special position for the supply of defence related equipment. Even on the nuclear issue, Russia showed considerable understanding of Indian position when the Pokhran-II blast took place in 1998 and Gradually the obstacles were overcome to an extent and from 1997 onwards Russia was again on the way towards establishing a special position for the supply of defense related equipment. Even on the nuclear issue, Russia showed

considerable understanding of Indian position when the Pokhran-II blast took place in 1998. Russia was the first country to come out openly in support of India, when hostilities on Indo-Pakistan border broke out as Kargil conflict in 1999. On the international terrorism, India and Russia agreed that there is no justification for terrorism, and this must be fought against, without compromise and whenever it exists. Apart from these there were several issues on which both countries cooperate like cooperation on Afghanistan and Central Asia etc which provide a boost to their existing relationship.