

India-Russia Strategic Relations: Convergence and Divergence

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ABSTRACT

Since India's independence and, more specifically, since the end of the Cold War, the two countries' strategic cooperation, their relationship has undergone tremendous change. This relationship is modified by shifting global power dynamics, economic interests, and geopolitical upheavals, leading to both convergences and divergences. This article examines the historical background of relations between India and Russia, examines areas of convergence like defence collaboration, energy partnerships, and multilateral engagements, and examines areas of divergence like divergent viewpoints on international security concerns and India's growing engagement with the US. An evaluation of the future course of India-Russia ties within the framework of a multipolar international order is presented in the article's conclusion.

KEYWORD: Strategic Partnership, Convergence and Divergence, Imperialism, Colonialism, Strategic Dialogue, Counter Terrorism, Sustainable Development, Geopolitics, Transformation, Post-Cold-war era, Bilateral Relationship, Declaration, Global Harmony.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although Russia and India have been long-time allies, there have been a number of situations when problems have arisen that needed to be resolved. This study project will address a number of problems and difficulties that have affected relations between Russia and India. One must comprehend the strategic relationship between Russia and India in order to comprehend the concerns of convergence and divergence. Prior to comprehending this relationship, it is crucial to understand the meaning of strategy and strategic relationships. The word "strategic" gets its meaning from the noun "strategic." Strategy is the art of applying all available resources to certain goals and objectives. The concept of "strategy" initially had its roots in military contexts and was primarily linked with warfare. It encompassed the systematic use of a nation's resources, including its military, economic, and political capabilities, to attain specific objectives in times of conflict. Sun Tzu, in his renowned work "The Art of War," establishes a crucial relationship between strategy and tactics. He highlights the significance of their interdependence by stating that while strategy lacking tactics leads to a prolonged journey towards triumph, tactics devoid of strategy merely herald impending failure as they lack a cohesive and overarching plan. In the past, the concept of strategy primarily revolved around devising military methods and employing various tactics to accomplish specific objectives.

However, contemporary perspectives have expanded the scope of strategy beyond military applications, lending it broader connotations and importance. As a result, the term "strategic" now signifies a well-organized arrangement crafted to attain particular long-term goals and aims, not only within military domains but also in diverse non-military spheres. On the other hand, a partnership refers to a collaboration and engagement between two or more entities, rooted in shared objectives, mutual collaboration, and shared responsibilities. The conjunction of 'strategic' and 'partnership' signifies a collaborative, extended planning between multiple entities aimed at achieving specific objectives. A Strategic Partnership forged between two independent nations encompasses a wider spectrum of their associations. It necessitates a comprehensive, inclusive, and enduring approach, demanding unwavering commitment from both sides while fostering mutual comprehension and trust. Fundamental principles such as sovereignty, parity, mutual esteem, reliance, and mutual gains serve as the foundational elements of a sustainable strategic partnership. It's imperative to note that while differences exist between partners, they acknowledge and respect each other's individual significance, striving to reach mutually acceptable resolutions. India and Russia have exemplified such cooperative ties for over seven decades, showcasing a resilient and enduring alliance.

The global order, ideological stances, and national interests significantly shaped the evolution of relations between India and Russia. Following India's independence, the world was divided into antagonistic blocs: the communist sphere led by the Soviet Union and the western sphere led by the United States. India, emerging from prolonged colonial rule, aspired to secure a respected and rightful place in global politics. Post-independence, India adopted a foreign policy of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence, prioritizing support for other nations' struggles for autonomy, condemnation of racism and colonialism, and the promotion of global harmony. This stance initially drew skepticism from the US regarding India's position in the global order. However, these foreign policy tenets gradually fostered mutual trust and collaboration between India and the USSR. In 1964, the demise of India's inaugural Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, led to the succession of his daughter, Indira Gandhi. During her tenure, India's relationship with the USSR experienced a deepening of ties. The leadership transition did not significantly disrupt the amicable relations between the two nations. Despite India's official non-alignment during the Cold War era, there existed a certain ideological resonance between India's leadership and the socialist Soviet Union. This alignment stemmed from a shared opposition to imperialism and colonialism, shaping a degree of ideological affinity between the two nations.

Strategic Partnership between India and Russia

Following its independence, India adopted a non-alignment and peaceful cohabitation foreign policy. Thus, promoting global peace, opposing racism and colonialism, and aiding other nations in their freedom movements were the cornerstones of Indian foreign policy. Consequently, the US was dubious of India's perspective on the global system; nonetheless, these features of Indian foreign policy contributed to the development of mutual trust and collaboration between India and the USSR over time. India's leadership and the Soviet Union, a socialist state, shared some ideological similarities even though India formally remained non-aligned during the Cold War. This alliance was founded on a common rejection of colonialism and imperialism. Understanding India-Russian ties necessitates understanding India's connections with Pakistan, China, and the United States.

An important turning point in India's relations with Pakistan and the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was reached in 1966 with the signing of the Tashkent Agreement. Under the direction of Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin, an agreement was mediated in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, between Pakistani President Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. The goal of the agreement was to handle the fallout from the Second Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 and establish the groundwork for the normalisation and peaceful reconciliation of India and Pakistan. The Tashkent Agreement demonstrated the Soviet Union's important role as a mediator and facilitator of diplomatic solutions in the context of India's ties with the USSR. The Indo-Pak War of 1971, which occurred at a time when US and India's ties were at an all-time low, is a significant episode. At that time, the USSR provided assistance to India in dealing with the issue as the USA, China, and Pakistan formed a type of coalition against it. It is undeniable that the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971 somehow restrained the United States to indulge in direct war with India. Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971, was one of the earliest and most significant events that marked the start of this **strategic partnership** was during the Cold War era. Ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, India's ties with the successor state of the former Soviet Union – Russia-have faced certain uncertainties. Close ties with India, of course, remains a cornerstone of Russia's foreign policy.

Following a period of drift under President Boris Yeltsin (1991 to 1999), the strategic nature of Indo-Russian relations was renewed by his successor, Vladimir Putin, who had elevated these ties to a "privileged strategic partnership (2010)" and his successor, President Dmitry Medvedev has been following that course. The turning point in India-Russia relations came **nine years** after the collapse of USSR, when Vladimir Putin succeeded replacing Yeltsin. The President's visit to India in October 2000 was quite successful in giving the already-existing relations between Russia and India additional context. However, the signing of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership between India and Russia was the most significant result of President Putin's visit of 2000. The Strategic Partnership Declaration acknowledged earlier agreements made in 1971 and 1993, but it omitted the previous clause requiring consultation to eliminate threats to one another. The 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty had a requirement to consult, but the new Declaration included a clause prohibiting involvement in any coalition that would be hostile to the opposing side.

India Russia Strategic Partnership: Key Agreements

Formally, India and Russia began a strategic relationship in 1971. The India-Russia Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation, signed on August 9, 1971, originally had a duration of 20 years and was later renewed for another 20 years. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the treaty was replaced by a 20-year Treaty of Indo-Russian Friendship and Cooperation during President Yeltsin's visit to New Delhi in January 1993. The relationship between the two nations further deepened with the Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic

Partnership in October 2000, which was later elevated to the level of a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership in December 2010. To enhance this strategic partnership, India and Russia have established several platforms and institutions. The Annual Bilateral Summit, known as the India-Russia Summit, serves as a key platform where the leaders of both countries meet annually to discuss strategic, economic, and cultural ties. Additionally, several intergovernmental commissions have been created to cover trade, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural cooperation. A Strategic Dialogue between the two nations addresses strategic issues, defense cooperation, security challenges, and regional stability, involving high-level officials from defense and foreign affairs. Regular meetings between the defense ministers of India and Russia are held to discuss defense cooperation, military-industrial ties, joint exercises, and technology transfers in the defense sector. Furthermore, the India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue has been established to strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

Areas of convergence between India & Russia

A) Defense Cooperation: The Backbone of India-Russia Strategic Partnership

One of the most significant areas of convergence in India-Russia relations is their robust defense cooperation, which has long been the cornerstone of their strategic partnership. This relationship dates back to the 1960s, and over the decades, it has evolved into a comprehensive defense collaboration encompassing arms sales, technology transfer, joint production, and regular military exercises. Russia has been the largest supplier of military equipment to India, providing advanced weaponry that has significantly bolstered India's defense capabilities. A prime example of this cooperation is the BrahMos missile project, a joint venture between India's Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya. This supersonic cruise missile is a testament to the technological innovation resulting from the partnership, and it has become a crucial asset for India's military. The successful development and deployment of BrahMos underscore the strategic importance of defense cooperation in the India-Russia relationship.

Another hallmark of their defense ties is the licensed production of the Sukhoi Su-30MKI aircraft in India. This collaboration has not only enhanced India's air combat capabilities but also strengthened its indigenous defense industry by providing the technological know-how and manufacturing expertise necessary to produce these advanced fighters domestically. The ongoing collaboration on the production of AK-203 rifles, intended to replace the Indian Army's aging INSAS rifles, further highlights the depth of their defense industrial partnership. These joint production initiatives not only meet India's immediate defense needs but also contribute to its long-term goal of achieving self-reliance in defense manufacturing. The acquisition of the S-400 Triumf air defense system by India serves as another significant milestone in the India-Russia defense relationship. Despite substantial international pressure, particularly from the United States, India proceeded with the deal, demonstrating the strategic trust between New Delhi and Moscow. The S-400 system, known for its advanced capabilities in detecting and neutralizing aerial threats, will significantly enhance India's air defense, underscoring the critical role of Russian military technology in India's defense architecture. This deal also reflects India's commitment to maintaining a diversified and autonomous defense procurement strategy, which is crucial for its national security. Regular military exercises between India and Russia, such as the Indra series, further exemplify the strong defense ties between the two nations. These exercises not only enhance interoperability between their armed forces but also serve as a platform for sharing best practices and strengthening military-to-military relations. The consistent engagement in joint exercises highlights the strategic alignment of their defense objectives and their shared commitment to regional security and stability.

B) Space and Technological Cooperation: Expanding Frontiers with Strategic Collaboration

Space and technological cooperation form a critical area of convergence in India-Russia relations, showcasing their shared commitment to advancing scientific and technological frontiers together. This partnership is grounded in decades of collaboration, dating back to the Soviet era, and continues to thrive, driving forward both nations' ambitions in space exploration and technology development. India's space program has been significantly influenced by Russian expertise and support. The Soviet Union was instrumental in launching India's first satellite, Aryabhata, on April 19, 1975, using a Soviet Kosmos-3M launch vehicle. This pioneering event marked the beginning of India's journey in space exploration, establishing a foundation for the robust partnership that continues today. Russia has since remained a key partner in India's satellite development efforts. Notably, Russia provided critical assistance in launching India's first remote-sensing satellite, IRS-1A, in 1988. This collaboration has expanded over the years to include the launch of various satellites, such as the GSAT-6A communication satellite, which was launched by the Russian Proton rocket in 2018, further solidifying the cooperative relationship in satellite technology.

One of the most ambitious projects in India-Russia space cooperation is the Gaganyaan mission, India's first manned spaceflight program. Russia's significant experience in human spaceflight has made it an invaluable partner in this endeavor. In 2019, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) signed a contract with Glavkosmos, a subsidiary of the Russian space agency Roscosmos, to train Indian astronauts, known as vyomanauts, for the Gaganyaan mission. Four Indian Air Force pilots underwent extensive training at the Gagarin Research & Test Cosmonaut Training Center in Russia, preparing them for the challenges of space travel. The Gaganyaan mission, scheduled for launch in the near future, aims to send a three-member crew into space for a period of up to seven days, marking a significant milestone in India's space ambitions. Russia's contribution to this mission, particularly in areas like astronaut training, life support systems, and crew rescue operations, underscores the deep technological cooperation between the two nations. India and Russia have also collaborated on several deep space missions, leveraging their respective strengths in space exploration. One such project was the Chandrayaan-2 mission, where Russia initially agreed to provide a lander for India's second lunar exploration mission. Although Russia later withdrew due to technical issues, the collaboration highlighted the potential for joint efforts in exploring outer space. Moving forward, both countries have expressed interest in further collaboration on lunar and interplanetary missions, including potential cooperation on Chandrayaan-3 and future Mars exploration missions.

Beyond specific missions, India and Russia have engaged in joint research and development (R&D) in various space technologies. This includes collaboration in satellite navigation, where India's NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) and Russia's GLONASS systems have explored interoperability to enhance global positioning capabilities. The two countries have also discussed potential cooperation in space situational awareness (SSA), aiming to monitor and mitigate space debris and other threats to space assets. Moreover, the two nations are exploring opportunities in emerging space technologies, such as small satellite development, space robotics, and reusable launch vehicle technologies. These joint R&D initiatives are designed to foster innovation, reduce costs, and enhance the capabilities of both space programs. Several bilateral agreements underpin the ongoing collaboration in space and technology. In 2015, India and Russia signed an agreement on cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, reinforcing their commitment to joint space exploration activities. This agreement has paved the way for expanded collaboration in areas such as satellite communication, remote sensing, and space exploration. Looking ahead, India and Russia are poised to deepen their cooperation in space technology, with discussions ongoing about potential joint missions to the Moon, Mars, and beyond. Both countries are also keen to collaborate on space station projects, with Russia's plans for a new orbital station potentially opening up opportunities for Indian participation.

C) Multilateral Engagement: Advocating for a Multipolar World Order

In the realm of multilateral engagement, India and Russia share a common vision for a multipolar world order, advocating for a global system that is more representative of contemporary power dynamics. This shared vision has led to close cooperation in various multilateral forums, including the United Nations, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the G20. Both countries see these platforms as essential for promoting their interests and addressing global challenges in a more balanced and equitable manner. At the United Nations, India and Russia have consistently supported each other on key issues, reflecting their strong strategic partnership. Russia has been a vocal supporter of India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), recognizing India's growing influence and the need for UNSC reforms to reflect the current global power structure. This mutual support in the UN underscores the convergence of their foreign policy objectives, particularly in advocating for a more inclusive and multipolar world order. Within BRICS, India and Russia have worked together to promote economic cooperation and address critical global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and cyber security. The BRICS platform serves as a vital mechanism for both countries to coordinate their positions on global issues and push for reforms in global governance institutions. Their collaboration within BRICS highlights their shared commitment to collective action and their belief in the importance of emerging economies in shaping the global agenda.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is another important multilateral forum where India and Russia converge on key security and regional stability issues. Both countries share a strong interest in stabilizing Afghanistan and countering the threat of terrorism in Central Asia, making their partnership within the SCO a key element in their broader strategic cooperation. The SCO provides a platform for India and Russia to coordinate their counterterrorism efforts and engage with other regional powers to address common security challenges. The G20, which brings together the world's major economies, is another platform where India and Russia collaborate closely. Both countries use the G20 to advocate for policies that support sustainable development, global financial stability, and equitable economic growth. Their cooperation in the G20 reflects

their shared interest in reforming the global economic order to better serve the needs of developing countries and ensure a more balanced distribution of global wealth and power.

Areas of Divergence

A) Challenges in India-Russia Relations

India-Russia relations, while historically strong, face several challenges due to geopolitical shifts, differing alliances, regional security issues, and underdeveloped economic ties. A key area of divergence arises from their respective alliances and geopolitical interests. India's growing strategic partnership with the United States, particularly through initiatives like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and the Indo-Pacific strategy, has caused concern in Moscow. Russia perceives the Quad as a potential threat to its influence in Asia and views it as a mechanism to contain China's rise, with China being a key strategic partner for Russia. Conversely, Russia's deepening ties with China, especially given their shared opposition to U.S. dominance, have raised concerns in New Delhi. India is increasingly wary of the Russia-China axis, particularly in light of its ongoing border disputes and security challenges with China. Although India and Russia have managed to compartmentalize these differences, the intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China presents a complex challenge for their bilateral relationship.

Another point of divergence is seen in their differing perspectives on regional security issues, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East. India views Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism, a perspective that contrasts sharply with Russia's pragmatic approach to maintaining strategic relations with Pakistan, driven largely by its interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Russia's engagement with Pakistan, including military cooperation, has been a source of concern for India. Similarly, India and Russia have contrasting views on the conflict in Syria and the broader Middle East. Russia has been a key ally of the Assad regime in Syria, while India has taken a more balanced approach, advocating for a political solution to the conflict. These differing perspectives underscore the challenges in aligning their strategic interests within complex regional contexts.

Despite a strong political and defense relationship, economic ties between India and Russia have not reached their full potential, highlighting another significant area of divergence. Bilateral trade remains relatively low compared to India's trade with other major powers like the United States, China, and the European Union. This limited economic engagement is attributed to several factors, including logistical challenges, a lack of complementarities between the two economies, and the impact of Western sanctions on Russia. While initiatives such as the proposed India-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement and the expansion of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) aim to enhance economic cooperation, progress has been slow. Consequently, the economic dimension of India-Russia relations remains an area in need of further development.

B) Geopolitical and Strategic Challenges in India-Russia Ties

Russia's growing ties with China have become a significant point of concern for India, particularly as the Sino-Russian relationship has deepened over the past decade in response to Western sanctions and shifts in the global order. The expanding partnership between Russia and China, especially in military and energy cooperation, raises strategic alarms in India, given its own border disputes and security challenges with China. India views this close relationship as a potential strategic disadvantage, especially against the backdrop of its rivalry with China. Russia's reluctance to take a clear stance during India-China border conflicts, such as the Doklam standoff in 2017 and the Galwan Valley clashes in 2020, has further highlighted this divergence in their geopolitical interests.

Russia's increasing engagement with Pakistan, particularly in defense cooperation, represents another significant divergence in India-Russia relations. In 2016, Russia conducted its first-ever joint military exercise with Pakistan, codenamed Druzhba-2016, shortly after the Uri attack in India. This move was a source of concern for India, which views Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism. The growing defense relationship between Russia and Pakistan, including military exercises and the sale of military equipment, has strained the trust between India and Russia. Although both sides have downplayed these developments publicly, the underlying tensions remain, reflecting a significant point of divergence in their strategic priorities.

The differing approaches to the situation in Afghanistan further underscore the challenges in India-Russia relations. While India has consistently opposed engaging with the Taliban, Russia has adopted a more pragmatic stance, hosting Taliban representatives in Moscow and engaging with them as part of its broader strategy to secure its interests in Central Asia. India is particularly concerned about the potential for increased instability in the region and the Taliban's historical ties with Pakistan. Russia's engagement with the Taliban is seen by India

as a divergence in their approaches to counterterrorism and regional security, highlighting the complexities in aligning their respective strategies in Afghanistan. The Syrian conflict and broader Middle East policy also reflect differences in India-Russia relations. Russia has been a staunch supporter of the Assad regime in Syria, providing military support to maintain Assad's grip on power. In contrast, India has maintained a more neutral stance, advocating for a peaceful resolution through dialogue. While this divergence has not directly impacted the bilateral ties between India and Russia, it underscores the different strategic priorities the two countries hold in the Middle East. Russia's active military involvement in Syria contrasts sharply with India's more cautious and diplomatic approach to conflicts in the region, further illustrating the complexities in their strategic partnership.

The imposition of Western sanctions on Russia following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has significantly complicated economic relations between India and Russia. India has had to carefully navigate its economic and strategic interests to avoid the repercussions of secondary sanctions while maintaining its ties with Russia. These sanctions have notably restricted the scope of economic cooperation between the two nations, particularly in critical sectors such as defense and energy. For example, the delayed implementation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and reduced Indian investments in Russian energy projects are partially attributable to concerns over these sanctions. In addition to economic challenges, there are differing views on the Indo-Pacific strategy. India's active participation in the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and its support for the Indo-Pacific strategy have emerged as points of divergence with Russia. Moscow perceives the Indo-Pacific concept, particularly the Quad, as a U.S.-led initiative aimed at containing China and, by extension, diminishing Russia's influence in Asia. Russia has expressed discomfort with the Indo-Pacific narrative, advocating instead for a more inclusive approach to regional security. This divergence underscores the different geopolitical priorities of India and Russia, with India striving to balance its relations between the West and traditional partners like Russia. Another area of divergence is seen in disagreements over United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms. India has been a strong advocate for reforms in the UNSC, seeking a permanent seat as part of its broader foreign policy objectives. While Russia has expressed support for India's candidacy, there have been moments of ambivalence and divergence in its approach, as it seeks to maintain the existing balance of power within the UNSC. This occasional lack of strong support from Russia has caused friction, as India views its quest for a permanent UNSC seat as a crucial element of its international standing, leading to frustration in New Delhi over Russia's lukewarm stance at times.

C) Economic and Energy Cooperation: A Mixed Bag in India-Russia Relations

Economic and energy cooperation between India and Russia presents a nuanced picture, embodying both potential synergies and significant challenges. On one hand, energy cooperation has been a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, with India being a major importer of Russian oil and gas. Projects like the Sakhalin-I and II have underscored the strategic importance of Russian energy resources for India's growing economy. Moreover, the two nations have explored opportunities in nuclear energy, with Russia playing a pivotal role in developing nuclear power plants in India, such as the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. These collaborations highlight the strategic energy interdependence that has bolstered ties between New Delhi and Moscow. However, despite these successes, the broader economic relationship between India and Russia remains underdeveloped, particularly when compared to India's economic ties with other major powers like the United States, China, and the European Union. Bilateral trade, which stands at a modest level, has been hindered by logistical challenges, including the lack of direct connectivity and limited transport infrastructure. The underutilization of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the slow progress in finalizing the India-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement further illustrate the challenges in expanding economic ties. Additionally, Western sanctions on Russia have complicated the economic relationship, creating uncertainties and limiting the scope for deeper cooperation, particularly in technology and finance.

2. CONCLUSION

The India-Russia relationship stands at a complex crossroads, reflecting both the deep historical ties that have bound the two nations for decades and the evolving geopolitical realities that present new challenges and opportunities. Since India's independence and particularly since the end of the Cold War, the strategic partnership between India and Russia has undergone significant transformations. These changes are driven by shifting global power dynamics, economic interests, and geopolitical upheavals, resulting in both areas of convergence and divergence. One of the most enduring pillars of the India-Russia relationship is defense cooperation. This area of convergence has remained resilient despite the changing global landscape. Russia has been a steadfast supplier of military equipment to India since the 1960s, contributing to India's defense

capabilities through technology transfers, joint production, and collaborative military exercises. The BrahMos missile project, the licensed production of Sukhoi Su-30MKI aircraft, and the acquisition of the S-400 Triumf air defense system are testaments to the strong defense ties between the two countries. These projects not only underscore the strategic trust between India and Russia but also reflect India's commitment to maintaining a diversified defense procurement strategy, which is crucial for its national security.

Energy cooperation is another significant area where India and Russia have found common ground. Russia, as one of the largest producers of oil and natural gas, has played a crucial role in meeting India's growing energy needs. The collaboration on projects such as the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant and Indian investments in Russian oil and gas fields like Sakhalin-1 and Vankor highlight the importance of this partnership. Moreover, there is a growing emphasis on expanding the energy partnership to include renewable energy sources and exploring new areas of cooperation, such as in the Arctic region. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Vladivostok-Chennai maritime route are also expected to enhance energy trade between the two countries, further solidifying their energy partnership. In the multilateral arena, India and Russia have consistently supported each other, advocating for a multipolar world order that reflects the changing global power dynamics. Their cooperation in forums such as the United Nations, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the G20 has been instrumental in promoting shared interests and addressing global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and cybersecurity. The collaboration within the SCO, particularly in the context of regional security and counterterrorism, underscores the shared interests of India and Russia in stabilizing Afghanistan and countering terrorism in Central Asia. However, despite these areas of convergence, there are also significant divergences in the India-Russia relationship. One of the primary areas of divergence is their respective alliances and geopolitical interests. India's growing strategic partnership with the United States, particularly through initiatives such as the Quad and the Indo-Pacific strategy, has raised concerns in Moscow. Russia perceives the Quad as a potential threat to its influence in Asia and as a mechanism to contain China's rise, a key strategic partner for Russia. Conversely, Russia's deepening ties with China, especially in the context of their shared opposition to U.S. dominance, have led to concerns in New Delhi. India is wary of the Russia-China axis, particularly given its border disputes and security challenges with China. These differing alliances and strategic interests highlight the complexities in the India-Russia relationship, as both countries navigate a multipolar world order where their traditional partnerships are increasingly intersecting with new geopolitical realities.

Another area of divergence is the differing approaches to regional security issues, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East. India and Russia have historically held different perspectives on regional security matters, which have sometimes led to friction in their bilateral relationship. For instance, while India views Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism, Russia has maintained a pragmatic relationship with Pakistan, driven by its strategic interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Russia's engagement with Pakistan, including military cooperation, has been a source of concern for India, as it complicates India's efforts to isolate Pakistan on the international stage. Similarly, in the Middle East, India's more balanced approach to conflicts such as the Syrian civil war contrasts with Russia's active military involvement in support of the Assad regime. These differences underscore the challenges of aligning their respective strategic interests in complex regional contexts. Economic relations between India and Russia also present a mixed picture. Despite the strong political and defense relationship, economic ties have not reached their full potential. Bilateral trade remains relatively low compared to India's trade with other major powers such as the United States, China, and the European Union. Several factors contribute to this, including logistical challenges, the lack of complementarities between the two economies, and the impact of Western sanctions on Russia. The imposition of these sanctions following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has further complicated economic relations, limiting the scope of cooperation in key sectors such as defense and energy. India's efforts to navigate its economic and strategic interests while avoiding repercussions from secondary sanctions have added to the complexity of the economic relationship. Initiatives like the India-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement and the expansion of the INSTC have been steps in the right direction, but progress has been slow, and economic cooperation remains an area that requires greater focus and innovation.

Looking to the future, the trajectory of India-Russia relations will depend on how both countries manage these convergences and divergences within the framework of a multipolar world order. India's pursuit of strategic autonomy, balanced against its growing partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, will be a critical factor in shaping its relationship with Russia. At the same time, Russia's continued strengthening of ties with China and its approach to regional security issues will influence how the India-Russia partnership evolves. Both countries will need to engage in careful diplomacy to ensure that their relationship remains a cornerstone of their respective foreign policies. The multipolar world order presents both opportunities and challenges for India and Russia. On one

hand, the shift away from a unipolar or bipolar world allows for greater manoeuvrability in international relations, providing both countries with the flexibility to pursue their national interests without being overly constrained by the strategic priorities of other powers. On the other hand, the complexities of navigating a multipolar world, where alliances are fluid and interests are often conflicting, require a nuanced approach to diplomacy and strategic planning. For India, the challenge will be to maintain its strategic autonomy while deepening its partnerships with both traditional allies like Russia and newer strategic partners like the United States and Japan. This will require a delicate balancing act, particularly in the context of the Indo-Pacific, where India's interests in countering China's influence intersect with its longstanding relationship with Russia. For Russia, the challenge will be to manage its relationship with China in a way that does not alienate India, while also navigating the broader geopolitical shifts that are reshaping the global order.

In conclusion, the India-Russia relationship, shaped by decades of cooperation and shared strategic interests, faces new challenges in the evolving global landscape. Both countries have much to gain from continued collaboration, particularly in areas such as defense, energy, and multilateral engagement. However, managing the divergences in their strategic priorities will be crucial to ensuring that their partnership remains strong and resilient in the face of changing global dynamics. As India and Russia move forward, their ability to adapt to the shifting contours of the international order will determine the future trajectory of their relationship, making it imperative for both nations to engage in proactive and forward-looking diplomacy.

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