

# The Transformation of India–Russia Relations After 2014

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**Abstract-** *The India-Russia relations have traditionally been marked by the high level of strategic confidence and prolonged cooperation, especially regarding the field of defence. But during the modern era, the relationship has enhanced itself to be more inclusive in its traditional platform to incorporate expanded economic and trade activities. The paper analyses the development of India-Russia bilateral relations in the post-2014 period and mainly the issues on defence cooperation and trade relations. It states that defence has still stayed as the cornerstone of the relationship, however, trade particularly in the energy sector has become one of the key pillars. The paper also examines the way the two nations have responded to geopolitical changes such as Western sanctions and policy of strategic independence by India when it comes to the partnership. It concludes that, notwithstanding new challenges, the India-Russian relationship is strong and will still be relevant in a multipolar international system (Pant, 2016).*

**Index Terms-** *Bilateral trade, Energy security, India–Russia relations, Military cooperation, Multipolarity, Strategic independence.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indian-Russian relations have traditionally been marked by a strong strategic trust, long-term political cooperation, and strong defence interaction, which makes the partnership one of the longest-lasting in the modern international relations (Pant, 2016). This relationship is based on Cold War alignments, and institutionalised by a series of successive agreements, it has changed its classic military orientation to the wider scope of energy security, economic cooperation, and multilateral coordination (Mitra et al., 2023).

Since 2014, the course of the relations between India and Russia has been conditioned by major geopolitical changes, such as the revival of the great power rivalry, Western sanctions against Russia, and the increased economic interdependence on the global scale (Jaishankar, 2020). India has been

seeking a strategy of strategic independence in this shifting environment, striking a balance between its old-time alliance with Russia and at the same time increased its relationship with the western powers (Pant, 2016). This twofold strategy is indicative of the greater Indian goal of operating in a world that is growing multipolar without undermining national interests (Mitra et al., 2023).

The given paper will explore the development of the India-Russia relationships in the post-2014 era, especially in terms of defence relations and the widening of the range of economic and energy relations. It attempts to answer the key question: to which extent is the India-Russia partnership adjusted to modern geopolitical and economic issues preserving its traditional-strategic underpinnings? Through the discussion of the major changes in defence cooperation, trade relations and geopolitical placement, the paper will contend that despite the dramatic shift the partnership has experienced over time, it still has maintained its resilience and strategic relevance in the face of the ever-changing global order (Kambala, 2024; Kumar, 2025).

## II. THE INTRODUCTION TO COOPERATION AND STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS IN DEFENCE

Russia and India defense relations became the basis of bilateral relations over decades of political confidence and common strategic interests (Pant, 2016). This partnership could be traced back to the times of the Cold War when the Soviet Union became one of the most important strategic partners of India due to its provision of military equipment, technological support, and the diplomatic support (Mitra et al., 2023). With time, this collaboration evolved into an institutionalised and organised system with long-term agreements, combined field exercises, transfers of technologies, and mutual

dependence and reliability strengthened (Nandy, 2020).

However, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, both states continued with their defence relationship, which is an active campaign to retain a strategic useful alliance (Godbole, 2019). Defence cooperation was further institutionalised when the Declaration on Strategic Partnership was signed in 2000 which guaranteed frequent high-level contacts between the two countries (Ministry of External Affairs, 2000). The resilience of relationship through world political changes and coalition shift is emphasized in this continuity (Pant, 2016).

Since the post-2014 era, defence interaction between India and Russia has fine-tuned to altered geopolitical reality, especially because of the strained relationship Russia had with the West and India had developed a new strategy in its foreign policy (Jaishankar, 2020). India has become more focused on strategic independence, trying to diminish reliance on any particular nation and at the same time has strong relations with the traditional allies such as Russia (Pant, 2016). This has led to the transformation of the form of defence cooperation into a buyer-seller approach to be transferred to the co-production, joint development, and shared technologies (Mitra et al., 2023).

Some important defence initiatives have been used to show the extent of this growing cooperation, especially with regard to technology cooperation, and strategic significance (Kumar, 2025). The purchase of the S-400 air defence system proves that India is dedicated to the issue of national security, even at the cost of pressure brought by the Western countries, including sanctions (Pant, 2016). On the same note, the BrahMos missile project is an example of a successful joint venture in which Russian technological skills can be combined with Indian innovation (Kambala, 2024). The AK-203 rifle-manufacturing project is also a representation of the Indian madness to go local and be independent in defence (Mitra et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, the country has become diversified in procurement of defence, which has also enhanced between India and the United States and France by ensuring that the country is pragmatic in its approach to foreign policy (Jaishankar, 2020). Nevertheless,

Russia is an important ally because of the interdependence of the systems that exist today and the level of collaboration between the two countries in the past (Pant, 2016). Hence, the strategic cornerstone of the relations between India and Russia, despite the constant change of the form, is defence cooperation (Nandy, 2020).

### III. ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND TRADE RELATIONS

Although the domain of defence has conventionally played the leading role in IndiaRussia relations, economic and trade cooperation is acquiring more and more significant importance over the last years, especially after 2014 (Kambala, 2024). Bilateral trade was small-scale centuries because of the obstacles of structure, including geographical distance, logistical obstacles and the lack of involvement of the private sphere (Mitra et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the surfacing political resolution and global economic shifts have helped to bring gradual growth in the trade relations (Kumar, 2025).

One of the sensitive shifts to the economic relations was witnessed after the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022 changed the global patterns of trading and energy markets greatly (Jaishankar, 2020). The sanctions imposed on Russia by the West limited its access to the European market, leading to a strategic orientation to the Asian economies, the Indian economy being one of them (Kambala, 2024). Consequently, India has greatly grown its imports of Russian crude oil and enjoys the discounted price and guaranteed energy security (Kumar, 2025).

This change denotes that the two economies are complementary, where Russia plays a significant part as a source of energy resources and India as a consumer (Pant, 2016). The increased energy trade has not only improved bilateral relations, but also helped India to be stable economically as a result of decreasing the cost of energy (Kambala, 2024). Along with oil, nuclear cooperation also enhances economic relations, the examples thereof being the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (Mitra et al., 2023).

The next noteworthy trend in trade relations is another alternative financial mechanism meant to decrease the reliance on Western financial systems (Jaishankar, 2020). The adoption of local currencies in the trade settlements is an indication of a greater endeavor of the two nations to achieve economic sustainability amid geopolitical limitations (Kumar, 2025). These processes have also allowed the trade to go on even in the face of a globally disrupted financial network (Kambala, 2024).

Regardless of these developments, a number of challenges still inhibit the development of bilateral trade, with logistical inefficiencies, regulatory limitations, and low connectivity being among them (Mitra et al., 2023). The attempts to eliminate these problems include the International North-South Transport Corridor which focuses on transport routes and the cost of trade (Pant, 2016). However, the rise of trade is a major move in the relation between India and Russia, as it is no longer limited to the partnering relations in the field of defence (Kumar, 2025).

#### IV. THE FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND CHANGING GEOPOLITICS.

The history of development of the IndiaRussia relations should be considered in the context of the macro-environment of the geopolitical shifts in the world, in particular, the shift towards the multipolar system (Jaishankar, 2020). India has chosen a multi-alignment policy in this environment in which it can be involved into several world powers and still retain its strategic independence (Pant, 2016). Such a strategy will allow India to maintain relations with the Western nations and at the same time reserve its national interests without conflicts (Mitra et al., 2023).

The reaction of India toward the Russia and Ukraine conflict can also be described in terms of such diplomatic balancing move since the country did not personally condemn Russia and instead promoted dialogue and peaceful resolution (Ministry of External Affairs, 2022). This stand enabled India to retain its strategic relationship with Russia and still operate with western countries (Jaishankar, 2020). A practical attitude like that indicates a wider foreign

policy goal and maintain flexibility in foreign policy (Pant, 2016).

Simultaneously, this increases prospects of strategic relations between Russia and China, something that poses new challenges to India especially in regional security (Nandy, 2020). Due to the growing economic and political relationship between Russia and China, India should tread this shifting three-way dynamic (Mitra et al., 2023). In spite of these issues, India still remains focused on the ties with Russia as it is of strategic and economic value to the country (Pant, 2016).

It is also noticeable that India and Russia are interested in the multipolar world order in which power is not concentrated in one dominant blocks but is distributed among other actors (Jaishankar, 2020). The given vision is a very powerful premise on which cooperation in multilateral forums like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can be established (Mitra et al., 2023). These areas enable the two nations to coordinate their national stand on global governance, economic growth, and security in the region (Kambala, 2024).

To sum up, bilateral relations in the modern-day India Russia bilateral relations are characterized by both the continuum and transformation (Pant, 2016). The pillar of co-operation in defence has remained the backbone of the relationship as the trade and the economic interaction has become the other pillar of the relationship (Kumar, 2025). The alliance has an excellent response to the changing global orientation alongside geopolitical challenges, which has resulted in resiliency and flexibility (Jaishankar, 2020). The relations in the international system are shifting to the multipolar model, and the relations between India and Russia will continue being relevant and adapt to the new strategic and economical realities (Mitra et al., 2023).

#### V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, India-Russia relations, 2014-2020 represent a dynamic balancing between continuity and change within the bigger framework of the changing international power balance (Pant, 2016). Defence cooperation remains the backbone of the

partnership, which decades of institutional trust, technological cooperation, and alignment of strategy have supported (Mitra et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the increasing role of the economic activity, especially in the energy sector, underscores a significant diversification of the relationship as a response to the global upheavals (the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, 2025; Zakharov, 2024).

The practice of strategic independence has helped India to carefully balance its long-standing relationship with Russia and its growing interaction with the Western powers (Jaishankar, 2020). This strategy highlights a practical and adaptable foreign policy which is aimed at maximising national interest in an increasingly multipolar international system (Pant, 2016). There are however challenges faced by the partnership. The obstacle to trade in the form of the structures, the intensifying Russia-China relations, and the shifting geopolitical tensions can be considered possible barriers to the future direction of bilateral relations (Nandy, 2020; Mitra et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, despite these obstacles, the India-Russia alliance shows significant resilience and flexibility. In the future, its viability will be based on how both nations can strengthen their economic integration, strengthen their technological integration, and overcome the problematic geopolitical arrangements (Kambala, 2024). With the global order shifting to multipolarity, relations between India and Russia will continue to play an important role in any regional and global strategic processes, as long as it continues to adapt to the emerging circumstances (Kumar, 2025).

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