

INDO – RUSSIAN BILATERAL EQUATION INCLUDING MILITARY

POST SOVIET UNION PERIOD

Indo – Russian relations have always been a cornerstone in our foreign policy. We have had a multidimensional relationship with the Soviet Union which is out of the compatibility of our geopolitical and security interests. The past fifteen years, however, have seen many ups and downs.

The period 1991 to 1993 saw a total disarray in our relations till President Boris Yeltsin visited India in January 1993. Russia itself was going through the pangs of totally new identity and it was not clear the place India would find in the new scheme of things. On the other hand it took some time on India's part to adjust its relations with Russia after the breakup of Soviet Union. Russia perhaps then envisaged that it ought not to have special relations with any country.

Indo- Russian relations faced set back in 1992 when Russia reneged on the cryogenic engine deal with India under US pressure. The Rouble-Rupee parity created problems. India felt letdown on the issue of spare parts for defence equipment till Defence Minister Sharad Pawar's visited Russia in September 1992. Immense dislocation of Russia's military industrial complex was the cause. This period was a most difficult one in Indo Russian relations.

The period after president Yeltsin's visit to India brought a ray of hope in our relations. The treaty of friendship and cooperation provided substance and brought our relationship back on the rails. The rise in religious extremism, separatism and aggressive nationalism marked the end of cold war.

Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao's visit to Moscow in June 1994 brought about the Moscow declaration on the "Protection of Interests of Pluralist States" which became the corner stone - Russian relations and inter- alias reiterated support for their respective territorial integrity. It was the start of a new strategic partnership and of particular importance was mutually shared interests in Central Asian region. Developments in Afghanistan and Chechen region in Russia required that both nation strive to encourage secularism in Central Asian Region. Russian military presence in Tajikistan border as part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was a step to ensure peace and stability. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan was viewed with apprehension by both countries.

Rise of international terrorism has to be viewed with utmost seriousness. The war in Kargil in 1999 was a manifestation of religious extremism as is the continuing conflict in Chechnya. India supported the cause of the Northern Alliance along with Russia to prevent extension of Taliban influence into the neighboring countries of Central Asia. These needs fostered Indo-Russian ties to new heights "The Strategic Partnership between India and Russia" as articulated by the then Defence Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev is based on shared national interests and is aimed at promoting stability in South Asia and the Pacific. Indo-Russian relations have now reached a new height in matter of eight years.

After 9/11, the presence of USA and coalition forces in Central Asian region changed the dynamics of this region completely. There is a need for India and Russia to work in concert to come to better understanding with the US. The fight against terrorism kept Indo-Russian relations in tact. The exchange of high level visits further deepened and cemented our relationship. Both countries have supported each other on important issues. Russia's support on Kashmir is unequivocal and India backs Russia to the steps taken by it to protect its territorial integrity and constitutional order. Both countries show their total commitment to fight religious extremism and terrorism.

Indo-Russian defence cooperation has seen favorable impact. The Sukhoi and Gorshkov deal are indicative of close trust and cooperation beyond the "seller-buyer" arrangement. It has moved to the plane of mutual design research and production. On nuclear issue too Russia showed considerable understanding in that a month after Pokhran – 2 blast, Russia concluded agreement for installation of 1000MW nuclear reactors in South India, during the visit of Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Mr. Yovgenov.

US military intervention in Iraq without the sanction of the UN has complicated the scenario . Russia no longer felt that the American bases in Central Asian Republic were only for the duration of anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. Russia perceives these development as directed against it. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has assumed particular significance and during its summit meeting in Astana Kazakh capital in July 2005, the members have asked USA to announce time frame for its withdrawal of military bases from this region. The collective security treaty organization is quasi - military alliance of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus and Armenia. This brings new focus on indo Russian relations.

India attended this meeting of the SCO with an observer status and will continue to do so as such in future.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov espouses that multilateral approaches are the best solution to global problems and regional conflicts. It advocates trilateral cooperation between Russia-India-China. The Vladivostok initiative of May 2005 invited India to witness joint military exercises.

On the economic front however there has not been any significant movement. The potential could be high but direct access is one drawback. North-south corridor however improves prospects. After 2003 India Russian relations have entered a new path.

NEW SYNERGY IN MUTUAL COOPERATION

There is considerable scope for joint cooperation in Central Asian Region (CAR) particularly in industrial regime. India's experience of Soviet type infrastructure and joint technical and managerial experience could lend to full exploitation of resources in terms of modernization and up-gradation.

The energy wealth of (CAR) is of significance. In this sector and the already existing defence oriented industries of Soviet era the teaming of India and Russia can contribute to the economic development of CAR. India is keen to play bigger role in Russia's energy strategy. It has already invested US\$ 1.7 billion in Sakhalin – 1 project and is likely to invest further in Shakhalin - 3 projects. India would be particularly interested in joint exploration in new areas in Eastern Siberia. It could join hands in pipeline network. The Indian Government can catalyze cooperation between Russian companies and India's private sector such as Reliance Industries. Such involvement will contribute to India's energy security.

Russians on July 19, 2005 sought exception for India in the global nuclear non-proliferation regime in view of its "impeccable and unblemished" record and welcomed its engagement with the US in the field of civilian nuclear energy. The Chief of Russian Federation Atomic Energy Agency Alexander Rumyantsev said "there is need for making an exception for India in the global nuclear non-proliferation" regime including the rules of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)".

He hailed the Indo-US engagement in the field of civilian nuclear technology and termed it as a “positive development”. He said “however, our hands are tied due to NSG regulations. NSG in which the US play a dominant role, should take into account India’s growing energy needs and make exception for New Delhi”. Rumyantsev said. This matter was high on the agenda during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s talk with Russian President Vladimir Putin in May 2005. President Putin, it is understood to have assured Indian leaders that he would take up the matter with US President Bush and other leaders of the NSG, personally.

During Mr. Natwar Singh’s visit to Moscow in 28 Oct. 2005 to attend Indo Russian Inter – government Commission (IRIGC) and SCO meetings the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Sergei Lavrov indicated that exception should be made in terms of norms for India by NSG for supply of Nuclear fuel and indicated Russia’s support in this matter as well as expansion of cooperation between the two countries in the field of civilian nuclear energy. Later President Putin himself pledged to help lift curbs on nuclear fuel supply to India.

They also agreed that the vexed Iran nuclear issue should be resolved through negotiations with the IAEA and the situation should not be allowed to escalate to a point of no dialogue.

Direct agreements between Indian states of Gujarat and Karnataka and Mumbai with Astrakhan and Samara and St. Petersburg respectively is a good beginning.

North South Corridor will contribute considerably to increase trade with Russia and the CAR. Another area where our cooperation can be expanded is interaction between banking and financial institutions, that has picked up last year resulting in several MOU’s signed by leading Russian and Indian Commercial bank. The Russian and Indian sides welcomed an inter - bank agreement on the opening a credit line amounting to 25 million dollars by the Exim Bank of India in favour of Vneshtorgbank with likely amount for Vneshecononbank later on standard commercial terms.

Russian authorities should evolve its visa policy to permit tourist and businessmen an easy access to visit Russia and to invest. Its demographic fears can be allayed by adopting policies practiced by the United Arab Emirates where migrant workers never get UAE citizenship. This way host country’s needs are met and to and fro exchanges benefit to all concerned. India is developing fast and is ready to invest

in Russia. When economics becomes big enough, it should engender strategic understanding, cooperation and affinity.

These steps and other joint venture in areas of development of inland waterways and road construction could further strengthen our relationship.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COLLABORATION

There are numerous Scientific and Technological collaborations and interactions that are in progress. Some noteworthy ones are listed below:-

- a) Russian- Indian Centre for Advanced Computing Research (RICCR) was founded in 2000, where from India the International Institute of Information Technology is the major partner. In January 2004 the President of RICCR set up an Institute in Moscow promoted by Institute of Computer Aided Design (ICAD) of Russian Academy of Science and Indian Pune based Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC). The institution has the largest installation outside India of PARAM super computer developed by CDAC. Every year ten Russian students will get scholarship in India and 40 students from India will obtain doctorates in Moscow.
- b) An agreement was concluded recently during Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal's visit to Moscow to set up Indian Technology Center in Moscow under The Technological Partnership Accord signed during President Vladimir Putin's visit to Delhi in 2002. India has the largest Integrated Long Term Programmes (ILTP). Scientific and technological corporation involves thousands of scientists of the best labs and research institutes from both countries. These initiatives survived the collapse of USSR. Several world class cutting-edge technology in India through ILTP including opening The Power Metallurgy Center in Hyderabad are in operation.
- c) The importance of Joint efforts in space exploration was reiterated at the last summit. Two central agreements on space cooperation namely in the field of exploration and use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes and on Long Term Cooperation in the Field of Joint Development Operation and

Utilization of Russian Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) were signed, which gives support to mutually beneficial bilateral relations.

- d) Indian Industry has already identified areas of mutual interest such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, hydro carbons, energy and power and production of a medium size passenger-cum-cargo aircraft.
- e) An MOU on Intellectual Propriety Rights signed between India and Russia has removed a major stumbling block in Scientific and Technological collaboration.
- f) President Abdul Kalam's visit to Russia this year marked a high point in Indo-Russian high-tech collaboration. President Kalam has very old ties with Researchers and technical staff of Russian Academies. He was paid glowing tributes by Rector of Moscow University Academician Sadovnitchy.

MILITARY TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The military ties between India and Russia have a very long history full of mutual understanding and based on the concept of strategic partnership. Of course market situation forces these to change from time to time taking into consideration the most perspective trends in the development of Indo-Russian military and technology cooperation. There is increasing awareness on both sides on willingness to incorporate latest achievements of other countries such as France and Israel etc. and dovetail and integrate these jointly with foreign firms. Su-30MK1 is an example of such cooperation, wherein Sukhoi Designing office worked closely with France's SNECMA and Russia's NPO Saturn over working on Sa M 146 engines. Integration of our armament industries in the military technical cooperation and bringing diverse international skills together to enhance capabilities of the product will reduce the costs by way of sharing the investments in R&D.

Both countries are actively engaged in enhancing and developing inherent capabilities and potential of Su 30 MK1, Multirole Combat Aircraft (MRCA). Indian research and development agencies like Electronic R & D Establishment (LRDE) and Defence Avionics Research Establishment (DARE) have joined hands with Rosoboron Export and V.V. Tikhomirov Scientific Research Institute of Instrument Building (Tikhomirov NIIP) along with India-Russia Venture BraMos Aerospace. It is expected that by 2010 the first totally-built Su30 Mk1 will roll out from India's Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) production facility at NASHIK. It will be equipped with new active phased-array airborne radar called the IRBIS, being jointly produced at a cost of US Dollars 160 million. By 2007 the Su30 MK1 would be capable to carry one 2.5 tonnes BraMos missile along with other deadly ordnance. With further strengthening of aircraft wings the MRCA it should be able to carry up to three BraMos missiles.

BrahMos is a shining example of a joint venture in defence Technology. The agreement to design, develop, produce and market a multi-role supersonic cruise missile was signed in 1998 between Russian Federal State unitary Enterprise (NPCM) and India's state owned "Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The system has been accepted by Indian and Russian armed Forces

Ramjet technology from Yakhont and improved onboard guidance and navigation from Indian missile programmed, basically sees the synergy from the two sides. The production of the cruise missile does not violate obligations under MTCR. The display of this missile in numerous DEFEXPO's around the world has evinced keen interest. It is expected that CHILE may be its first customer. India's Defence Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee recently visited Chile (November2005) and had this item on his agenda.

The modernization of Admiral Gorshkov renamed the Vikramaditya is another example of successful international collaboration.

Of interest could be development of T-72 M1M main battle tank, the revamped version T-72 with the Msta – 5 self propelled gun and enhancement of range and better accuracy of smirch multiple-launch rocket systems are the features of this up gradation. This project has competition from Ukraine where similar up gradation is also possible.

Current Indo Russian dialogue on Defence Technical collaborations / purchase of equipment include co-production of weapon systems and platforms on investment sharing basis like fifth generation fighter aircraft and advanced Amur class submarine as discussed between visiting Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov and the Indian counterpart Mr. Pranab Mukharjee during their meeting at Delhi on 16th October 2005. Earlier the Russian Navy Commander Vladimir Kuriyedov in July 2005 at St. Petersburg had indicated the advantages of this fourth stealth type AMUR with most modern weaponry. Admiral Verfi shipyard at St.Petersburg is spear heading this project.

The problems that the Indian Armed Forces face vis-à-vis speedy supply of spare parts and maintenance and repair support from Russia are being progressively addressed. Suitable clauses are being built into the new contracts. These envisage creation of Military technical maintenance centers in India . Contracts for GORSHKOV, SU 30 MK1, BrahMos and T90 s tanks have these provisions incorporated. These facilities may also be extended to other foreign countries holding comparable Russian equipment.

The creation of Rosoboron Service (India) Ltd. is a first ever unique joint venture.consequent to a decree by the Russian President. It involves eight Russian defence manufacturers/vendors who have joined hands with an Indian company in private sector. This company will operate a bonded warehouse to stock Russian defence equipment. This venture is manned by skilled ex-servicemen of Indian Armed Forces. The mandated activities of the company, registered in India, range from repairs and maintenance of systems to spare parts supply and training of personnel. Initially to meet needs of the Indian Navy this company will later on take on the service/maintenance of Russian –supplied assets of the Indian Air Force. This arrangement was insisted upon by Indian Navy during negotiations for GORSHKOV deal. This is a step in the right direction but more needs to be done in this direction both in letter and spirit.

There are estimates that hundred Russian defence production facilities are kept in operation by Indian defence contracts ! In the next five years India is likely to purchase arms worth 14 billion US Dollars. A major portion of this may come from Russia !

Indo Russian military exercises in October 2005 has been a step in consolidation of relationship. The naval exercises in the Eastern seaboard off Vishakahptnam had the front line ships of both countries take part in maneuvers and synchronized missile and antisubmarine weapon's firing. The Russian ships were under the command of Rear Admiral Sergey Viktovich of the Pacific Fleet. Similarly para-drop exercises of men and armaments in POKHARAN by Indian Air Force and Indian Army were witnessed closely by the Russian Defence Minister. A bit too close in one instance ! These exercises promote mutual operational compatibility.

CONCLUSION

Indo- Russian bilateral relations assume a new significance in the emerging multilateral structures. We have supported each other through thick and thin. The significance has already been highlighted in our defence cooperation and Russia's support to India's nuclear programme and energy requirements. There is continuing need to further broad base this relationship to add vibrancy. Our core interests coincide and new emerging areas would further cement our synergy. Our Ambassador to Russia said a few days back tht Indo-Russian relationships are unparalleled.

