RUSSIA’S SECURITY INTERESTS IN INDIA

Introduction

The dissolution of Soviet Union brought about a fundamental transformation in the geo-political structure of the world and was significantly felt in South Asia. The bi-polar world turned into uni-polar one. Russia, the most prominent among the successor states of the Soviet Union, in spite of inheriting the formidable military powers of its predecessors, found itself suddenly reduced to a regional power. The systemic transition launched after the break up brought about economic chaos and political uncertainty. Its security environment apparently appeared friendly and peaceful as the ideological divide was no longer there. However, new threats and challenges emerged, which were different in nature than those that prevailed in the Cold War period.

The driving force behind Indo-Russian relations is the commonality of geo-political and economic interests of both the countries in the new historical conditions. Russia has given more importance to India in its policy towards South Asia. This was due to common challenges they faced to their unity and territorial integrity. These challenges were terrorism, arms and drug trafficking, organized crime, religious extremism and separatism, etc. And also both the countries have common perception on the emergence of source of threat to their security. These challenges have assumed a new dimension, both in their sweep and intensity after the terrorist attack on America on September 11. The two countries have always taken common stand on important issues of regional and international importance. This chapter makes an attempt to analyse Indo-Russian cooperation at the regional
level to eliminate these challenges and what kinds of problems Russia and India are facing in Chechnya and Kashmir respectively. In addition, this chapter also discusses the bilateral relationship between two countries.

**Regional Context of Russian-Indian Relations**

In Russia-India relations it is primarily the compatibility of their national and strategic interests that have proved the most influential in determining the nature and direction of Indo-Russian relations. The territorial integrity itself was at stake for these two states exemplified by the Kashmir and Chechnya conflicts. With an important part of the problem perceived to be rooted in their neighborhood and the problem at their domestic level also made them to be complementary.

**Central Asia**

The Central Asia is an intervening variable and significant area of cooperation between India and Russia. They considered security and stability in Central Asia as of vital interest for them. Russia and India strongly condemned terrorist activities on the territory of the Central Asian States, which were supported from outside and aimed at challenging the secular and democratic process initiated by them. Being contiguous to the region, Russian Interests of security and stability are deep and substantial. Central Asia came to occupy a significant place in Russia's strategic considerations. The Russian military doctrine of 1993 highlighted the danger that arose from regional and local conflicts. These doctrine said lay in the southern direction. The primary Russian concern has been to ensure the security of its Southern periphery and to safeguard its territorial
integrity. However, these security concerns are centrally linked with the Central Asian States (Nirmala Joshi, 1999).

After the emergence of the Central Asian States as independent entities, a civil war broke out in Tajikistan leading to tension over the Tajik-Afghan border. Thousands of Tajiks fled the country and took refuge in Afghanistan. Subsequently, the Tajik opposition groups were continuing their struggle from Afghanistan. The turmoil in Afghanistan complicated the Tajik problem and Russia had to take the responsibility of protecting the Tajik-Afghanistan border. Tajikistan civil war is the best example of how internal matters of Central Asia affected the Russian security concerns. Russia has blamed the nationalist and the Islamists, notably the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), for the violent turn of some of these demonstrations (Shireen T. Hunter, 2004). The Tajikistan Opposition which was against President Emamuli Rakhmanov and his policies was getting support from Afghanistan. The Tajik Afghan border which is 1500 km long has always been a porous one. After the Taliban captured power in Kabul in 1996 the Tajik opposition received the full support of the Taliban. In order to thwart the danger posed by these extremists President Rakhmanov sought the help of Russia under the Collective Security Treaty.

Another manifestation of its security concern was the perceived fear in Russia about the spread of divisive forces. Whatever the religious extremism or any other form of extremism spreading into Central Asia, it is certainly going to have a spillover effect on Russia. It is estimated that nearly 8 per cent of the Russian population comprises if not more. In the eventuality of religious extremism spreading to Central Asia, these autonomous republics of Russia would
be adversely affected. Such a development will certainly once again socially and politically destabilise Russia (Nirmala Joshi, 1995). Terrorism and religious extremism are affected all the Central Asian Republics and they believed that these threats are emerging from Afghanistan. The victory of the Taliban was facilitated the coordination among different Islamic groups. Therefore, the threat of radical Islam became a common regional concern. In fact, at the summit meeting of CIS the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Kyrgyzstan President, Askar Akayev said that Islamic fundamentalism became a destabilizing factor in the region (Alexi Malashenko, 2001).

The threat of 'religious extremism' received the serious attention of then Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev. Not only did he express a historically rooted fear of Islamic encirclement, he also developed a more ideological and cultural view of the Islamic factor, advocated a thorough and sustained containment policy. In his view, Moscow had to be ready to play its part in the containment of this threat on behalf of the civilized world (Lena Jonson, 2004). In the 1994 report by the Foreign Intelligence Service, 'Islamic extremism' was branded as a serious threat emanating from Central Asia and Afghanistan. The development of fundamentalist and Islamist movement in Russia and the Central Asian region during the following years led Russia to take more seriously the Islamic threat. Russia saw its role in Central Asia as one of underwriting the political stability of the Central Asian Republics and protecting their borders against internal and external threats. In Russian perception, it was imperative to insulate Central Asia from the divisive tendencies emanating from Afghanistan. Russia believed that the Central Asia could check the infiltration of divisive forces, particularly Islamic
fundamentalism from the Southern border of Central Asia and there by the stability of Russian heartland ensured. Consequently, the borders of the CIS states became the strategic borders of Russia.

Russian interest in Central Asia was further strengthened by the presence of large number of Russian ethnic people in the region. It was estimated that over 25 million Russians were spread over in the new states of which nearly 10 million Russians and Russian-speaking people in Central Asia. For centuries large numbers of Russians have settled in all republic of Central Asia. The condition of ethnic Russians in the Central Asian Republics had become complicated after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They were marginalized in Central Asia due to their lack of political participation, introduction of language laws and the hostile conditions due to rise of religious extremism. Due to all these reasons a large number of Russians migrated to Russia, and the migration from Tajikistan was most pronounced because of the conflict situation there. Hence, a greater emphasis is being placed on the need to protect the Russian speaking community. The Military Doctrine enunciated in 1993 clearly stated that “any suppression of rights, freedom and lawful interest of Russians and Russian speaking people could lead to tension (Izvestia, Basic Provisions of Military Doctrine, Current Digest of Post Soviet Press, November 18, 1993). Due to these reasons Russia wanted to build a belt of stability, good neighbourliness and peace around its entire periphery, including Central Asia.

Another source of threat that could have a negative impact on the region was the growth in drug trafficking through Central Asia. It is estimated that nearly 65 percent of the opium that reaches the west passes through the Central Asian
route. It generates funds and has dangerous offshoots in the form of narco-terrorism and illicit trade in small weapons. This trade is helping the terrorist groups to sustain their activities. Apart from these threats, Central Asia constitutes an area where Russia can interact economically. Russia can help these countries in providing technical expertise and support to central Asia to explore its oil and energy sources. The activities of Russian oil and gas companies in Central Asia is growing specifically in Kazakhstan and struggle to control of oil export is also increasing there. Control over its energy resources and their means of transportation provides tremendous strategic and economic leverage over the region. In recent times the significance of Central Asia has acquired a new dimension. The eastward enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the differences between Russia and the West. Whether this is the "great game" or not is a debatable point, but the fact is that Central Asia has acquired significance in Western strategy as well.

All the Central Asian states have a shared perception of the challenges posed by religious extremism to their societies. In a security summit on 20 August 2000, the leaders of four Central Asian states barring Turkmenistan met in Kyrgyzstan to express serious concern over terrorism, extremism and armed aggressions was assumed as a permanent and chronic character, thus undermining security of and stability in Central Asia. According to President Karimov, those countries that do not share a border with Afghanistan and thus think that they are not in danger are doing a big mistake. “The aggression today is taking the form of a creeping expansion, and bandit formations can pop up anywhere, especially as the matter
involves drug corridors that actually ran through the whole of Central Asia” (Summary of World Broadcast (SWB), 29 Sept. 2000).

Therefore, Russia’s major objectives are to transform the Central Asian states into politically and economically viable states with friendly politics towards Russia. It wanted to strengthen its role there within the inter-governmental political and economic system. Russia also wanted to counter the threat of religious extremism while encouraging the prevention of drug trafficking and arms smuggling. In this context, Russia and Central Asian states have developed different mechanism to fight terrorism and religious extremism. The security structures in Central Asia were firstly the Collective Security Treaty of 1992 and make it an efficient instrument for protection and security. The Collective Security of 1992 was converted into Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is another regional organization. SCO came into existence as the Shanghai five, consisting of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on 26 April 1996. Its main objective was to ensure security and developing economy. But from 1998 the focus of the Forum’s activities has shifted to fighting “religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism”. The SCO had set up an anti-terrorist centre and rapid deployment force in Bishkek to deal with the menace of international terrorism. In May 1998 a coalition of Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan was created as a joint effort to fight religious extremism.

India does not share any direct boundary with any of these states; nevertheless the geographical proximity of the region makes it to be considered as part of India’s extended neighbourhood. The Central Asian region is of strategic, economic and
political importance to India. Over the centuries, India and the Central Asian States have had intensive interactions, both commercial and people to people, and shared many common socio-cultural values and perception. It is of significance that in the contemporary context, India and these republics share similar views on dangers of religious fundamentalism, extremism, extremism and terrorism (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Annual Report, 1997-98).

Developments in the region have a direct bearing on India’s national interest and security. India intended to continue and strengthen its cooperation with these countries. Indian interests are in seeing that the Central Asian states remain secular and the democratization process not disrupted by forces of religious orientation. This sharing of common values and perceptions forms a strong basis for enhancing bilateral cooperation in diverse fields such as culture, science and technology, human resources development, transfer of technology, trade and economy. In this context, Central Asia becomes very important due to its abundant raw materials and vast untapped sources of energy. Central Asia could also provide market for Indian defence industry and consumer goods. There is a realization among the countries of the Central Asian region that there is a considerable convergence of our regional interests and that Indian experience is useful in their development while preserving their secular and multi-ethnic character.

India has multi-faceted relations with all Central Asian states. India is a member of the Conference on International and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). CICA is a Kazakhstan initiative and 16 countries, including India are part of the process (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Annual Report, 2001-2002). India and Kazakhstan have worked in close coordination in all CICA
meetings of the Special Working Group (SWG) set up of drafting documents.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to Kazakhstan in June 2002 was very important. During the visit both countries identified Information Technology, Pharmaceuticals, Defense and Hydrocarbons as potential areas of cooperation. The following Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were signed during the visit: (a) Agreement to setting up of a Joint Working group for combating international terrorism and other crimes. (b) MoU on Military-Technical Cooperation. (c) Agreement for Cooperation in the field of tourism (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Annual Report, 2001-2002).

India also greatly valued its ties with Uzbekistan and regular political exchanges have helped in achieving a high degree of political understanding.

But the concern is about the menace of terrorism that has been threatening the civil society and progress in both India and Central Asia. Therefore, it is in the Indian interest to see that the secular regimes in these predominantly Muslim states are not dislodged by forces of religious extremism. At the same time there is no difference between Russia and India on the importance of Central Asian region. India can be a reliable partner of Russia in Central Asia to fight these forces. Russia has been favouring India’s admission to the SCO for close cooperation on regional security. This would in fact help India to meet its commercial and trade interests in the region.

Given the high degree of compatibility of their vital interests Russia and India was able to re-establish a new basis for their relationship. The 1993 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation laid the foundation. The Moscow Declaration of 1994 drew attention not only to the nature of new challenges faced by the two countries,
but also importantly focused attention on the common source from where this threat emanated. In this Declaration both sides reiterated their deep interests in promoting peace and stability in the area between Russia and India. Particular concern was expressed over the continuing sanguinary conflicts in Afghanistan and its negative impact on the adjacent states and called for speedy political settlement. It also facilitated the exchange of information and cooperation in areas such as narcotic trafficking, smuggling in small weapons and cross-border terrorism.

India and Russia are two powerful poles at the opposite ends of the vast Central Asian region, and the two sides expressed their concern for the growth of the forces of religious extremism in their neighbourhood and the objective of these forces. In the Joint Statement issued at the end of summit-level talks the two leaders in Moscow in November 2001, both sides expressed deep concern over the threat to the security and stability in Central Asia posed by escalating international terrorism and religious extremism. Both sides agreed that regional cooperation can play an important role in the stabilization of the situation in the Central Asian region (Indo-Russian Joint statement, www.pib.nic/archive/ireleng/lyr2001/nov2001.html). They called upon the Central Asian states to contain and eliminate these forces and return to the path of peace and moderation.

This shows that how India and Russia are facing similar challenges to their national integrity originating from the same source, therefore the stability of Central Asia assumed vital importance for both countries. Located in close geographical proximity to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the potential to destabilize Central Asia is indeed real. Thus from the perspective of Indian and Russian
Security interests, it is crucial that the Central Asian states are stable and maintain their secular identity.

**Western countries influence in the Central Asia**

Russia’s concerns in the region got aggravated as mentioned earlier due to the Western countries intervention in Central Asia and their intention to expand NATO. Russia realized that its Southern periphery was the focus of Western powers strategic thinking. Moreover what added to the growing Russia’s distance with the West on Central Asia was the competition to control the energy and other natural resources (Rabinstein Z. Alvin, 1997).

But the attack on the world trade centre in America in 2001 changed situation in the region. Central Asia became the focus of world attention. The Central Asian States welcomed the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) comprising of troops drawn largely from the NATO against the Taliban and destroy the Al-Quida network in Afghanistan and to capture Osama Bin laden. Russia also extended full support to the international coalition forces and most importantly President Putin allowed the Central Asian States to extend support and cooperation to international forces (Nirmala Joshi, 2002). All the Central Asian States have shown willingness to extend all possible help including military and base facilities. The elimination of the Taliban regime has led the enhancement of U.S and other countries military presence in the Central Asian states. The united Sates acquired the use of the Khanabad airbase in Uzbekistan, the Manas base near Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. During the early part of the campaign against Taliban, the issue of the length of the U.S. military presence was left ambiguous. Russia’s
political and military establishment opposed this presence and saw it as undermining CIS collective security structure.

Russia’s was concerned about the America’s long stay in Central Asia and near to its border. Apart from America’s immediate objective of defeating the Taliban and combating terrorism, Russia is concerned about the America’s aims to control oil and energy resources and its intention to expand the NATO. In November 2002 NATO summit held in Prague, Seven new countries, including three Baltic States were invited to join the Atlantic alliance. It was for this reason that both President Putin and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, while emphasizing that the Central Asian states are sovereign sates and can decide their own policies, except that the U.S. military presence will be limited duration. This dual approach is reflected in an interview of Igor Ivanov with Izvestia in July 2002 in which he said: “American presence in Central Asia would be justifiable if it were in accordance with the time frame defined by the UN Security Council for Peacemaking operations in Afghanistan. The Afghan government expects 18 months to be enough to form its own security and military forces. As for bilateral relations, the Central Asian countries will regulate these matters based on their own interests.” On other occasions, Ivanov said that Russia is not indifferent to how long the U.S. stays and that it will ask the United States for maximum transparency in their military activities in the region and time limitations for their presence. These Shows that Russia don’t want outside country presence in Central Asia at the cost of its interests. Russia considers The Central Asian Region as its extended neighbourhood.
Evolution of Russian-Indian Relations

As mentioned Russian-Indian interests had a great deal of commonality on strategic issues. Developments in Afghanistan was also one such area. The Mujahideen, who were not part of this agreement Geneva Accord of 1988, continued their revolt against Najibullah’s Government. The Najibullah government survived after the Soviet withdrawal largely by holding on to a reduced territory. While demanding an end to outside support for the resistances, the Soviets insisted their right to support the Kabul regime and continued to provide extensive military aid. Najibullah tried to draw Mujahideen military leader into Afghanistan armed forces but the Mujahideen were reluctant to cooperate. Finally on 14 April 1992, Najibullah was forced to resign. The forces fighting against the establishment formed a united front under the Barhanuddin Rabbani’s Liberation Front (NLF). This government also failed to bring peace to the strife torn country. Afghanistan was in a state of anarchy, with complete breakdown of law and order.

In the midst of chaos, the Taliban movement emerged in 1994 in Kandahar formed by a number of Pashtun mullahs who were veterans of the war against the Soviets and wished to see an end to the civil war. The movement became known as the Taliban, standing for students, as the bulk of the membership came from Afghanistan and from the North-West Province of Pakistan especially those born in refugee camps and educated at Madarassa. Taliban promoted an orthodox Islam and superstitious tribal beliefs. It captured Kabul in September 1996, since then it tried to have control over the entire country. The ranks of the Taliban had been strengthened by foreign fighter’s largely coming form the Arab states, Chechnya,
and Pakistan, many of who were also parts of Al-Quida (Frank A. Clements, 2003). In 1996, Osama bin Laden came to Afghanistan following his expulsion from the Sudan. He organized training camps for terrorists and attracting recruits from within the Islamic world to his Al-Quida organization.

The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan has complicated Russian and Indian interests in the region. India and Russia expressed deep concern over the situation prevailing in Afghanistan. They noted that the Taliban controlled areas had become the breeding ground for religious extremism and international terrorism, posing a serious threat to regional and international security (Joint Statement for the Press Signed by Russian President and Indian Prime Minister, on 3rd October 2000, http://www.india.mid.ru/india/summits/04d02htm.) Russia was apprehensive of an unstable Afghanistan, since it could destabilize the Central Asian region as a whole. Russian Foreign Ministry said that the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan adds a significant international dimension to the situation in south-central Asia. Ravaged for many years by civil war, this country has become the primary international launching ground for the expansion of terrorism and religious extremism. This posed a serious threat to Russia's security and to that of allies in the region, and also many states (Igor S. Ivanov, 2002). It also worried about the Taliban's support to rebels in Chechnya. Russia believed that there was a connection between terrorist group operating in Chechnya, Central Asia and Afghanistan. In fact Taliban was the only regime that recognized the independence of Chechnya.

India believed that the Kashmir insurgents had strong nexus with Afghanistan. From India's point of view, instability in Afghanistan has always had
immense implication for its security. India's objective was to expand its relations with Afghanistan and reduce the Pakistan's influence. India's then Defence Minister George Fernandes declared, "Afghanistan is the sphere where the Russia and Indian approaches are identical (Martin Malek, 2000). India maintained active contact with major Afghan groups and supported humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people both bilaterally, and through the U.N. during the Taliban rule. India supported the role of the U.N. in restoring the peace and normalcy in Afghanistan (Government of India, Ministry of Defense, Annual Report, 1996-97). Russia and India also supported the opposition forces to the Taliban, that is, the Northern Alliance. All possible help was rendered to the Northern Alliance.

After 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre in USA and in response to that US retaliated by sending its forces into Afghanistan. This was the notable development in the international relations in the initial phase of the new millennium. Taliban regime in Afghanistan came to an end in 2001. There was a new government led by the Hamid Karzai. India recognized the new government and said that while the new government has international legitimacy, the task of reconstruction and rebuilding the institution is formidable. Pakistan had vested interest in a weak and unstable Afghanistan which provided it an opportunity to meddle in the internal affairs of the country in the pursuit of its quest for strategic depth vis-à-vis India and Central Asia. Any revival of jehadi activities supported by Pakistan is of direct security threat to India in view of their linkages with terrorism and proxy war against India by assuming Kashmir as the flash point of the region. India had also committed very much to international engagement with Afghanistan so that Pakistan cannot exploit the neglect and inattention of the International community,
as it did after the withdrawal from Afghanistan, to sponsor *jehadi* politics and training militants in the region (Government of India, Ministry of Defense, Annual Report, 2002-03).

Apart from these common threats facing Russia and India from Afghanistan, the war-ravaged country held political and economic importance for both Russia and India. Due to their political, economic and strategic interests Russia and India are cooperating in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. They are aimed at excluding Pakistan from any future say in the Afghan affairs. During Vajpayee’s visit to Russia in 2001, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said in a press conference that India would be more actively involved in the 6+2 mechanism, to bring peace to Afghanistan- that comprises Pakistan, Iran, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Russia and the U.S. both countries also ruled out any future role for the remnants of Taliban in any future Afghanistan (‘India, Russia Agree over Terror, Afghanistan’ the Times of India November 6, 2001). ‘The Moscow Declaration on International Terrorism’ signed by the two countries in November 2002 emphasized ‘the necessity to avert the spilling of the conflict beyond the boundaries of the region to prevent future extension of terrorism.’ Both countries emphasized on maintaining effective interaction in the framework of Joint Working Group (JWG) on Afghanistan.

India and Russia had in-depth discussions regarding developments in Afghanistan during the Putin visit to India in 2002. Both the sides noted the continuing threat to security in Afghanistan. The countries expressed the possible regrouping of former Taliban and the Al- Qaida elements and their continuing
links with their sponsors. At the same time, both sides expressed the hope that the transitional administration of Afghanistan will succeed in restoring peace in the country. They stressed that it is in the interest of the international community to see a stable and sovereign government in Afghanistan. Both sides have committed to support economic and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and agreed to closely coordinate their actions.

**Terrorism**

Russian-Indian interests coincided further when the threat perception emanating from Afghanistan was strengthened with its emergence as the hub of international terrorism. They reaffirm that global terrorism in all forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. They underscore that there can be no justification for terrorism on any grounds, including ideological, religious, racial, ethnic or any other (Joint Declaration by the Russia Federation and the Republic of India (2004), *Strategic Digest*, vol.34, no.12, December, p.1693). They believe that the fight against terrorism has to be long-term, sustained and comprehensive.

Despite the government effort to combat terrorism it has remained a serious problem through the 1990s to present years. Terrorism coupled with religious extremism and succession, constitute even more danger. Since the September 11 terrorist attack on the US, terrorism has assumed special significance and it no longer operates within a particular region. Following the events of 9/11 the focus of the international community has shifted to Afghanistan and South Asia.
The threat to Russian territorial integrity was becoming more real especially in the North Caucasus where the Chechen issue once again escalated into a conflictual situation 2000. The National Security Doctrine and Military Doctrine of 2001 mentioned this threat very clearly. These documents have identified the main threat as the terrorist and secessionist movement in Chechnya and Dagestan. The Military Doctrine for instance, mentions seven threats, the first being international terrorism as in Chechnya and Dagestan (Anuradha M. Chenoy, 2001). Accordingly, Russia considered its most important foreign policy task was to combat international terrorism which was capable of destabilizing the situation not only in individual states, but also in entire region (The Russian Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, June 28, 2000, http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/concept.htm). A brief history of the Chechen issue is given below as it is necessary for understanding the escalating Russian security concerns.

The Chechen Republic is located on the Northern Slopes of the Caucasus mountains. The conflict between Russia and Chechnya has long historical roots. The war that presently rages in the Chechen’s Republic can only be understood in view of centuries of incessant struggle between the two cultures. Since 1722 (Russian troops first fought the Chechens) Russia has attempted to dominate and control Chechnya, while the Chechnya people have persistently attempted to reclaim their cultural and political independence. After the Bolshevik revolution, a semi-independent political entity, was formed in 1918 and was able to retain its status until 1921. However, after the civil war, the communist curtailed local political autonomy in the region. Relation between the Russians and the Chechens during the communist rule remained difficult and uneasy. However, when
revolutionary changes swept away the USSR and ushered in a new political era, the Chechens declared themselves independent in the Russian Federation. But the newly independent Russian state never accepted nor recognized an independent Chechnya. Russian Federation was willing to concede greater autonomy and sign special treaties with Chechnya but there was no question of independence.

The Chechen – Ingush Republic declared itself independent on November 1991 after General Dzhokhar Meisayevich Dudaev and his Chechen National Congress had seized power on 6 September in a military coup and deposed the government in Groznyy (Pontus Siren, 1998). President Yeltsin sent units of the then Soviet armed forces to Chechnya to assert Moscow’s authority in the Republic. However, Russian troops were withdrawn from the republic when the Russian Supreme Soviet refused to sanction the military operation (Pontus Siren, 1998). Then three years of uneasy truce followed, during which Chechnya, while economically dependent on Russia, was de facto politically independent. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia’s military presence in Chechnya was quickly undermined and it had to withdraw its armed forces from the Republic under humiliating circumstances.

Besides, Chechnya also resorted to the ideology of Islam for the purpose of mobilization and gaining diplomatic support from Muslim countries. In fact, President Maskhadov has declared Chechnya as “the Islamic Republic of Chechnya” (Rajan Kumar, 2001). An outcome of all these events was the growing influence of Islamic extremist forces over the political and social spheres of Chechnya. The Chechen war has claimed heavy casualties on both sides. According to estimates by the Russian Committee of the soldier’s mothers, Russia
has lost about 25,000 servicemen in Chechnya since fighting began in December 1994.

The Independence of Chechnya or autonomy does not present any serious danger to Russia. As President Vladimir Putin once aptly said, “After all, the formal status of Chechnya is not so important to us. What is important is that no threat to Russia should ever come from that territory” (Andrei Piontkovsky, 2004).

In addition, Russian worry is Chechen separatist’s extensive ties with terrorist organizations abroad. Many of Chechen field commanders received training at camps in Afghanistan; Arab “Volunteers” take part in terrorist act in Russia. There is also much evidence connecting Osama bin laden and Al-Qaeda with Chechen rebels. Both Arab and non-Arab members fighting in Chechnya have undergone training in Afghanistan. It was there that bin Laden, met the Jordanian Omar Ibn-al-Khattab, who later became one of Chechnya’s most powerful warlords. Khattab later introduced bin laden to another Chechen separatist leader, Shamil Basaev (Yevgeny M. Primakov, 2005).

Russia has drawn the attention of the world community its concern in Chechnya, which became a criminal enclave primarily because the men who seized power there had nothing in common with the interest of the Chechen people. As Putin observed, “for us the most important thing is to prevent this territory from being used as a bridgehead for attack on Russia and rocking it from within” (Alexander M Kadakin (1998). Russia having negotiation with terrorist and secessionists on their terms is not in the larger interests of Russia as a whole and Chechnya in particular. Russian political establishment has abundantly made it
clear that you can have dialogue and negotiations with those who abjure the path of terrorism and secessionism and agree to become part of the national mainstream of the basis of equity and justice.

In this context, Indian policy towards Chechnya is very important because it is also facing similar problems in Kashmir and other parts of India. India supported the steps taken by Russia in the Republic of Chechnya in the Protection of its territorial integrity and constitutional order. India like Russia has been combating the challenges of terrorism. India has been a victim of terrorism for many decades, much before the West experienced its deadly reality on September 11, 2001. The terrorist menace in Jammu and Kashmir has its roots in Pakistan and is supported by the government and institutions of that government (Government of India, Ministry of Defense, Annual Report, 2002-03). Cross-border terrorism and the support extended to various militant groups from across the border in Kashmir pose a grave threat to India’s territorial integrity. The talk of Jihad against India by militant groups enjoying sanctuary and support from across the border has made situation in the state extremely difficult. Terrorists groups fighting here also like Chechnya getting support from outside. Russia always supported India’s position on Kashmir. During the Kargil war in 1999 Russian position showed complete understanding of the Indian stand. Russian view was that infiltration from across border should cease and the sanctity of line of control in Kashmir to be observed. From the Russian Security point of view Kashmir become important because same forces are fighting in Kashmir and Chechnya. The struggle over Kashmir, although it would seem to touch upon Russia’s interest only indirectly, encourage passion among Islamic extremists in the neighbouring countries, and this cannot but worry
Russia with its multimillion strong Muslim populations (Vladimir Moskalenko and Tatiana Shaumian, 1998). Both Chechnya and Kashmir have been victims of terrorism, patronized and promoted by the same forces. In this regard Putin said that while addressing the Indian Parliament, “the same individuals, the same terrorist organization and very often, the same individuals participate in organizing, in conducting and igniting terrorist acts from the Philippines to Kosovo including Kashmir and Russia’s Northern Caucasus” (Address of the Russian President to the Indian Parliament, October 4, 2000, http:www.indiamid.ru/india/summits/04-02.html).

In the Declaration signed during the second Putin visit to India in December 2002, the two sides outlined their common position on terrorism, Afghanistan, Central Asia, West Asia, etc. Both the sides agreed to set up an Indo-Russian Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter-terrorism to put an “end to this common threat through preventive and deterrent measures nationally and bilaterally” (Delhi Declaration on Further Consolidation of Strategic Partnership between India and signed on December 2002, In Strategic Digest, vol. 32, no. 2, December 2002). Both countries have welcomed the unanimous adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 1566 (piloted by the Russian Federation) (Joint Declaration by the Russian Federation and the Republic of India, New Delhi, December 3 2004, In Strategic Digest, vol. 34, no. 12, Dec. 2004, p. 1693). Noting that it seeks to consider action against terrorist including sections and judicial action and aims at making the counter Terrorism Committee more action oriented, both Countries decided to actively cooperate with each other in counter-terrorism efforts. The common problem of self-determination, terrorism and separation whether in
Chechnya or Kashmir is causes of grave concern for both India and Russia. Therefore, both countries have reiterated their common resolve to fight terrorism.

During Prime Minister Vajpayee’s visit to Moscow in November 2001 both the countries signed the Moscow Declaration on International terrorism (For the text of the Moscow Declaration signed between India and the Russia on International Terrorism, Strategic Digest, November 2001). The declaration stated among other things. In multiethnic and democratic countries such as India and Russia, violent actions being perpetrated under the slogan of self-determination, in reality represents acts of terrorism. Both the countries also agreed to continue effective interaction on Afghanistan, in the framework of the Indo-Russian Joint Working Group on Afghanistan established between the two countries in October 2000. The Russian position was further reinforced in the Joint Statement on February 2002, in which both the countries gave the call for a “comprehensive, long-term multi-dimensional” cooperation among the members of the international community to fight against “the existence of extensive ties between Al Qeada and Taliban with terrorist organizations active in other parts of the world, including Chechnya, the Central Asian Republic and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir” (Joint Statement of India and the Russian Federation on 3 February 2002 during the visit of Russian foreign minister, in Strategic Digest, vol. 32, no. 2, February 2002).

“Russia expressed its understanding and support regarding India’s justified demand that the activities from Pakistan and territory controlled by it cease of completely.

Taking note of the Pakistan President’s Commitment to fight against terrorism in his 12 January 2002 speech, the Russian Foreign Minister said that Pakistan’s Commitment can only be judged by the concrete action it takes on the
ground. He also criticized the attempt to justify crimes being committed in Kashmir including killing of innocent civilians by terrorist as a Kashmir freedom movement. No country should allow constant attempt to undermine its citizen’s safety to go unpunished. In this regard, we understand the Indian government’s concerns very well (Nirmala Joshi, 2002).

President Vladimir Putin during his visit to India in 2002 called upon Pakistan to destroy the terrorist infrastructure serving separatist movement in Kashmir. He also promised to render all necessary assistance to eradicate the evil empire of terrorism. On the Kashmir issue, he agreed with Indian position that “this issue can be resolved on a bilateral basis without outside interference (For details see the text of the address of the Russian President at the Central Hall of Parliament on 4 October 2000, in mainstream, vol. 33, no. 43 (14 October) 2000). The joint declaration called on Pakistan to fulfill its promises to crack down on terrorism and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure inside Pakistan. While referring to Russia’s concern about the Chechenyan insurgency and India’s worries about militancy in Kashmir, he said that there should be no double standards in the fight against terrorism. This reflects the attempts by Russia and India after September 11 to win international acceptance for their assertion that they too are fighting terrorism in Chechnya and Kashmir respectively.

In spite of cooperation between two countries there is no reduction in terrorist activities. Every day there is an attack on government agencies and civilians. Many innocent people and the military personnel are losing there life. The terrorist’s groups active in India and Russia still getting all the support from outside especially Pakistan. Though, President Musharraf has given the assurance
to the world community that he will remove terrorist infrastructure from Pakistan’s territory, but he is not able to fulfill this assurance. In fact there is increase in the activities of religious groups. In Afghanistan it has been reported that Taliban forces are regrouping and posing threat to Russia and India. That is why there is need for coordinated approach from all the countries in eliminating these forces. And there should not double standard to fight the terrorism. Apart from Indian and Russian cooperation, other countries like America and China should play active role in controlling terrorist activities. These countries have good relations with Pakistan and in fact Pakistan is a frontline state in the war against terrorism.

**Multilateral Diplomacy**

Terrorism, drug trafficking and religious extremism were global in nature, therefore was need of global approach to eliminate all these problems. The Russian Federation and India believed that most urgent and essential steps in effectively and comprehensively dealing with the threat of terrorism needed. In this regard Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The Russian Federation and India recognise that aim of promoting global peace, security and stability through dialogue, consultation and cooperation among countries concerned. As strategic partner, the Russia and India reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate bilaterally and at the multilateral level on strategic issue, and to evolve a universal effective system of countering global challenges and threat of Twenty first century. This was very important organization fighting to eliminate all these problems. Presently India having a observer status, but Russian Federation wants India to become full member of the organization.
Both Russia and India stand for a just and democratic world order based on the principle of multipolarity and Sovereign equality of all states. Both countries agreed that it was vital to reform the UN system to make it more effective, at the same time preserving the organization’s key role in promoting global peace and security. Russia had given its support to India as a deserving candidate for the permanent membership in the United Nation Security Council (H.E. Alexander M. Kadakin Ambassador of Russia to India, Russia-India: Eurasia’s vector of stability. New Theme, vol.vi, issue.4, December, 2003). India and Russia had expressed their determined opposition to the unilateral use force in violation of the U.N charter and to intervention in the internal affairs of other states, including under the guise of humanitarian intervention.

**Kashmir issue**

The Kashmir problem stared when the tribal forces supported by Pakistan government, invaded Kashmir in 1947. The Soviet Union maintained its neutral position when the Kashmir Issue was raised in the United Nations. However, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev changed this attitude towards South Asia and adopted the policy of “strengthening friendship and cooperation with neutral and peace loving countries in Europe and the third world”(Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Nogee, 1998). India’s policy of non-alignment and its rejection of any bloc politics, anti-colonization and anti-racism brought both the countries together. The growing close relationship between US and Pakistan and the Chinese disenchantment with the Soviet ideology also played very important role in formulating Soviet policy towards Kashmir. All these compelled the Soviet Union
to look for a reliable partner in the South Asia to counter the growing alliance. In this background it always supported India’s position on Kashmir.

In December, 1955, Soviet premier, N.A. Bulganin, speaking in the Supreme Soviet of USSR, said that “the question of Kashmir is already resolved by the people of Kashmir themselves; it considers itself to be an integral part of Republic of India. Soviet Union supports the Indian policy on the Kashmir question, as it completely serves the interests of strengthening peace in that region of Asia” (Riyaz Punjabi, 2001). The Soviet vetoes in 1957 and 1959 on the Kashmir issue in the Security Council of United Nations were extremely valuable and helpful. During Leonid Brezhnev period the Kashmir issue was put in a much wider context of South Asia and to turn the Indian subcontinent into a peaceful arena probably under the aegis of the Soviet Union. The Tashkent Declaration of January 1966 showed Russia was able to successfully reduce its commitment to India on the Kashmir issue. Russia favoured a bilaterall solution to the problem, as favoured by India.

In the eighties Mikhail Gorbachev focused more on reforming the Soviet political and economic system and amending its foreign policy accordingly. Gorbachev’s “New Thinking” was designed to redefine the place and role of the Soviet Union in the world. As a result of this new thinking, Indo-Soviet relationship was viewed in a wider perspective. While making comment on Indo-Soviet relation, his Deputy Foreign Minister, Mikhail Kapista assured a Pakistanis newspaper in 1985 that his country wished to be friendly with all the South Asian states, but in case of a problem between India and its neighbours, we will side with
India" (Peter J.S. Duncan, 1989). This indicated that soviet engagement with Pakistan was not at the cost of its ties with India.

With the dissolution of the Soviet-Union, it appeared that a shift had taken place in Russia's foreign policy on Kashmir. During his visit to Pakistan in December 1991, the then Russian Vice President, Rutskoi, said that the right of self-determination of the Kashmir’s people should be decided under the United Nation’s auspices and in accordance with its resolutions (“Russian stand on Kashmir”, Asian Recorder, vol. 38, no. 6 (5-11 February) 1992). This shift in Russia stand weakened India’s position at global level. However, Boris Yeltsin in his address to Indian parliament in 1993 expressed strong and unconditional support to the Indian position on Kashmir. While speaking at a meeting with Indian businessman, Yeltsin made the Russian stand on the Kashmir issue clear: “we support the settlement of Kashmir according to the Indian version so as to maintain integrity and unity of India. And in whatever International organization—it may be the United Nations Security Council—we shall stand by this point of view (Excerpt from the speech of Borish Yeltsin, President of Russian Federation, at a meeting with Indian Businessman in New Delhi on 28 January 1993). During the visit, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the two countries. It was clear that the equidistance as advocated by some Russian experts in South Asia was not feasible. The new challenges to which we have already referred in detail once again brought Russia and India closer to each other. The policy of equidistance was not feasible in the changed circumstances also.

In 1996, during the visit of Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov to Delhi, the Russian delegation reiterated the Russian support to Indian position on
Kashmir. Both the governments excluded the inclusion of Kashmir Issue in the agenda of the United Nations and concluded that the issue should be addressed through bilateral negotiations within the framework of the Shimla agreement. Russia considers the Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan. It is against Pakistan’s attempt to internationalize the Kashmir Issue. The Russian Foreign Ministry does not regard an Independent Kashmir as a viable option (Martin Malek, “Russian Policy towards South Asia”, Asian Survey, vol. 44, No. 3, p. 389). Hence on an issue of critical significance to India Russian support comes the closest to Indian stand. This support undoubtedly valuable.

Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is another problem both Russia and India are facing. It has the potential to destabilize because of its links with organized crime and separatist terrorist groups fighting in different countries. Drug trafficking is a transnational phenomenon. Most of the countries have drug trade within or passing through the border which poses serious challenges ranging from effecting border control to subversion of state and society. The world’s largest drug growing countries are those of Latin America, the Golden crescent (Afghanistan Iran and Pakistan) and golden Triangle (Thailand Myanmar and Laos). While Latin American countries are predominately coca growers the countries of golden crescent and golden triangle are major opium production centre.

Russia is concerned about the alleged massive increase in drug crops in Afghanistan. The total area of opium Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and Pakistan stood at 36,450 hectares at the end of 1994 (Sumita Kumar, "Drag
Trafficking as an International Security, Problem (Strategic Analysis, May 1996). Afghanistan alone produced nearly 1,200 tonnes of opium in 1989. But decade later the harvest had almost quadrupled to an estimated 4,600 tonnes. Presently Afghan opium accounts for about 70 per cent of the world heroin production (The Economist, October 20th, 2001, p. 21). About 20 per cent of heroin consumed in the US appears to go from the golden crescent particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan. These developments in its southern border defiantly affect Russia because major routes for drug trafficking from Afghanistan go via central Asia and Russia. It has become a central marketing point of heroin from the golden crescent region.

Central Asia boomed in the drug trade over the last few years so much so that the five states comprising central Asia are increasingly being referred as a “new Colombia” (Sumita Kurrar, "Drug Trafficking as an International Security, Problem" Strategic Analysis, May 1996). The Tajikistan narcotics industry has expanded dramatically. This was both through domestic production and through trade from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Drug trade is often used to achieve particular political aims. The money received in this trade is used to finance illegal political and military activities. Such as extremism, terrorism and drug trade in these countries has very close links with criminal world and with separatist and extremist groups. Tajikistan is the best example of the tight connection between drug trafficking and political struggle. It is one of the important centre productions of drugs and for their transport from Afghanistan. The civil and clan conflict in Tajikistan and the resulting emigration of many thousand Tajik to Afghanistan have stimulated a radical growth in drug circulation.
in and via Tajikistan (Vitaly V. Naumkin, 1999). From Tajikistan drugs flow to other countries of Central Asia as well as to Russia.

Turkmenistan is another important link in the drug traffic from Asia to Europe. It also has a long standing tradition of drug consumption. The drugs used here are either indigenous or imported from Afghanistan and Iran. According to the Russia, ministry of the interior 93 per cent of Marijuana arriving on the Russian drug market comes from Kazakhstan as does 85 per cent of the hashish and 73 per cent of the opium (Vitaly V. Naumkin, 1999). The Kazakh- Russian border remains almost totally transparent and there are no restrictions. Therefore drug traffickers are able to operate without serious difficulties.

The problem that confronts Russia and the Central Asian countries, and India also, is of corruption, addiction and violence. Therefore, Russia has a vital interest in controlling drug- related activities along its borders and within the Russia territory. The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNDOCEP) director Pino Arlacchi says that Russia's "new rich" are among the biggest potential growth markets for heroin-pushers (The Economist, no.51, p.22). During his recent visit to Dushanbe, Putin had signed an agreement with Tajikistan establishing a permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan, aimed at fighting terrorist and drug traffickers operating across more than 1000 km long border with Afghanistan (Hindustan Times, 19 October 2004, p.23).

India also is a victim of drug trafficking related activities. It is not only being threatened by drug trafficking from the Golden Crescent on its western flank but also from the narco-trafficking in Golden Triangle, bordering the eastern side;
India is also a transit route for illicit narcotics from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar which is bound for the European market. Nepal’s open border with India and its proximity to Pakistan and Myanmar make it an alternate transit route for illicit narcotics from the golden crescent and golden triangle to Europe, other points Asia, and the US.

Another related aspect of drug trafficking is the phenomena of weapons proliferation in the region. The linkages between weapons and drugs have made terrorism more dangerous and can have negative effects on the situation in Kashmir. Many terrorist groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan are using these sources for purchasing weapons and other materials to continue their activities. The success of the Taliban movement can be largely explained by revenues from the production of opium.

The Russian Federation and India believe that one of the most urgent challenges today is strengthening multilateral cooperation for countering the global narco-threat. Both the countries underline the urgency of the need for the development of a comprehensive strategy, under the auspices of the UN, to effectively counter this problem and reiterate their commitment for close cooperation with the UN and other international organizations which are working within the frame work of UN drug control programme.

**Bilateral Relations**

While the regional context is imparted substance and content to Russia’s ties with India, the bilateral aspect is equally important. As mentioned after the
dissolution of the Soviet Union there was debate regarding whether Russia should pursue pro-western policy or it should give importance to old allies of the Soviet Union? The debate in Russia was an attempt to define its goals, priorities and international role in accordance with its compulsion and needs.

In this context, its foreign policy goals towards India also underwent for reconsideration. Two different schools of thought existed in Russia at initial time regarding policy towards India. One opinion favoured retaining the traditional special relationship. India should be given priority in Russia’s policy in South Asia, while at the same time good relationship were developed with other countries, including Pakistan. The other school favoured ending the special relationship. The second view was associated with the foreign Ministry headed by Andrei Kozyrev. During parliament hearing in January 1993 before president Yeltsin’s visit to India, Kozyrev expressed doubt’s about the need to preserve Russia’s special relationship with India and suggested a principle of ‘equidistance’ in dealing with India and Pakistan. He explained that this might enable Russia to get Pakistan’s help in addressing the problem of Afghanistan (Vladimir Moskalenko and Tatiana Shaumian, 1999).

It was natural that this shift of emphasis of Russia’s foreign policy goals led it to considerably modify its attitude towards India. The whole Russian outlook was expressed through a concept called de-ideologisation which Russian President Borish Yeltsin, during his visit to India in January 1993, claimed was permeating ‘all spheres of Russia life, including its foreign policy (Anita Inder Singh, 1995). This was a clever way of conveying to India that in the Post Cold War era Russia
did not consider any country as its enemy and neither did it wish to have special relation with any country. Russia had a desire to have good relations with all countries serving its interest and needs.

The Russian government headed by Boris Yeltsin felt no obligation to continue the concession that had their basis in the Cold War. Russia had adopted a normal commercial approach in its trade policy with India that had serious implication for India. But the disillusionment with the West made Russia to find out its common interests with India. Factors which compelled Russia and India to renew their close and warm ties have been discussed in detail in the earlier section of this chapter.

President Yeltsin was keen to retain the goodwill built up in its relations with India over the Cold War period. In this background it redefined foreign policy goals, priorities and international role. The 1993 concept paper called for a "pragmatic renewal" of ties with India based on realistic possibilities and legitimate interests of both sides with an emphasis on economic stimuli (Devendra Kaushik, 2001). It also called for taking into due consideration India's stand on international problems, primarily on nuclear non-proliferation while developing military technical ties. The national goals of two countries were being looked upon in the light of new international realities. President Boris Yeltsin visit to India in January 1993 was a recognition of India's role in contemporary international relation and an attempt to search for a formula interaction in the changed Post-Soviet Scenario. Yeltsin sought to convince his hosts that Russia's Western oriented foreign policy did not mean that Moscow could ignore Asia and Pacific. He said that "no strong
eastern policy is possible without India or without taking into consideration India’s interests its global weight and its authority (ITAR-TASS, on January 29, 1993 in BBC, SWB, FE/1601, 4/4, February 1993). During this visit the two countries signed a new 20 year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. This treaty gives element stability in their relationship and also endorsed India’s stand on the Kashmir issue. The Russian government approved Indian approach that the resolution of the issue of Kashmir should be on a bilateral basis- the Shimla Agreement, and later the Lahore diplomacy. A major milestone in Russian-Indian relation came in June 1994 when Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Russia and two countries signed the Moscow Declaration on the Protection of pluralistic states (Rizwan Zeb, 2004).

An article in Moscow Declaration defines the challenges to the security and national interest of the two countries. As discussed earlier the Declaration also committed both the countries to uphold the territorial integrity of each other. Tension and violence still persist in the world. As ideological and other barrier to mutually beneficial cooperation are being overcome, new challenges to security and stability are emerging. In particular there is a growing threat from the force of aggressive nationalism, religious and political extremism, terrorism and separatism which strike at the unity of pluralistic states (Vinay Shukla, 1999).

It has become increasingly obvious that Russia’s foreign policy is undergoing a major face lift. There was an open effort to upgrade its relations with countries like India to a strategic level. The new Russia Foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov asserts that “Russian foreign policy should uphold national interest more
energetically than before”. Soon after taking over as the Foreign Minister Mr. Primakov spelled out the parameters of the Russian foreign policy in the new context. He repeatedly underlined the need to diversify Russia’s International ties. “Of great importance for us is the development of relations with the European community as a whole as well as China, India, Japan, the near middle East countries and the Asia pacific countries” (R.R. Sharma, 1997).

There had been convergence of Indian and Russia views on various International issues and the resolution of various flash-points by the international community in the current state of influx in the international system. Both had been opposed to an uni-polar world order. They advocated multi-polar global structure based on sovereign equality of all states and peoples. Primakov was the main protagonist of the multi-polar concept. In promoting the idea of a multipolar world Russia and China were able to forge a strategic partnership. It possibly in this context that Primakov came up with an idea of strategic triangle between Russia-China and India. Since the1998, the idea was first put forward it seems that it is slowly gathering a momentum. In fact promoting the strategic triangle is one of the prime objectives of Russian Foreign Policy.

Major changes were took place in Russian foreign policy when President Vladimir Putin visited India in 2000. The Foreign Policy concept of Russian Federation endorsed by Vladimir Putin in July 2000 expressed that one of the crucial directions in the Russian foreign policy in Asia is developing friendly relations with the leading Asian states, primarily with China and India. “In South Asia, Russia intends to strengthen its traditional partnership with India, including international affairs, and to aid and overcome problems persisting in South Asia.
and strengthen stability in the region (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, July 10, 2000, [http://www.mid.ru/mid/eng/econcept.htm](http://www.mid.ru/mid/eng/econcept.htm))

Russian foreign policy has displayed greater political will. Under President Putin, to defend its national interest and play a more important role in world affairs. While in India, President Putin signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership with India. The Declaration stated that the two parties sought to impart a qualitatively new character and long-term perspective to their multifaceted bilateral relations and to actively develop them in political, economic, trade, scientific, technological, and cultural and other fields, in the years ahead and into the 21st century. This has opened a new era of strategic relations that can help both countries in the charging international context. In another words, it implied that Russia's ties with India had acquired a higher qualitatively character.

Another important outcome of Putin's visit in 2000 was common approach evolved by the two countries on global terrorism, on Afghanistan in particular, which along with Pakistan had become a breeding ground for international terrorism, aided and abetted by drug mafia, illicit arms trade and anti-social elements. This commonality of policy between the two countries has set in motion an international movement against terrorism. In Indian and Russian view, Afghanistan supported by Pakistan, had emerged as the hub of military and international terrorism (Nirmala Joshi, 2002)

In November 2003, India’s Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee paid an official visit to Russia the sides signed and endorsed ten bilateral documents, including the
Both Russia and India stand for adjust and democratic world order based on the principles of multi-polarity and sovereignty equality of all states. Russia agreed that it is vital to reform the UN system to make is more effective, at the same time preserving the organisation's key role in promoting global peace and security. Russia has once again reiterated its support to India as a deserving candidate for the permanent membership in the expanded UN Security Council.

The developments and events described above demonstrate the long-term Indo-Russian national interests. Their relations also show that the geo-political interests of Russia and India still converge despite the changed security environment after the Cold War. The growing terrorism which threatens Central Asian Republics and North Caucasians region of Russia also threatens Indian Kashmir. Russia and India have to fight this problem together to protect their national interests.

**Trade and Economic Cooperation**

In the evolving Russian relations with India the economic dimension is not as dynamic as it is in strategic and political matters. This was not the case of Indo-Soviet relations. The former Soviet Union was India's largest trade partner. Indo-Soviet trade, which started with a meager 13 million rupees turnover in 1953 and following the signing of the first ever trade agreement between the two countries in April 1953 reached the record of 5.5 billion US$ in 1990. The first bilateral agreement between India and Soviet Union for technical economic cooperation was signed on 2\(^{nd}\) February 1955 in order to provide Soviet technical assistance for building the Bhilai Steel Plant. The Soviet Assistance was in accordance with the
needs of our five year development plans. They provided a strong boost to rapid industrialization of India and helped in achieving economic self-reliance by the country. India’s export to the former Soviet Union consisted of traditional items like tea, coffee, cashew nuts, spices, tobacco, medicine, textiles and garments etc. the Soviet export to India consisted of petrol, petrol product, chemicals, fertilizers, newsprints, non-ferrous metal, medicine and equipments etc. But the Soviet dissolution brought about systemic changes which affected all sectors. Abolition of state monopoly on foreign trade, decentralisation of economic control, de-ideologisation of foreign policy led to greater contact with West dealt a heavy blow to indo-Russia economic cooperation. Dismantling of old trading system before the creation of new market mechanism and institutions resulted in all-pervading chaos affecting Russian economy and foreign trade. Bilateral trade agreements and protocols, which were the corner stone of indo-soviet trade abandoned. Bilateral trade came to standstill and payments for past supplies were blocked for several months damaging the interests of both countries. Another factor was the dislocation of economic activity caused by the break-up. Besides the lack of experience in operating under a new system was an obstacle. Renegotiation hence took a long time causing delays. Despite having socio-economic & trade relations in the past a large past 1990s has been a period of difficult adjustment. Economic transformation in Russia from a centrally planned economy in 1991 coincided with the policies of economic liberation in India. These developments changed the nature and character of foreign economic relations in the both the countries.

The Russian and Indian governments renegotiated the entire trade regime in early 1990s. The 1993 agreement terminated the traditional Rupee trade
arrangement mandated all bilateral trade translations to be conducted in hard currency basis. Therefore, the current bilateral trade is no longer conducted in non-convertible currencies. It is based on payments in treaty convertible currencies. All the Russian exports to India follow the new system.

Indo-Russian trade has declined substantially in the last one decade. In 1992, it was 1.3 billion US$, but in 1993, the figure touched the all time low 1.1 billion US$. There were some signs of an upward swing in the middle of 1990s, but this was again halted by the financial crisis in Russia. Trade turnover in 1995 was 1.9 billion US$ but it declined to 1.2 billion US$ in 1998. However, from 1999 there is a growth in trade and business. According to Russia’s state custom committee, trade with India for January – December 2003 amounted to 3.3 billion US$ with Russian export estimated at 2.7 billion US$ and import from India at 0.6 billion US$ (G. Ivashentis, India: Strategic Partnership in Action, International Affairs, 2004). The Indian investment of $ 1.7 billion in the Sakalin-1 oil production project, the $2.6 billion project for the construction of a nuclear plant in Kudankulam are signs of stepping up of cooperation. During Putin’s visit in 2000, a multimillion contract on the joint exploration of gas fields in the Bay of Bengal was signed between Gazapron and the Gas authority of India limited (Alexander M.Kadakin, 2001). With India taking up large scale programmes like oil and gas exploratory production and transportation construction & modernization of thermal power plants and development of electronics information science, telecommunications, biotechnology, Russia see therefore in export of machinery equipment and high technology (Alexander M.Kadakin, 2001). While international investment is needed to boost the economics of both countries, Russia
and India are encouraging their private entrepreneurs to invest in sectors that are naturally beneficial. The signing of the intergovernmental agreement on civil aviation has also opened up broad prospects for the development of bilateral ties in civil aviation.

There is no doubt that both Russia and India are keen to enhance their economic interaction. In 2000 India, Russia and Iran signed an agreement to build the North-South Corridor connecting St.Petersburg with Mumbai via Iran. The North-South corridor has a branch going up to Aktan in Kazakhstan. The purpose of the corridor is to re-invigorate economic activity. However, the corridor is not functioning to the desired level. Another dimension that needs to be looked into is the banking sphere. This could promote joint ventures in both the countries.

Despite all these advantages and mutual complementaries, Indo-Russian trade has not moved with the expected potentials from stagnation. Economic cooperation and trade relationships are primarily important because it plays a vital role in strategic partnership between two countries. Economy and security are key areas in strengthening the relationship in the crucial era of market economy. The growth of strong regional dynamics in the international politics becomes essential, when major powers come to have strategic partnership. In the case of south Asia, both US and Russia wants to have strategic relationship with in their framework of foreign policy.

In the conclusion, after discussing Russia's security interests in India, it can be said that no single country can deal with the problems of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, illegal drug trafficking in narcotics and organised crime single