ROLE OF RUSSIA IN POST COLD WAR ERA IN INDIA’S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

In the changing dynamics of international politics set in motion by the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, there were paradigm shifts in the nature of relations among countries. India and the Russian Federation, however, were soon able to find a new basis for reestablishing their close and friendly relations. Within a span of nine years, Indo-Russian relations have evolved into a strategic partnership. This implies a qualitative higher level of relationship reflecting mutual trust and confidence. Generally, it has been observed that whenever the geopolitical and strategic interests of two countries coincide, the ensuing relationship between them is often warm, close and friendly. The crux of Indo-Russian relations also lies in the compatibility of their vital interests at the regional level—Central Asia, the center of Eurasia. It was this compatibility of geopolitical and strategic interests that augured well for Indo-Soviet ties in the past, although the context was different, and augurs well now for Indo-Russian ties.

The regional scenario, however, has been undergoing swift changes. Eurasia has been attracting world attention. Several factors explain this shift in focus towards Eurasia. With oil politics and energy security occupying the center stage of international politics, the abundant natural resources of Eurasia including energy sources has drawn a lot of external attention. The scramble to control these vital resources, the efforts to provide alternate transport routes and corridors to most of the landlocked countries of the region, and the propagation of “forced” democracy in the post-Soviet space are various dimensions of the competition that has emerged among major powers. It is primarily between the West, particularly the US, on the one hand and Russia in partnership with China on the other hand competing for control and influence in Eurasia. What has complicated the competition is the emergence of Afghanistan as the hub of international terrorism and religious extremism under the Taliban. While the Taliban have been defeated, the danger of terrorism and extremism continues in the region. Reports suggest that several extremist groups have reemerged and that Iraq is gradually emerging as a center for terrorist activity. Thus, the regional scenario has been in a state of
constant flux. For Indo-Russian relations, the regional context presents not only new challenges to their relationship, but new opportunities as well. In order to analyze India’s relations with Russia, an examination of the strategic environment in Eurasia is necessary.

**Strategic Environment in Eurasia**

In the post-Cold War era, one of the distinctive features to emerge was that security could no longer be interpreted in narrow terms or exclusively military terms. New challenges have arisen. These are primarily religious extremism, terrorism and aggressive nationalism. These new sources of non-traditional threat pose a serious challenge to the integrity and sovereignty particularly of multiethnic states and pluralist societies. Both India and Russia are multiethnic and pluralist societies. These nontraditional sources of threat manifested themselves in the most prominent manner in India’s neighborhood. India was already battling against extremism and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and the appearance of these forces in its neighborhood made worse situation. A noteworthy development that coincided was the unexpected emergence of the Central Asian states as independent entities. This widened India’s sphere of geopolitical and strategic interest. Even in the past, the Central Asian region was important for India, but Indian concerns were taken care of by friendly Indo-Soviet ties. In the changed context of 1991, India began to look upon the five states of Central Asia as part of its “extended neighborhood.” Since the majority of the people of Central Asia are Muslim, they began to attract attention, and Indian interest lay primarily in seeing that the secular orientation of the Central Asian states remain intact.

However, Indian concerns arose when the government of President Mohammad Najibullah was overthrown by the forces of religious extremism led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. The success of the Mujahideens in 1992 was the first victory of religious extremism, and this was the beginning of Afghanistan’s emergence as the hub of extremism and terrorism. India’s view that Afghan developments could cast their shadow over the newly independent states of
Central Asia was not unfounded. Mosques, madrassahs and theological schools sprang up, and religious practices were being observed with great fervor. The beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992 signaled a new phase in the growth of religious extremism. The devastating civil war in Tajikistan lasted for five years (1992–1997). The opposition sought refuge in Afghanistan. Here, all help and cooperation was extended by the Rabbani government in terms of safe sanctuary, training, and financial support. Importantly, the religious leaders and others gained vast experience in the political and military struggles.

From an Indian perspective, the most worrisome aspect was Pakistan’s activities in Afghanistan, and its increasing interest in Central Asia. Initially, Pakistan pursued a religious agenda in Central Asia in order to acquire “strategic depth.” Pakistan’s objective was not simply to bring the states of Central Asia within the fold of Islam, but it also wanted to emerge as a bridge between Central Asia and the rest of the world, in short, to create a strategic integrated region with religious orientation. India’s unease about Pakistan’s activities in Central Asia was put to rest when the leaders of Central Asia adopted a stringent attitude towards extremism, and in fact took strong measures to curb all such activities. With the rise of the Taliban and its avowal to spread its ideology to Central Asia, Indian concerns increased phenomenally. In Indian thinking, “The September 1996 offensive of the Taliban that overthrew the Rabbani government and captured Kabul was believed to have been part of Pakistan’s larger game plan to extend her influence in Central Asia.”\footnote{The Kargil War of 1999} is an eloquent testimony to the fact that extremism and cross-border terrorism was escalating. Indian concerns were heightened because the newly independent states of Central Asia were weak. They had to build up polities as well as to have armed forces. Until that time, they were dependent on Russia for their security requirements.

Had the forces of religious extremism and terrorism succeeded in the region, the geopolitics of Eurasia would probably have undergone a fundamental change. Indian vulnerabilities vis-à-vis the non-traditional threats received full support and understanding from Russia. In fact, Russia too was facing similar challenges in Chechnya. Russian interests lay in insulating Central Asia from the
divisive tendencies emanating from Afghanistan. As aptly stated by Georgii Kunadze, the then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Russia has a specific geopolitical interest in Central Asia, which is to prevent the explosive charge of Islamic extremism from penetrating into the country.” Hence, protection of the southern periphery of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) came to have strategic significance for Russia.

Indian and Russian interests lay in ensuring the stability and security of the Central Asian region. The existing regimes should not in their view be overthrown by forces of extremism. It must be pointed out that, at that juncture, the problem was region specific and that the military presence of a Russian led peacekeeping force on the Tajik-Afghan border was able to protect and safeguard the region. Given its friendly ties with Russia, India favored Russia being the sole guarantor of security and stability in the region. The military presence of the international coalition forces led by the US in the wake of the events of 9/11, by terrorists fundamentally altered the geopolitical situation in the Central Asian region. The fight against terrorism that had so far had a regional dimension now came to occupy the center stage of international politics. The Taliban has been defeated, but the Saudi fugitive Osama bin Laden remains elusive. The al Qaeda terrorist network has been largely destroyed, but reports suggest that they have reemerged and are now operating from Iraq as well. The war against terror is continuing. It is possible that the war could be a protracted one, which means the military presence of the coalition forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere could also be long drawn. Whether the military presence of Vera Kuznetsova, “The Foreign Ministry’s Policy: Between Fatal Inevitability and Probability; interview with the deputy minister of foreign affairs, Georgii Kunadze,” the coalition forces has a hidden agenda as Russia and China believe is difficult to say. But there is no doubt that competition to control the resources of Eurasia and reduce Russian influence has acquired a new edge especially after the US-led military intervention in Iraq in 2003. Besides, in the wake of 9/11, there was a change in all five Central Asian states. All the states not only supported the campaign against terrorism, but willingly offered military and base facilities to the forces.
American troops were stationed at Khanabad or the K–2 air base in Uzbekistan, and the Friendship Bridge that connects it with northern Afghanistan was also made available. Due to deterioration in their relations, Uzbekistan asked the US to vacate the military base. In November 2005, the remaining American troops departed from Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan had opened its Manas air base to the US. In Tajikistan are stationed coalition forces from France and the UK. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have also offered logistical help to the coalition forces. Several factors account for the willing cooperation on the part of the Central Asian states. Firstly, the sense of vulnerability of the Central Asian states increased especially after the Taliban came to power. Perhaps it was felt that the existing security arrangement under the Collective Security Treaty was inadequate. As a perceptive Uzbek observer said, “. . . the majority of the public regards the American military presence as a gift from Allah.” The reasoning behind this attitude is primitively simple. “Russia has no money to protect us. Protecting themselves is something people here aren’t used to.” Besides, the economic assistance that these countries would receive would be helpful. Importantly, it would give the Central Asian states the necessary space for maneuverability vis-à-vis Russia.

India has supported the military presence of international coalition forces and welcomed the defeat of the Taliban. Despite five years of continuous campaigning against extremism and terrorism, the terrorist infrastructure has not been completely uprooted. Several outlawed groups have reappeared, for example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan now operates as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan. The blast in Mumbai (July 2006) is a poignant reminder of the inhuman activities of the jihad groups. A related issue that is becoming more pronounced in recent times is the flourishing trade in narcotics, and the enhanced activities of organized crime. These negative tendencies sustain extremism and terrorism. The instability in Afghanistan helps to perpetuate such activities. Another complicating factor from the Indian perspective is that the competition among major powers in its area of strategic interest is becoming strident. US-Russian competition became evident at the Budapest Summit in
1994. Russian hopes of being accepted as an equal partner by the West were in vain. An era of “Cold Peace,” as described by Russian president Boris Yeltsin, was beginning. According to Dmitri Trenin, “There was an over-abundance of optimism on both sides.” There were inherent limitations in Russia being accepted as an equal partner by the West. Two factors in this context are important. One was the decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to expand eastwards, in the direction of Russia’s periphery. The decision to invite countries of the former socialist bloc was perceived in Russia highly negatively. Second, the issue of energy security acquired a new urgency. The opening line of the Joint Statement on the New US-Russian Energy Dialogue of May 2002, “Successful development of the global economy depends on timely and reliable energy delivery,” succinctly highlighted the strategic importance of this resource. The energy resources in Eurasia, particularly in the Caspian Sea basin, drew considerable external attention. The American approach was spelt out by the then deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott who said that the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia should be independent, prosperous and secure. This would widen the area of stability in a strategically vital region that borders China, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Russia considered the post Soviet space as its zone of special interest. Russia has deep and vital interests at stake in the region. In the words of former Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov, “The situation in the former Soviet Union was vitally important to Russia’s economy, defense and security and to the rights of Russian citizens outside Russia.” These conflicting interests triggered the competition often interpreted as the “great game.” This is indeed a debatable point. The following report in The Times of Central Asia has probably put the entire question into the right perspective. “The new Great Game is all about oil and gas. The imperial soldiers and spies of a bygone era have given way to engineers and deal makers as the states jockey for the lucrative business of building pipelines to tap the vast resources of the landlocked region.” This competitive aspect paved the way for cooperation after the events of 9/11. Russia gave tacit approval to the Central Asian states to grant military base facilities to
the coalition forces. It was understood that this military presence was specifically for fighting the war on terror. Russia felt that the cooperative aspect would help in intensifying US Russian interaction in various fields, especially in the economic sphere. The situation began to change after the US military intervention in Iraq without UN approval. Many in Russia felt that the West, particularly the US, was pursuing a hidden agenda, one of controlling the resources of the Region, and limiting and, if possible, eliminating Russian influence. According to Russian general Leonid Ivashov, now vice-president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, “Russia faced a political paradox at the turn of the century. By supporting the US-led struggle against international terrorism, Russia has also complicated its position in the CIS countries.” In his view, the Central Asian leaders have made a mistake by inviting US-led coalition forces.9

Since 2003, Russia has been making determined efforts to restore its influence in Central Asia. The thrust of its policy is economic, military and political. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) comprising of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan has emerged as a proactive military grouping in the region. The CSTO has a base in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the Russian military presence is substantial. In fact, it is a projection of power rather than meeting the security challenges of the region. While military presence is necessary, the targets are nevertheless on the ground and are dispersed. But what has accentuated the present phase of the competition is the Western support of the “color revolution.” In the view of Evgenii Primakov, former prime minister of Russia, “various US foundations and diplomats were involved quite openly in the so-called color revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. This fact cannot but worry us.”10 There is a widespread perception that events of March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijan events of May 2005 had an external hand. Whether this is true or not is a moot point, but the fact is that all the Central Asian countries turned to Russia for help. It greatly facilitated Russia’s restoration of its influence in the region. Consequently, in July 2005 at the summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in
Astana, the US was asked to announce a time frame for the withdrawal of its forces from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

A new factor in this competition is the role of China. The Chinese have geopolitical interests in Central Asia. Their concern is that China’s borders with the three Central Asian states—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—remain peaceful. The Chinese concern is largely for its Uyghur minority located in Xinjiang. China has established close and strategic ties with Russia. Both countries realize that a collective or a multilateral approach is necessary in order to protect their interests. In this regard, Russian and Chinese views concur on many issues of regional and international politics. China is highly circumspect about the Western military presence at Manas in Kyrgyzstan. The Manas air base is 200 kilometers from the Chinese border. The SCO, a Chinese initiative, is emerging as a proactive and leading regional grouping in the region. Another dimension that has emerged in China’s policy towards Central Asia is its quest to ensure energy security. China has intensified its interaction with Kazakhstan, an energy-rich country, and has concluded several agreements in this regard. China’s aspiration is also to play a role in Caspian Sea politics. This dimension could assume significance in the future. China is also highly circumspect about a possible color revolution affecting the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region. As it is, they are restive, non-Han Chinese Muslims of Jurik stock. Despite these setbacks and the concerted efforts of Russia and China to meet the challenge of the competition, the US is not likely to withdraw from the region. Its latest thinking indicates that the US would encourage and promote greater links between the region (Central Asia) and South Asia, in which India could play a leading role. This is possible by exporting energy southward, and by transporting corridors and an electric grid connecting hydropower with South Asia. However, enhanced interaction with South Asia may not eliminate Russian influence, but could perhaps limit Chinese activity.

The strategic environment is undoubtedly in a state of flux. The competition to control resources and influence would continue to dominate US-Russian involvement in Eurasia. But this competition would be low key, for both
sides are likely not to allow the situation to escalate to the point of hostility. From the Indian perspective, it acts as a restraint on its aspiration to play an effective role in Central Asia. Given the past historical and cultural affinity and its present image as a reliable partner, India would have to make serious efforts to establish its presence in the region. However, two important developments in this context are worth mentioning. One is that China has shown keenness to engage with India. India’s interaction with China encompasses various fields. A top official of the People’s Liberation Army said that India and China were moving in the direction of sustaining peace and stability in their neighborhood and not just on their frontiers. “We have a long history and share a lot of common ground,” he said. Secondly, there is a marked improvement in India’s relations with the US. This is partly because of India’s rising international profile and partly because the South Asian focus on US foreign policy has acquired a new dimension. The US would like India to play a leading and substantial role in the region. All these developments have put new strains on Indo-Russian relations. But in my view, the core of Indo-Russian relations have not been disturbed in a major way. The regional context has undergone a change with Russia placing greater emphasis on a multilateral approach and to an extent, it has diluted the regional basis; nevertheless, within the changed context, new areas of cooperation do exist. We now turn to them.

Indo-Russian Relations and the Regional Context

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was uncertainty about the future of India’s relations with the Russian Federation. Indian concern was whether the special relations it enjoyed would undergo a change or not. Immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was a debate even in Russia about its future policy towards South Asia. There was a view that Russian policy should be equidistant, in which both India and Pakistan enjoyed the same emphasis. Hence, in the early years, Russian policy towards India was one of benign neglect. This phase soon gave way and in January 1993, during President Yeltsin’s visit to India, the earlier treaty was replaced by a new one: The Treaty
of Friendship and Cooperation. However, it was with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao’s visit to Russia in June 1994 that Indo-Russian ties were put on a firm foundation. “The Moscow Declaration on the Protection of Interests of Pluralist States” signed by India and Russia has become the bedrock of the relations. The Declaration drew attention not only to the nature of the challenges faced by the two countries, but also focused attention on the source from which this threat emanated for both. It also reiterated support of the signatories for each other’s territorial integrity. This is highly important given the fact that India and Russia were battling with these challenges in Kashmir and Chechnya, respectively. In the changed context, it was the space that lay between India and Russia that acquired significance. Once again, it was the commonality of their geopolitical interests that paved the way for the relationship to become strong and stable. Later, India and Russia backed opposition to the Taliban that had crystallized into the Northern Alliance. On the issue of religious extremism and terrorism, India and Russia share many commonalities: the source of tension, funding, training, etc. India and Russia wanted a secular Central Asia working towards a democratic setup. From this perspective, stability and security were important. Instability hampers growth and helps in sustaining extremism and terrorism to an extent. Consequently, India and Russia have established institutional linkages to strengthen this aspect. To date, this commonality has not diminished. Russia views India as a major regional power whose involvement in international politics would make a positive contribution.

From Russia’s vantage point, the unfolding developments in Europe, Eurasia, and the energy security issue were reminiscent of the Cold War mindset. Its response was the propagation of the idea of a multipolar world. In this regard, a historic agreement with China on a “Multipolar World and the Formation of a New World Order” was signed in Moscow in April 1997. This was the beginning of a partnership with China. A multipolar world is an order that is just and fair and democratic in which all nations are considered as equals and more importantly, enjoy equal security. It is a world order in which there is no place for hegemony. In this order, the UN would occupy a position of centrality.
its part, India upheld that the world order was not a unipolar one, as new centers of power and influence were emerging. While acknowledging the need for a multipolar world, the Indian approach was not in terms of blocs, but the need to maintain a balanced and stable world order. Since a unipolar world could lead to instability, there was a need for a balancing force.

Among the other initiatives taken by Russia is the idea of an **Russia-India China strategic triangle**, coming together in the interests of the challenges faced by them in the region. During Primakov’s visit to India in December 1998, he proposed at an informal level that India-Russia-China should come together and form a strategic triangle in the interests of peace and stability in the region. The initial response of India was one of caution that could be explained by the fact that a strategic triangle implied common perceptions and convergence of interests vis-à-vis a common threat. Similarly, China expressed no opinion on this idea. One of the impacts of the events of 9/11 has been that China has developed a positive attitude towards the idea of trilateral cooperation. Possibly, the renewal of Pakistani-American cooperation could have had an impact on Chinese strategic thinking. It was perhaps with the idea of furthering the cause of trilateral cooperation that President Vladimir Putin embarked on his Asian tour by visiting China and later India in December 2002. In a TV interview, Primakov said, “It is shared interest in maintaining security and stability in Central Asia and Afghanistan that may give flesh and blood to the idea of a Moscow-Beijing-Delhi triangle.”

The foreign ministers of the three countries have been meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly to discuss issues of common concern at the global and regional level. Issues such as energy security, trade and enhancing contacts have been discussed. In May 2005, the foreign ministers of the three countries had their first full-fledged meeting.

As mentioned before, the turn of the century saw fundamental changes in the region. The Western military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia radically altered the geopolitical landscape. With the passage of time, Russia was convinced that a multilateral approach was best suited to the evolving situation.
Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov in an interview said that “**multilateral approaches are the best solutions to global problems and regional conflicts**”.12

With increasing focus on multilateral approaches, a regional grouping that has come into prominence is the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**. Prior to the formation of the SCO in June 2001, it was known as the Shanghai Five with a limited agenda of maintaining peace and stability on the border and promoting a good neighborly attitude in the region. The Shanghai Five felt the need to transform itself into a regional grouping as the security problems in Central Asia became complicated and a collective approach was necessary. The SCO’s agenda expanded to include security and economic issues. The essence of the SCO lay in peace and good neighborly ties among the countries. The primary concern of China, an active participant of SCO, was the security of its periphery and its Xinjiang region. A declaration by the heads of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (June 7, 2002) stated that the **SCO has been established with a view to strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighborliness.** 13 The objectives of the SCO were combating religious extremism, separatism, and terrorism, and, at the economic level, it meant energizing economic links. In August 2003, the first multilateral anti-terrorism military exercise was held within the framework of the SCO. At the wider political level, the SCO has expressed its views on issues of international significance. For instance, a statement issued at the end of the St. Petersburg Summit in 2002 reiterated support for the One-China Policy and the principle that “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China.” 14 Similarly, in a clear reference to the US-led war in Iraq, it was stated at the Moscow Summit in 2003 that “we have a common stance.

It was only in July 2005 that India was admitted as Observer to the SCO at the Astana Summit, and we have since regularly attended its meetings. India supports the objective of the SCO to foster economic cooperation, ensure stability in the region and combat terrorism and extremism. SCO has mooted initiatives on increasing regional trade, development of transportation networks and energy cooperation. It is our firm belief that economic cooperation and development in
an environment of security and stability will be beneficial for our region as a whole. With our growing economy and our large market, as well as our geographical proximity to the region, India can be a natural and fruitful partner. India is keen to play a constructive and active role in the SCO, and will duly consider the question of India’s membership of the organization once the SCO has sorted out the relevant procedural issues for expansion. There is no alternative to the UN as a universal organization in an international system.”

Although the SCO has emerged as a proactive and dynamic regional grouping, it nevertheless faces certain challenges. A great deal depends on the nature of Russia-China relations, the two most powerful players in SCO. As an opinion, differences among them cannot be discounted. Similarly as the Russian and Central Asian societies evolve towards democracy and openness, albeit slowly, would their perception of SCO also undergo a change? Moreover, the SCO faces a challenge from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), of which Russia is an active member. The CSTO also espouses similar objectives. For the present, it seems that the SCO is not likely to expand its membership. Currently, there are India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan as countries with observer status in the SCO. India could play an effective role in the grouping. Firstly, India has a rich experience in multilateral diplomacy. After all, it was the founder of the Non-Aligned Movement. India has also been a member of G–77, South-South Cooperation etc. Secondly, Indian experience in combating extremism, terrorism and separatism could be useful. Indian membership would certainly make it broad based, and given India’s rising profile, would certainly lend weight to the SCO. It appears that for China, the SCO is a tool to engage with Central Asia for the foreseeable future ensuring its core objective of maintaining peace, stability and good neighborliness on its common borders. The CSTO, a Russian initiative, is also emerging as an active grouping, although its focus appears to be on military and vigorous defense cooperation among the member states. The CSTO is not likely to open its membership to states other than those of the post-Soviet space. As mentioned, this emphasis on multilateralism has to an extent diluted the regional context of Indo-Russian relations, especially when India is not a full
member of these regional groupings. India’s role is stymied in this situation. New areas of cooperation have nevertheless emerged. One area is joint cooperation in Central Asia. India and Russia stand to benefit by increasing their involvement in Central Asia. The systemic transformation in these countries is still incomplete. India-Russia cooperation in broadening the basis of the Central Asian states’ economy is probable in the spheres of textiles or textile machinery, light industry, and agriculture in the use of new farming techniques. In addition, Central Asia’s industrial base shows that light and food industries are common to all. This is followed by machine building, metal processing and ferrous metallurgy. Indian experience in operating a Soviet type of industrial infrastructure could be useful. At another level, Indian managerial skills can be matched with Russian expertise in upgrading, modernizing and building new enterprises in the medium- and small-scale sector. Indian and Russian cooperation in the energy sector as well as the defense industries located in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan could be accelerated. India has already invested nearly $2.7 billion in the Sakhalin project on natural gas. Indian cooperation in building the export pipeline infrastructure holds significant promise.

Secondly, India-Russia cooperation in the developmental activities of Central Asia can be accelerated if they can provide the landlocked countries access to the outside world. In this regard, the North-South Corridor connecting St. Petersburg with Mumbai is the best option. The corridor, a combination of sea, rail, and road routes was planned in 2000 with Russia, Iran, and India agreeing to this ambitious project. Russia has already constructed a container terminal at Olia and Makhachkala on the Caspian Sea. On July 1, 2003, Kazakhstan also joined the North-South Corridor, and one branch of the corridor now goes to Aktau on the Kazakh side of the Caspian Sea. From the Russian side, it is much easier and cheaper to provide this Eurasian region with goods from India than from Europe. Although the North-South Corridor is operational, it is not functioning up to the desired capacity. Difficulties need to be resolved. In order to open the Siberian part of Russia, it is necessary to give this isolated region access to the outside world. This is possible if one branch of the Trans-
Siberian (trans sib) Railway from Omsk Oblast could be connected to Aktau in Kazakhstan. Such a proposition is not too difficult because Aktau is connected by a rail and road network. Kazakhstan, on the issue of a transport corridor, would certainly like to widen its options. Hence, it could be India-Iran-Kazakhstan and Russia (Omsk Oblast). It could give this region an outlet to the south. A whole new vista for Indian goods could open up not only in Central Asia but in Siberia as well. Landlocked Siberia would also be able to interact with Southeast Asia, Africa, etc. Importantly, the opening of the Siberian region via the North-South Corridor would facilitate Indian labor to go to the region. In Siberia, there is a shortage of labor. Indian labor is known to be efficient and hence could play an important part in the development of Siberia. The question is how to ensure the smooth functioning of this corridor when the North-South Corridor is operating below capacity. One option could be to have sub-regional cooperation among Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, and India. If sub-regional cooperation takes off, many of the problems related to the transport corridor could be sorted out. A joint coordination committee could be set up comprising of members belonging to the four countries. The committee could oversee and address problems such as the harmonization of trans-shipment rules, custom duties, tariffs, etc., and ensure the smooth functioning of the corridor in the interests of all concerned. The physical infrastructure and development that would occur in the process could act as a tool for development and strengthen cooperation.

Indo-Russian Relations and Bilateral Context

While regional input has played an important role in Indo-Russian relations, the bilateral context is equally substantial. At the political level, both India and Russia have steadfastly supported each other on issues of crucial importance. Russia’s position on the Kashmir issue is very close to India’s position. Taking note of President Pervez Musharraf’s speech of January 12, 2002, a joint statement issued at the end of Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov’s visit to India (February 3–4, 2002) said, “Pakistan’s commitment can only be judged by the concrete action Pakistan takes on ground.”16 In other words, Russia showed
complete understanding of India’s position on cross-border terrorism and its reluctance to engage in a dialogue with Pakistan at that time, while on the Chechen issue, India expressed support for the steps taken by Russia to protect its territorial integrity and constitutional order in the rebellious Chechen Republic. On the question of terrorism and the need to initiate countermeasures, India and Russia had similar views. At an international forum, India and Russia have vigorously championed the need to combat this menace with a greater sense of urgency. The two countries have often reiterated their deep commitment to fighting religious extremism and terrorism. Several institutional linkages have been established to facilitate exchange and sharing of information and advancing the common interests in the best possible way.

The congruence of views between India and Russia had a favorable impact on defense cooperation. This cooperation was put on a firm footing with the landmark Sukhoi deal signed in late 1996. The salutary features of Indo-Russian defense cooperation were its long-term-basis transfer of technology, modernization of existing equipment, and access to the latest equipment, weaponry, etc. in the Russian arsenal. In fact, defense cooperation had gone beyond the main “buyer-seller” syndrome and had moved to the plane of joint design, research, and production. The chief of the Indian Armed Forces was in Russia to assure the Russians that enhanced interaction with the United States would not lead to a drift towards that country on the question of defense cooperation.

Even on the nuclear issue, Russia showed considerable understanding of the Indian position when the Pokhran-II blasts took place in 1998. Initially, there was disquiet in Russia over the blasts, but later, Russia did not go public in criticizing India. Importantly, it did not impose sanctions. In fact, in June 1998, an agreement for the construction of two 1000-MW reactors at Kundankulam was signed during the visit of the Russian minister for atomic energy, Evgenii Adamov.

In his first visit to India in October 2000, Putin in his sentimental address to the Indian Parliament had captured all the aforesaid thus:
‘This is my first visit to India. I am sincerely touched by the friendliness, sincerity and ... cordiality that we experience on the Indian soil. This is proof that Russian-Indian relations are free of any political fluctuations. They are stable, firm and they are not altered by time... our relations with India have always been and remain one of the most important areas of Russian foreign policy, and they have a special influence and significance for us. I would like to emphasise ... that no matter how our relations with other countries developed... they are not to prejudice our relations with India. This will never be so. India is a great country. It is our long term partner and ally... there has never been a voice of conflict. Russia and India are ancient civilisations, but at the same time they are living democracies...’  

Similar sentiments had been expressed by Putin in the course of his visit in December 2002 at the official dinner in his honour:

‘This is my second visit to your wonderful country. Its beauty and originality excite admiration while the genius and diligence of the Indian people arouse the feeling of high respect. Disagreement or conflicts have never overshadowed the longstanding Russian-Indian friendship...our national characters, life perception, our spirituality and culture also have a lot in common...’

Quite often it is sentiments such as these, outside the pale of conventional diplomatic jargon, which truly touch the heart of the leaders and people in question, and contribute towards laying solid and deep foundations in relationships, as has been in the case of the time-tested Soviet/Russian-Indian partnership.

Needless to mention that in year 2000 when Putin came to power some basic restoration of relations was made. Yet Putin brought considerable cheer to the Indo-Russian relations as well as a measure of order and stability. His visit to India was one of the first visits abroad. During his visit in 2000 he stated that his country’s relations with India were among the top priorities of its foreign policy and beyond any doubt a matter of national consensus in Russia. The major issue in Indo-Russian relations has always been arms trade so this sphere was the first
one to be revitalized as the most developed field of cooperation since Indo-Soviet relations. After USSR collapsed both countries still were interested to keep and develop relationships in arms trade for several reasons. **First**, for Russia India was still the biggest arms market (two others buyers of Russian weapons were only China and Iran). **Second**, Russia needed to earn hard currency and safeguard its military industry (even now India buys more hardware from Russian defense industry than Russian own military force). Meanwhile, for India Russia was vital to upgrade soviet weapons arsenal which was 70-80% Soviet-Russian and modernize it. Russian arms were and still remain cheaper than the western ones. Then Russian hardware was also familiar to personnel. Furthermore, one of the most important factors was **Russian readiness to transfer technology which western countries refused to do**. For Russia defence deal matters more, almost, we can say these are the base of strategic relations.

At the same time even being criticized by the West, Russia came to rescue India when China cut supplies of enriched uranium fuel to Tarapur. Moreover, Putin was the first leader to visit Bhabha Atomic Research center (BARC) after nuclear tests. The latest Head of Russian Min Atom, A. Rumyantsev has been very clear in his wish to cooperate with India on nuclear issues. "India is our strategic partner. We want to ensure that there are no reproaches (from the international community) in this regard". He confirmed that Russia was still intending to continue assisting in building nuclear power station despite international concern saying that "We will do our best to participate in India's ambitious program to generate 20,000 MW of nuclear power by 2020". There are also speculations about Russia helping India in constructing a nuclear reactor for its nuclear submarine and "supplying India with 300-kilometre range Klub class cruise missiles that can be launched under water".22

At the same time as Deepa Ollapally - the author of the article "Indo-Russian Strategic Relations: New Choices and Constrains" states: "It is no secret that India would prefer to get nuclear assistance from France or even US…" India also hasn’t forgotten the backtracking on cryogenic engine technology contract. So even though Indo-Russian nuclear program seems to have support on
the highest level there is no actual guarantee the cooperation can last for a long time.

In year 2000 HRM inaugurated the Russian-Indian Center for Advanced Computing Research at the institute for Computer Aided Design (ICAD) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with the installation of the PARAM 1000 Super Computer. Also a memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Science and Technology between the Department of Science and Technology and the Kurchatov Center for Nuclear Physics was signed in 2000. During the visit of Indian Prime Minister to Russia in 2003 a Protocol on Scientific Cooperation between the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of the Republic of India and the Russian Academy of Sciences was signed. In the same year Memorandum of Understanding for the Continuance of Mahatma Gandhi Chair of Indian Philosophy in Moscow as well as creating three more chairs of Indian studies in the Russian cities of St.Petersburg, Vladivostok and Kazan was signed. Also the Cooperation Agreement between the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and the Indian Council of World Affairs was made.

Trade remains the weakest link in Indo-Russian relations. Indian top leaders showed their concern by this fact and were making steps for improving the situation. For example during visit to Russia (in 2003) PM of India was accompanied by a delegation of more than ninety top industrialists and businesspersons. This event "provided the necessary high level thrust to the round the year efforts such as revival of joint Business Council, encouraging more frequent business exchanges, establishing necessary banking and financial structure to facilitate bilateral trade and investment…”

Putin also pays much attention to the problem of actually trade stagnation between two countries. In his speech (Bangalore, 2004, 4th of December) addressed to business elite of India he said that bilateral trade reached level of $2 billions. He emphasized though that in absolute values this figure was still very far away from satisfactory especially if the fact that it was mostly raw materials’ trade was taken into consideration. Putin also promised to try to balance the arms and civil trade and was saying that now to his deep satisfaction Russia and India
started to cooperate more in such sectors as IT, transport, energy, roads building and other spheres of non-military trade. Russian president underlined importance of so-called North-South Corridor Intergovernmental Agreement which was signed between India and Russian Federation in 2000. "The agreement is expected to facilitate easier movement of goods along the corridor connecting India through the sea route to Iran and then via the Caspian Sea to the Russian Federation and beyond. This initiative is also likely to reduce transit time and cost of transportation of goods from India to the Russian Federation and European Countries". Putin was welcoming Indian business elite to take advantages of opportunities opened by this agreement.

In 2002 the two sides began to "explore the possibility of using Indian debt repayments to fund Russian investments in India…" We should keep in mind that straightening of economic relations between two countries are of the special importance now due to the fact that economy is Russian "priority one, two and three" in so called "Putin doctrine".

On May 1, 2001, President Bush launched his $ 53 billion plan for National Missile Defence (NMD). This defence system was based on the installation of land-based radar and interceptors which could detect missiles immediately after they are fired, and which by hitting them like a bullet could turn them into smithers. In order to pursue the NMD, the USA walked out of the ABM Treaty, thus casting it into the dustbin of history. Soon after the Bush plan was announced, India through a statement of Jaswant Singh, the then Foreign Minister, became one of the first countries to support it. The UPA Government which came to power in 2004 did not withdraw this support. On the other hand, the defence pact that it signed with the United States in 2005, included provisions on cooperation between the two countries in the development of defensive weapon systems. Both Russia and China strongly objected to the NMD plan. The Russians also apparently did not take very kindly to India’s strong and instant support for it. This became one of the reasons for the tension that subsequently developed in the relations between the two countries.
Visits and Declarations among both countries- Chronology of events

Indian PM visits to Russia in November, 2001

At the invitation of the Russian Federation, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, paid a state visit to the Russian Federation from November 4-7, 2001. This visit was in line with the agreement to have annual Summit Meetings outlined in the Declaration on Strategic Partnership signed at the time of the State visit to India by President Putin in October 2000.

A *Moscow Declaration on International Terrorism* was signed by the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation. A number of other bilateral documents were also signed for strengthening cooperation in other fields. A Joint Statement on Strategic Issues was agreed upon. During the meetings, discussions took place on bilateral matters, and on regional and international issues of mutual interest. The talks were held in a frank and friendly atmosphere in the true spirit of the strategic partnership existing between the two countries. Both Sides stressed upon the time-tested relationship between India and the Russian Federation which has been marked by continuity, trust and mutual understanding. A close identity of views was noted on issues of mutual global interest. The Sides stressed the significance of the Declaration on Strategic Partnership signed by President of the Russian Federation and the Prime Minister of India in October 2000 which has elevated the multifaceted ties between the countries to a qualitatively new and higher level, has laid a strong foundation for further development of Indo-Russian relations, and strengthened common understanding and trust between them.

Both Sides highlighted the forward movement in bilateral relations pursuant to the decisions taken during the visit of President Putin. They agreed to give greater depth, span and content to their bilateral relations and identified steps to further strengthen them. A comprehensive review of the trade and economic relations between the two countries was undertaken. Both sides confirmed their intention to make efforts at the diversification and establishment of new settlement procedures in the area of trade and economic cooperation. A need to focus on promoting investment, boosting trade as well as removing barriers in
trade was emphasized. It was noted that the decisions taken during the *Seventh session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC)* helped in the promotion of cooperation in important areas such as civil aviation, energy and information technology. In this connection, the Inter Session Review Meeting of the Co-Chairmen held in New Delhi in October 2001 was considered significant for the further intensification of trade and economic relations between the two countries. The signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement for Promotion of Aviation Safety has opened up broad prospects for the development of bilateral ties in civil aviation. The Confederation of Indian Industries signed an agreement with the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs on setting up of representative offices in Moscow and New Delhi respectively. EXIM Bank of India signed an agreement to extend a credit line of US $ 10 million with the Vnesheconombank of the Russian Federation. The State Bank of India and the Canara Bank also reached agreement with the Central Bank of Russia for setting up a branch in Moscow. These steps will further boost bilateral trade relations between the two countries. Both sides agreed to encourage further cooperation in the area of Information Technology and Computerisation.

Emphasizing that a promising area of cooperation between the two countries was in the energy sector which is expected to occupy a central place in their bilateral relations in the coming years, the two Sides welcomed the conclusion of the agreement on participation of ONGC Videsh Limited in the Sakhalin-I oil and gas project in the Russian Federation. Keeping in view the increasing importance of energy security, both Sides noted the growing significance of the energy sector in their bilateral relations and expressed their common desire to intensify long term collaborative efforts in this regard. Expert level discussions would be held on a possible setting up of an institutional mechanism to carry forward cooperation in the area of energy security.

The Sides reiterated their commitment to continue their cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy as well as outer space. A *"Memorandum on Implementation of Kudankulam NPP Project"* was signed. Both Sides took note
of the successful development of scientific and technological cooperation between them and the establishment of the Joint Council for Implementation of the Integrated Long-Term Program of Scientific and Technological Cooperation between India and Russia for the period up to 2010.

The Sides recalled the traditional contacts in the field of culture between the two countries and emphasised that steps need to be taken for further strengthening these ties. Three Chairs and two projects of cooperation relating to Indology were established at St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan, and Vladivostok. The Sides stressed that they attach importance to the development of ties between the regions of the Russian Federation and the States and Union Territories of India. They attach importance to the activities of the Working Group for Regional Cooperation under the IRIGC. Agreements were reached on the establishment of partner-relations and cooperation between the Astrakhan region in the Russian Federation and the Gujarat state in India.

The Sides noted that military-technical cooperation has acquired a new dimension covering not only trade in arms and military equipment, but also joint research and development of new projects. They considered that the First Session of the Inter Governmental Commission for Military and Technological Cooperation held in June 2001 in Moscow was mutually beneficial and productive.

The Sides expressed satisfaction over the interaction between the National Security Council of India and the Security Council of the Russian Federation. They noted that the regular meetings of the Working Groups established under the Indo-Russian Protocol of Cooperation between the two Councils would help in further strengthening this cooperation. Both Sides consider it one of the most pressing objectives of today to strengthen regional and global stability and international security. A Joint Statement of India and the Russian Federation on Strategic Issues was agreed to during the visit.

Both Sides in spite of cooperation in the field of energy, Atomic energy for peaceful use, cultural and military Technical cooperation reaffirmed their commitment to promote the formation of an equitable multipolar world order
based on the principles of rule of law and equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in domestic affairs of States, with a view to removing threats to stability and international security. They expressed their desire for the further reform of the United Nations in order to strengthen its central role in international affairs. They agreed on the advisability to expand the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to make it more representative and increase its effectiveness. The Russian Federation reiterated that it supports India, an influential member of the international community, as a strong and appropriate candidate for the permanent membership of the expanded UNSC. Both Parties will actively cooperate within the United Nations to ensure an effective implementation of the Millennium Summit Declaration.

The Sides reaffirmed that global terrorism is a threat to international peace and security. Cooperation to combat terrorism is becoming an imperative of contemporary international reality. The two Sides believe that combating this menace should be on a comprehensive and long-term basis and should be directed also at those supporting, harbouring or providing safe haven to terrorists. India and the Russian Federation intend to make their full contribution to the establishment of such a system. They proceed from the understanding that terrorist acts admit no justification under any political, ethnic, religious, social, economic, or other grounds. Terrorism is an absolute evil; it is a global scourge to be collectively countered.

The two Sides expressed their satisfaction with the level of cooperation between India and the Russian Federation in countering international terrorism and other transnational organised crimes, which fuel terrorism, including drug trafficking. The two Sides reiterated their resolve to continue and coordinate efforts for strengthening the international legal basis for combating these challenges. In this regard, they stressed the need for the early finalisation of the Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the UN.

Both Sides expressed their commitment to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan. They agreed that for peace and
stability to return to Afghanistan, it was essential to ensure the establishment of a broad-based independent government with representation from all ethnic groups. Both Sides stressed that there could be no place for elements of the Taliban in any future Afghan government. They underscored the important role the international community would have to play in the political, social and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and in this context agreed to ensure close coordination between them to ensure the success of all such endeavours.

Both Sides remain deeply concerned over the threat to security and stability in Central Asia posed by international terrorism and religious extremism. The Sides noted with satisfaction that the two countries hold similar position on issues concerning Central Asia. In their view, regional cooperation can play an important role in stabilization of the situation in the Central Asian region.

The Sides shared their concerns over the developments in the Middle East, which is still passing through a crisis. They spoke in favor of adoption of urgent measures to resume Israeli-Palestinian dialogue on the basis of the Mitchell plan. The Sides expressed their conviction that there existed no alternative to the peace process there and declared the need to ensure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on the basis of the Madrid principles, and, first and foremost, the relevant UN Resolutions, and the "land for peace" principle.

The two Sides believe that the response to the present threats and challenges to security in the Asia-Pacific region, including the escalation of terrorist acts, violent forms of extremism and separatism, should be sought through the consolidation of efforts of all the States concerned. The importance of the work within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), with a view to promoting trust in the political and military sphere with future application of preventive diplomacy methods, was emphasized. India and the Russian Federation expressed their mutual readiness to further enhance constructive interaction with the countries of the Asia Pacific region in the bilateral and multilateral formats in the interests of stability and security in this vast region.

Both Sides expressed their conviction that the visit of the Prime Minister of India to the Russian Federation and the discussions held would facilitate further
development of strategic partnership between the two countries, expansion of bilateral cooperation and interaction aimed at strengthening international strategic stability and in the building of a just, fair, democratic and multi-polar world order.\textsuperscript{27}

**Vladimir Putin's visit to India in December, 2002**

Mr Putin and Mr Vajpayee signed two Russian-Indian declarations—on the further strengthening of strategic partnership and on the strengthening and stepping-up of economic and scientific-technical cooperation. They also made a joint statement. A memorandum on the establishment of a joint ad hoc team to counteract international terrorism was signed in the national leaders’ presence. Among other documents signed after the talks were a memorandum of mutual understanding between the Russian Ministry of Information Technology and Communications and the Indian Ministry of Communications on cooperation in telecommunications, and a protocol on the protection and uses of Intellectual Property Rights.

When addressing a news conference after the signing ceremony, Mr Putin said, in particular, that the Russian and Indian stances on essential international problems were close or even the same. The issues concerned, above all, were guarantees of strategic stability and security, the fight against international terrorism, extremism, separatism and international crime.\textsuperscript{28}

**Visit of the Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Russia November 12, 2003**

While welcoming Indian PM, President Vladimir Putin said that this visit will serve as an important milestone in strengthening the strategic partnership between our two countries, between India and the Russian Federation. Our ties are developing in the political sphere, on the international stage, and we are very glad of this, but they are also strengthening in the area of military-technical cooperation and in the economic sphere in general. We are seeing positive growth in our economic relations.
Following documents were signed between India and Russian Federation on 12th Nov. 2003:

1. **Indo-Russian Political Declaration on Global Challenges and Threats to World Security and Stability:** The Joint Declaration signed by the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation Mr. Vladimir Putin is aimed at further enhancing political cooperation between the two countries in dealing with challenges and threats presently faced by the world. In the Declaration, the two countries have noted international terrorism, transnational organised crime, illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, certain aspects of globalisation and environmental and developmental challenges as major issues that require collective efforts. India and Russia have declared that dialogue, consultation and cooperation should be the means to promote global peace, security and stability, for which the two countries are committed to cooperate as strategic partners both bilaterally and at the multilateral level. It is particularly emphasised that the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in this regard. The two countries underlined that in the era of globalisation, true multiplurality, in all its aspects, will be attained by preserving pluralism.

2. Protocol between the Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on **Joint Publication of Bilateral Archive (Diplomatic) Documents:** Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will jointly prepare and publish a compilation of archive (diplomatic) documents relating to relations between the two countries. Joint efforts will be made to organise both the already published documents and those which have yet not been published.

3. **MOU** between Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Russian Aviation and Space Agency on **Cooperation (Rosaviakosmos) in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes:** The MOU outlines various technical areas of ongoing and prospective Cooperation
between ISRO and Rosaviakosmos for the use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

4. **Agreement on Scientific Cooperation and Scientific Exchange between the Department of Science and Technology and the Russian Academy of Science**: The mutually beneficial cooperation between scientific institutes and scientists of India and Russia will be carried out by combining research efforts of the two countries and joint utilization of R&D resources. Scientific cooperation will be conducted through joint research and development projects, joint workshops and symposia and use of 200 man-weeks per year for exchange of individual scientists for such purposes. Exchange of scientists would be conducted for project-based work, technology transfer, presentation of scientific lectures and exploring new avenues of scientific cooperation.

5. **Memorandum of Understanding** between Department of Science & Technology of the Government of India and the Russian Academy of Sciences for **Establishment of Indo-Russian Science and Technology Centre for Gas Hydrate Studies**: For realizing the potential of gas hydrates in the continental margins and slopes of exclusive Economic Zones. The Centre is proposed to be established in National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai. The Department of Science and Technology and the Russian Academy of Sciences will support this programme under the bilateral Integrated Long Term Programme of Cooperation in Science & Technology.

6. **Memorandum of Understanding** between the Department of Science & Technology of the Government of India and the Russian Academy of Sciences for the establishment of the Indo-Russian Centre **for Earthquake Research**: This Centre has been proposed to be set up at Indian Meteorological Department, New Delhi. The Centre would carry our research in basic applied management related studies in this area. It will undertake software and hardware development, technology transfer, joint manufacturing and commercialization of seismological and geo-physical
equipments. The Centre will also establish testing and collaboration facilities in India for standardization of seismological equipment. The Centre will be supported under Integrated Long Term Programme of Cooperation in Science & Technology by the Department of Science and Technology and the Russian Academy of Science. The Joint Research Council will oversee the scientific programmes of the Centre.

7. **Agreement on Scientific Cooperation and Scientific Exchange** between the Indian National Science Academy and the Russian Academy of Sciences: Both Academies would support fundamental research in science and technology with special emphasis on specifically chosen areas. They would be facilitated by exchange of scientific information, research visits, bilateral workshops and symposia.

8. **Agreement** between the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation and the Government of the State of Andhra Pradesh of the Republic of India on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation: This agreement is aimed at formalising cooperation between the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh and the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation in the field of trade and economy, science and technology and culture. The two sides will contribute in this direction, including by creating favourable legal, organisational, financial, economic and other necessary conditions. This agreement is in line with the efforts being made by India and Russia in promoting regional level cooperation between the two countries.

9. **Joint Report on the Implementation of Steps Elaborated in the Joint Economic Declaration** Signed during the Visit of President Putin to India in December 2002: Under para 20 of the Joint Declaration on Strengthening and Enhancing Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, signed in December 2002 in New Delhi, the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission was required by the two leaders to submit a Report to the Summit. This Joint Report deals with the
implementation of the provisions of the Joint Declaration since the last Summit.

10. **Memorandum of Understanding** between the Bank of Foreign Trade (Vneshtorgbank) Russia and the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd. (ECGC): The purpose of the MOU is to establish a *framework for cooperation between the parties in supporting and encouraging trade and investments* between India and Russia. The MOU covers sharing of information, training and consideration of schemes to facilitate investment.

**Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, to India during December 3-5, 2004**

During the visit following documents were signed and agreed upon :²⁹

1. Joint Declaration by the Russian Federation and the Republic of India.
2. Agreement on Cooperation in the Study and Use of Space for Peaceful Purposes.
5. Protocol between the St. Petersburg Administration and the City of Mumbai on Cooperation.
6. Agreement on Strategic Cooperation between Gazprom and the Gas Authority of India.
7. Memorandum of Understanding between Sberbank and the State Bank of India.
8. Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between Sberbank and the Canara Bank of India.
9. Agreement on Cooperation between Vnesheconombank, Roseximbank and the Indian Export Credit Guarantee Corporation.
10. Agreement on Cooperation through the Dialogue of Civilisations Programme between the Russian Centre for National Glory and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

11. Memorandum of Understanding between Stroitransgaz and the Gas Authority of India.

Visit of the Prime Minister of India Dr Manmohan Singh to Russia to participate in celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the victory over the nazi Germany, May 8 - 10, 2005

The Prime Minister of India Dr Manmohan Singh visited Moscow on May 8-10 to participate in celebrations of the 60th Anniversary of the Victory over the Nazi Germany. Mr Singh met President Vladimir Putin. The leaders expressed satisfaction with the level of strategic partnership between Russia and India and discussed further development of bilateral relations. President Vladimir Putin said in beginning of talks that We have plenty to work on in widening our trade and economic ties. I think that you will agree with me that unfortunately the level of exchange of trade turnover is not what it could be between India and Russia. We could give substance to these relations, pay more attention and provide greater support to cooperation in science intensive fields.

Mr. Manmohan Singh also put thrust that for us relations with Russia are very important. I agree with you that we must continue to develop our relations, and we are very grateful to you for your personal contribution in developing our relations. Russia is our friend, who has endured the test of time, and all sections of society in India consider Russia to be our friend. For us, mutual relations with Russia have strategic importance.

On 25th Oct, 2005 External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh said that strategic partnership between India and Russia was continuously gaining strength. "India and Russia share a time-tested friendship which has become a strategic partnership". "The closer ties between India and Russia have been further cemented by people-to-people contacts and a myriad of cultural exchanges," he added. "Our economic cooperation is growing and we have multiple programmes
and projects in a number of areas of science and technology," the Minister said referring to the 11th session of Indo-Russian IRIGC, starting on October 26.

**Indo-Russian partnership oil and gas sector 2005**

Indo-Russian relationship has started to acquire more economic dimensions. Oil and Gas has been regarded as one of the most important segment of energy security. The coordination between India’s *ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL)* and Russian state owned firms is better in Sakhalin-I Project. OVL has 20 percent stake in the Exxon Mobil operated projects, which has started producing 23000 barrels of oil per day from 1st October, 2005 and ramp up the production to 2,50,000 barrels per day by 2006 end. Russia is restructuring its tax structure and a liberal regime is bound to attract more investments in Russia and India may directly benefit from this. Russia is also trying to demonopolize oil sector and trying to make big oil conglomerate. This will create better conditions for overseas investment. The 11th Indo-Russia Intergovernmental Commission saw Russia’s pledge to support India to get international restrictions on civil nuclear technology transfer lifted. Russia has also promised to set up four more nuclear reactors at Koodankulam in addition to two reactors.

Indo-Russia joint naval exercise 2005 christened INDRA-05 has moved on to tactical counter maritime operations, with stress on counter terrorism.

**Visit of the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to the Russian Federation, 2005**

The Prime Minister of the Republic of India Dr Manmohan Singh paid an official visit to the Russian Federation on 4–7 December, 2005. The talks concluded with the following documents being signed in the presence of the two leaders: an Agreement between the Federal Space Agency and the Indian Space Research Organisation on cooperation on the Coronas-Photon project in the area of solar physics and solar-terrestrial relations; an Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of India on measures to protect technology during long-term cooperation in joint
development, operation and use of the GLONASS global navigation system for peaceful purposes; an Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of India on mutual protection of intellectual property rights in bilateral military-technical cooperation.\(^{30}\)

**Renewal of defence deal**

India & Russia have decided to renew defence cooperation programme. The defence cooperation programme is bound to expire in 2010. Russia still remains the largest source of Indian weapons. Russia has agreed to extend help India build the *Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV)* and air defence vessel. ATV is an indigenous project for the development of nuclear submarines. Defence contract between India & Russia that are due for delivery till the end of 2007 are valued at roughly $10 billion. Under a bilateral accord signed in 2004 India & Russia have jointly launch navigational satellite to make Glonass fully operational by 2007. At the fifth Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) for military-technical cooperation meeting, both the countries decided to jointly manufacture a *Multi-role Transport Aircraft (MTA)* for the air forces of the two countries. Both the countries also discussed over the terms for supply of three TU-22M long range bombers.\(^{31}\)

**12th Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Meeting**

The twelfth Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) on trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and cultural cooperation was held in New Delhi on 8th December, 2006. The Russian delegation was led by Alexander Zhukov, Deputy Chairman of Government of Russian Federation. These are five working groups under the auspices of Joint Commission

(a) on Trade and Economic Cooperation;
(b) on mines and Metallurgy;
(c) on Technologies;
(d) on Energy; and
(e) on culture and Tourism.
These groups have met earlier and have finalized detailed areas of cooperation. India and Russia have set up a *Joint Study Group [JSG]* to provide a road map to raise bilateral trade and study feasibility of a *Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement {CECA}* between the two countries and the JSG has had two meetings so far. An Indo-Russian Forum on Trade and Investment has also been set up. This forum meets for wide participation of business representatives.³²

**Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation to India, 2007**

Following agreements were signed between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation during the Official visit of H.E. Mr Vladimir V Putin, President of the Russian Federation to India, January 25-26, 2007 New Delhi³³


2. **Protocol between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Russian Federation on holding “Year of Russia in India” in the Year 2008 and “Year of India in Russia” in the Year 2009.**

3. **Memorandum of Intent between the Department of Atomic Energy, the Government of the Republic of India and Federal Atomic Energy Agency, the Russian Federation on development of cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plant units at Kudankulam site as well as in the construction of Russian design nuclear power plants at new sites in the Republic of India.** Signed by Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Secretary Department of Atomic Energy and Mr. Sergey Kirienko, Director Federal Atomic Energy Agency of Russia.

GLONASS for peaceful purposes. Signed by Shri G. Madhavan Nair, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization and Mr. Anatoly Perminov, Director, Federal Space Agency of the Russian Federation


7. Protocol between the Central Board of Excise and Customs (Republic of India) and the Federal Customs Service (Russian Federation) on exchange of information on the movement of goods and conveyances between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation. Signed by Shri V.P. Singh, Chairman, Central Board of Excise and Customs and Mr. Andrey Belyaninov, Head, Federal Customs Service.


Visit of the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the Russian Federation. 2007

On Departure for Russia the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh on November 11, 2007 New Delhi said that “The India-Russia Strategic Partnership is an enduring bond of friendship, which has strong historical roots. Our relations with Russia have traditionally been a factor of peace and
stability in the region and beyond. I am convinced that the strong fundamentals of mutual trust and a shared world view on regional and global issues would continue to bring our two countries closer together in a dynamic international environment. Our multifaceted bilateral cooperation with Russia is based on long-term interests. The year 2007 is the 60th year of the establishment of India-Russia diplomatic relations. As we rejoice in our joint accomplishments during the six decades of unbroken friendship, we also stand committed to further deepen our partnership in the fields of trade and investment, defence, energy security, science and technology, space and other areas of mutual benefit. I am confident that my visit will lead to a reaffirmation of our joint endeavour towards creating greater economic prosperity and a secure, stable and peaceful world order.”

On 12th November, 2007, two have discussed bilateral relations, in particular cooperation in the military-technical and nuclear energy sectors. Mr Putin and Mr Singh noted that Russia and India share common or similar positions on the main international issues. Three intergovernmental agreements were signed in the presence of the two leaders following the talks.

Year 2008 began in India-Russia relations just as 2007 ended with a bang. Close on the wheels of the successful visit of the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Moscow in November 2007.

Russian Prime Minister Mr. Victor Zubkov led a high-level delegation of Russian Ministers, senior officials, and businessmen to India during February 12-13, 2008. The Russian Premier inaugurated the "Year of Russia in India" together with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at an impressive ceremony at the ramparts of the Red Fort on February 12. Delhi and other Indian cities will hope to see the best of Russian arts and culture in India between now and December 2008. Mr. Zubkov met Prime Minister, and called on the President and the Vice-President. He also had substantive meetings with our External Affairs Minister, Finance Minister and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

The Russian Premier’s visit to India was also timed to coincide with the second session of the India-Russia Forum on Trade and Investment. The event
witnessed the participation of over 500 business representatives from the public and private sector in both countries, and resulted in two outcomes that can be considered significant: firstly, it was decided to establish a CEOs Council which will be akin to a Joint Business Council. This should kick-start and provide effective ignition for the "B2B" interaction. It is a timely initiative since, over time, the trade relationship between the two countries will need to be determined by the burgeoning private entrepreneurs in both countries. Secondly, a joint task force (JTF) will now monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the joint study group for taking the trade and economic relations between the two countries to newer highs by removing the impediments to bilateral trade and commerce. The JTF will also examine the feasibility of a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation agreement (CECA). The trade and investment forum resulted in the Captains of Indian and Russian industry and finance coming together to discuss prospects of working together in IT, financial services, power and energy sector, and other key spheres as transport, infrastructure, metallurgy and mining. Significantly, Premier Zubkov’s India visit coincided with the Russian Vneshtorgbank and Russian telecom and services conglomerate giant Sistema inaugurating their representative offices in New Delhi.

All in all, the Russian Premier’s visit did have a significant focus on trade and economic cooperation, and should help both countries to march in tandem in realizing the goals laid down by the political leadership in both India and Russia in further advancing their partnership. The rock-solid foundation provided by the close and friendly relations that the two countries have enjoyed over the past six decades will help businesses in both countries to similarly move forward and advance cooperation in sectors ranging from energy to aviation, and metallurgy to the power and engineering sector.

**India-Russia Chamber of Commerce launched**

In response to the long felt need of the business community for a dedicated country specific Chamber, the India-Russia Chamber of Commerce has been established recently, to fill this gap. The Chamber was inaugurated by His
Excellency Mr. Alexander Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation on February 12, 2008 at Hotel Taj Mansingh, New Delhi. The overall objective of the India-Russia Chamber of Commerce will be to contribute towards the realization of the vast potential that exists in the economic/commercial field between the two countries. In this, we will compliment efforts of other Chambers. His Excellency Mr. Vyacheslav Ivanovich Trubnikov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to India and Mr. Shashank, former Foreign Secretary, Government of India, are the Co-Patrons of the Chamber, while Ambassador Pripuran Singh Haer, IFS (Retd) is the Secretary General.

The Thirteenth Session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) sub-group on land systems was held from June 23-27, 2008 at Sochi, Russia. An 8-member team from India participated in the session. Issues concerning ongoing military-technical cooperation and identification of areas for future cooperation were discussed at the meeting.

**Prime Minister Singh meets Russian President during G-8 summit**

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh met with the President of Russia H.E. Mr. Dmitry Medvedev in Hokkaido on 9 July on the sidelines of the G8 Summit in Japan. Bilateral cooperation and regional and international issues of importance to both sides were reviewed at the meeting. President Medvedev made it a point to convey his sincere condolences to the families of Indian diplomats who lost their lives in the dastardly terrorist attack at the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia on also issued a statement on 7 July condemning the inhuman act. President Medvedev confirmed to Dr. Singh that he would be visiting India later this year.

**BRIC Summit**

The first Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) Summit was held on 9 July in Hokkaido. It was attended by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, President Medvedev, President Lula de Silva, and President Hu Jintao. The four leaders decided to hold the next BRIC Summit in New York. President Medvedev said...
that the BRIC countries should play a greater role in shaping up the new global financial architecture. Also, Russian companies plan to enter into the exploration and extraction of natural resources with Indian partners, he said. The two sides are keen to develop relations in areas such as metals, machine building, pharmaceuticals, space, and biotechnology and information technology.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had a telephone conversation with President Medvedev on 24 July. This was the second time that the two leaders spoke on the phone since Mr. Dmitry Medvedev became President in May this year.

**Trilateral Official level Meeting**

The India-Russia-China trilateral official-level meeting on Disaster Management and Mitigation was held in Samara, Russia on 29 July 2008. Shri Prabhanshu Kamal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, represented India at the meeting. Consultations were also held with the Russian side on 30 July on the Draft Agreement on Emergency Preparedness.

**Russia offers Condolence on Mumbai Terror Attacks**

In November 2008 was also witness to two most regrettable incidents: the first in Russia—an accident on 8 November on board the Russian submarine ‘Nepra’, and the second in India—a series of ghastly terrorist attacks in Mumbai during 26-29 November. PM Manmohan Singh sent his deepest condolences in a message to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on the accident on board the Russian submarine. Addressing media in Caracas on 27 November, President Medvedev expressed condolences to PM in connection with the Mumbai terrorist attacks. In his message, President Medvedev said “it is inadmissible to use terrorist methods in the settlement of any issue”. On 28 November, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin expressed condolences to the families of those who died as a result of acts of terrorism in Mumbai. PM Putin’s message conveyed that the “barbaric crimes committed in Mumbai came as a real shock for all of us and once again reminded us of the necessity of repulsing any terrorist attack resolutely.
President Dmitry Medvedev visits India

President Dmitry Medvedev paid a successful State visit to India on 4-5 December, 2008. President Medvedev held extensive discussions with Prime Minister on bilateral and international issues. President Medvedev also presided over the closing ceremony of the ‘Year of Russia in India’ together with the President of India. President Medvedev was the first foreign Head of State to visit India after the Mumbai terrorist attacks, and the issue of terrorism was discussed at President Medvedev’s meeting with the Prime Minister in New Delhi. Russia expressed its readiness to cooperate with India in every possible way in punishing the perpetrators of the terrorist acts. India and Russia strengthened their ties further by inking 10 agreements, including a pact on civil nuclear cooperation and decided to intensify their cooperation in combating terrorism. The agreements signed in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev were in diverse areas ranging from space and defence to finance, human space programme and tourism. The new Russian President is accompanied by a host of officials and businessmen from various state-run and private agencies and companies.

Describing the agreement on civil nuclear cooperation as a “new milestone” in bilateral relations, Singh told a joint press conference with Russian President who is on a three-day visit, here, “The signing of the agreement on civil nuclear cooperation with Russia marks a new milestone in the history of our cooperation with Russia in the field of nuclear energy.” Under the agreement, Russia will build four additional atomic reactors in the Kudankulam nuclear plant in Tamil Nadu. Russia agreed in January 2007 to help India in the construction of four energy blocks at the atomic plant in Kudankulam and nuclear power plants at new sites in India. Separately, OAO Tvel, the Russian nuclear-fuel monopoly, agreed to deliver fuel worth $700 million to other Indian power stations. Singh, after signing a joint declaration with Medvedev,
said both the countries have taken “yet another step forward” through joint action in human space flight programme.

**Dmitry Medvedev about relations with India** Relations with India have always been and I am sure will be one of the most important foreign policy priorities of our country. Our mutual ties of friendship are filled with sympathy, and trust, and openness. And we must say frankly that they were never overshadowed by disagreements or conflict. This understanding - this is indeed the common heritage of our peoples. It is valued and cherished in our country, in Russia, and in India. And we are rightfully proud of so close, so close relations between our countries.36

**Pratibha Devi Singh Patil about relations with Russia** We are confident that India lives in the hearts of every Russian. In the same way, I can assure you that Russia also lives in our souls as a Homeland, as people who share our emotions, our feelings of mutual respect and constant friendship. Long live our friendship.37

Russia’s space agency signed a new document with ISRO on cooperation in space exploration, which includes plans to send two Indian astronauts to space on board a Russian Soyuz spacecraft in 2013. Observing that both countries have decided to increase the trade volume to $10 billion by 2010, Singh said they discussed the possibilities of greater cooperation between Indian and Russian companies, both in upstream and down stream sectors. The two leaders also discussed military cooperation, including technology transfer, T-90 tanks and “issues concerning creating and selling or leasing nuclear powered submarines.”

The two countries signed accords on the sale of 80 MI-17V-5 helicopters to India and cooperation in areas including space exploration, financial markets and tourism. According to Rosboronexport officials, the helicopter deal is worth more than $1 billion. The Russian leader expressed hope that the arms agreement would be extended for the next 10 years. “Our prime task is to move from buy-sell to joint production and development” in missile and aircraft development, he said. “Some issues remain, but there are not many of them,” Medvedev said. “We have agreed that we will keep these issues under joint control and we’ll fully cooperate with each other.”
Russia and India have seen a growth in bilateral trade in year 2008, which increased in the first nine months by 41.6% to $3.8 billion dollars year-on-year. The two countries plan to increase trade to $10 billion by 2010 from this year’s expected level of $7 billion, and diversify economic cooperation in the future. Both the countries, partners in the BRIC nations, which also include China and Brazil, are looking to boost trade to $10 billion by 2010. Russia’s Statistics Service earlier said accumulated Indian investment in Russia totaled $821 million, including $718 million of foreign direct investment. Russia invested $18 million in India in the first half of 2008.

Agreements/MoUs Signed During Visit

During the visit, Russia and India signed ten Agreements/MoUs covering a wide expanse of strategic cooperation between the two nations. These were as under:

1. Joint Declaration between the Russian President and Indian Prime Minister
3. Agreement on Construction of Additional Nuclear Plants at Kudankulum site as well as Construction of Russian-designed Nuclear Power Plants at New Sites within Republic of India
4. MOU on Joint Action in the Field of Human Space Flight Programme
6. MOU on Joint Cooperation in Customs, Excise and Narcotics
7. MOU for Cooperation Between the Respective National Securities and Exchange Boards
8. Contract for Supply by Russia of 80xMI-17 Helicopters
9. Agreement for Prevention of Laundering of Proceeds from criminal Activities
10. MOU between Heads of CEOs Council.
The Agreement for construction of four additional nuclear plants at Kudankulam was ready to be signed during the last visit of President Putin. It was deferred due to India's deference to US sensitivities as the Indo-US Nuclear Deal was yet to be signed. However, during the present visit the Agreement expands the scope to construct new nuclear plants at additional sites within India in addition to the four new nuclear plants at Kudankulam. **Russia would seem to acquire a dominating position in terms of construction of civil nuclear power plants in India.**

President Madvedev however stressed that Defence Cooperation between Russia and Indian needs to be enhanced and despite some irritants more progress can be expected.

In nutshell, Russian President Medvedev's visit to India, while underplayed by the Indian media, has been a significant one if one is to go by the assertions made on foreign policy related issues in the Joint Declaration. While there is no direct criticism of the United States in the contents of the Joint Declaration, the assertions there and the wording, spells out Russia-India convergences especially on Afghanistan, and are at great variance with United States foreign policy stances. Russia's stands on Mumbai 9/11 would find favorable Indian public support response especially in the reference to perpetrators, sponsors; organizers and patrons being brought "to justice in India". It sends a strong message to Pakistan. Russia-India Strategic Partnership seems to continue in a vibrant mode and the Indian Prime Minister's significant statement that "Our strategic partnership with Russia is a sheet anchor of our foreign policy" reflects the wide expense of the Russia-India Strategic Partnership and the convergence of strategic interests.\(^{39}\)

Ms. L.K. Ponappa, Deputy National Security Advisor, led a delegation of the Indian National Security Council Secretariat to Moscow from 2-5 February. She held discussions with her Russian counterpart, Mr. V P Nazarov, during the India-Russia **Joint Coordination Group (JCG)** meeting between the Security Councils of the two countries. The JCG was set up in 2001 and has been meeting regularly.
**Meeting of Sub Groups on Ship Building**

The Thirteenth Meeting of the Sub-group on Shipbuilding under the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation was held at Cochin from 03 to 06 February, 2009 under the Co-Chairmanship of Vice Admiral Ganesh Mahadevan, Controller of Warship Production & Acquisition, Integrated Headquarters (Navy) and Mr. L.V.Strugov, Chief of the Shipbuilding Department, Federal Agency of Industry of the Russian Federation. Over 40 representatives from the Department of Shipbuilding Industry, Rosoboronex port and various OEMs and Indian representatives from the Ministry of Defence, IHQ (Navy), Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) participated. Various issues pertaining to Shipbuilding were discussed and resolved and a Protocol on resolving the remaining issues through mutual cooperation was signed.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. A N Borodavkin visited India on 25 February and met Mr. N Ravi, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. Mr. Borodavkin was also received by External Affairs Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee. Mr. Madhavan Nair, Chairman, ISRO led a delegation to Moscow from 26-28 February and held discussions with Mr. A N Perminov, his counterpart in the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roskosmos).

**Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Chairman Awarded**

In the military-technical field, the Federal Service for Military Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, in a ceremony in Moscow on 02 March awarded the 'Medalio Za Ukreplaynia Baevogo Sadrooshestva' (Medal for Strengthening of Companionship in Arms) to Mr. Ashok K. Baweja, Chairman, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in recognition of his contribution towards strengthening bilateral cooperation in the military aviation sphere.

**Talks on cooperation in Pharma sector held**

Mr. Devendra Chaudhry, Joint Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, visited Moscow on 04-06 March, 2009 for discussions with Russian authorities on
cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector. He had meetings with Director, Department of State Control on Medicinal and Disability Rehabilitation Products, Federal Service on Surveillance in Healthcare and Social Development of the Russian Federation, and Executive Director, Association of Professional Pharmaceutical Organizations, Moscow.

**Bureau of Energy Efficiency delegation visits**

A two-member delegation comprising Mr. Yogendra Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi and Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, visited Moscow on 08-10 March to attend the 3rd Meeting of HDP Working Group on Energy Efficiency.

**Indian Delegation present at Meeting on Audit of Privatisation, Economic Regulation**

A two-member delegation led by Mr. Arvind Kumar Awasthi, Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General, visited Moscow on 16-20 March to attend the 15th Working Group meeting on Audit of Privatization, Economic Regulation.

**Indian envoy attends Special Conference on Afghanistan**

March 2009 also witnessed the important visit of H.E. Ambassador S.K. Lambah, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of India on Afghanistan, to Moscow to participate in the Special Conference on Afghanistan held on 27 March under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

**Meeting of the India-Russia Joint Task Force (JTF) on Economic Cooperation**

The second meeting of India-Russia Joint Task Force (JTF) in the area of economic cooperation was held in Moscow on March 26-27, 2009. The meeting was co-Chaired by Mr. Neeraj Kumar Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, from the Indian side and Ms. E. V. Danilova, Director of the Department of External Economic Relations, Ministry of Economic Development,
from the Russian side. During the meeting, the JTF reviewed the status of bilateral trade and positively noted the significant increase witnessed during the current financial year. Bilateral trade in the period April-November 2008 amounted to USD 3.97 billion compare to USD 3.4 billion in FY 2007-08, an increase of over 80% in comparison to corresponding period of previous financial year. Fertilizer and pharmaceuticals sectors have witnessed particularly high growth. Under sectoral discussions, the JTF addressed the areas of agriculture & food production; chemicals, petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals; fertilizers; construction and engineering services; transportation; and tourism.

The issue of continued unilateral country-wide restrictions on import of certain agricultural products from India to Russia was discussed in detail. The Indian side expressed serious concern over the continuation for more than a year of these restrictions which were not in accordance with international norms. India had not taken such extreme steps when Russian wheat consignments were found to contain weeds of quarantine concern to India. The JTF called for expeditious removal of restrictions on import of Indian plant products to Russia. In this context, the JTF also recognized the need for a mechanism for prior consultations before imposition of country-wide trade restrictions. The Indian side conveyed that the Indian economy was expected to grow at 6.5% in the second half of Financial Year 2008-09. India continued to be an attractive destination for Foreign Direct Investment and had received investments of over USD 21 billion in the period April-December 2008. In this context, several Russian companies showed interest in collaborating with Indian companies for establishing Joint Ventures in India and Russia in the areas of pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, agro-processing and construction & engineering services. In the pharmaceuticals sector, where India has emerged as the most reliable supplier of quality generic drugs to Russia, the JTF recommended exploring the possibility of setting up of joint ventures in both countries. In the fertilizer sector, the JTF underlined the need for identifying partners for setting up joint venture in Russia for long-term supply of fertilizer to India. The India-Russia Joint Task Force has been constituted to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of India-
Russia Joint Study Group (JSG) which was set up to work out a programme for enhancing the bilateral trade to USD 10 billion by 2010 and to explore the possibilities of a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement between the two countries. Needless to mention that the first meeting of the JTF was held in New Delhi on November 6-7, 2008. The JTF deliberates on the recommendations of the JSG in a sequential manner and identifies concrete steps for their implementation.

**YEAR OF INDIA IN RUSSIA 2009**

**THE INAUGURATION OF THE YEAR OF INDIA IN RUSSIA ON 31ST MARCH, 2009**

The Year of India in Russia 2009 was jointly inaugurated by Hon’ble Dr. Karan Singh, President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Mr. Alexander D. Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation at a gala ceremony held at the New Stage, Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on 31 March 2009. This follows the successful conclusion of the Year of Russia in India in 2008. The magnificent inaugural event titled "Aadita", the Beginning, which encapsulated six major classical dance forms of India and in one of which Russian dancers also participated, set the tone for the nine-month long extravaganza of a series of dance recitals, musical concerts, exhibitions, seminars and conferences, trade fairs, scientific workshops, economic and commercial exchanges, food festivals, film weeks, fashion shows and a variety of other activities that will take place in Moscow and other cities and regions of Russia. During his visit to Moscow for the inaugural ceremony, Dr. Karan Singh, President, ICCR was awarded the Order of Friendship by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation for his exceptional and long-standing personal contribution to Indo-Russian friendship and cooperation and the strengthening of our bilateral relations including in the sphere of cultural exchanges and interaction. The award was handed over by H.E. Mr. Alexander D. Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation at the White House on 31 March 2009.
Wing Commander (Retd.) Rakesh Sharma visits Moscow

Wing Commander (Retd) Rakesh Sharma visited Moscow during 7-11 April to attend the functions commemorating the 25th anniversary of the joint Indo-Soviet expedition to space. He was the first Indian cosmonaut to venture into space aboard the Soyuz spacecraft from 3-11 April, 1984. The Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre (JNCC) of the Embassy along with the Hindustani Samaj of Moscow organized a function in his honour on 8 April at the D P Dhar Hall in the Embassy premises.

In his address, Wing Commander (Retd) Rakesh Sharma thanked all those who were involved in the success of his space mission, including his co-pilots Commander Yury Malyshev and Flight Engineer Gennadi Strekalov, whose widows, Mrs. Nadezhda Malysheva and Mrs. Lidia Strekalova respectively, were present on the occasion. Mr. A.N. Berezovoi, a member of the ground support team of the expedition, also attended. The programme concluded with a reception attended by about 120 guests. The event formed part of celebrations of the ‘Year of India in Russia’ as follows:

1. Director Film Festivals visits Moscow

Shri V.B. Pyarelal, JS (Films), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and Shri Shankar Mohan, Director, Directorate of Film Festivals visited Moscow from 12-15 April to hold discussions with Russian officials regarding the proposed Indian film weeks to be organised in various cities of Russia under the ‘Year of India’ as well as India’s participation in the Moscow International Film Festival and the St. Petersburg Film Festival in June, 2009. The delegation called on Russian Deputy Minister of Culture, Alexander Golutva.

2. Kathak Dance at Book presentation ceremony

On the occasion of presentation of Gerasim Lebedev’s early-19th century book “Impartial Contemplation of Eastern India’s Brahmanical System, Sacred Rituals and Folk Customs” at Yaroslavl, JNCC artists led by Shri Praveen Gangani presented a Kathak Dance programme at Yaroslavl on 16 April as part of the ‘Year of India in Russia’. A festival of Indian Culture “Rangoli 2009” was organized by the Tver State Medical Academy on 18 April as part of the ‘Year’.
JNCC artists led by Shri Radheshyam Sharma, Tabla Teacher and Shri Praveen Gangani, Kathak Teacher presented their programmes.

3. **Secretary Culture attends SCO member state meet**

On the Cultural front but unrelated to the ‘Year of India in Russia’, Mr. Jawhar Sircar, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, visited Russia to attend the 6th meeting of the Ministers of Culture of SCO member-States held from 26-28 April, 2009 in Kazan.

4. **National Book Trust Team in Moscow**

A 3-member delegation led by Shri Amar Mudi, Joint Director (Administration & Finance) from the National Book Trust of India visited Moscow from 26-29 April, 2009 for discussions with the Russian Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communication and the Moscow International Book Fair (MIBF) authorities on India’s participation in the MIBF from 2-9 September as ‘Guest of Honour’ country under the ‘Year of India in Russia’.

5. **Ram Navami celebrations in Moscow held**

The Russia-India Friendship Association gathered to mark Ram Navami on 29 April at the Bakhurshin Theatre in Moscow. Padma Shri Mr. Gennady Mikhailovich Pechnikov, who played the role of Rama and has presented Ramlila in Moscow for over 40 years, talked about his various visits to India and the International Ramayana Festival held in Khajuraho in 2000. Episodes from the Russian Ramayana Theatre were screened. The Padma Awards ceremony of 2008 in which Mr. Pechnikov was presented the Padma Shri by President of India was also shown. Ms. Padma Puttu, JNCC Kuchipudi dancer, presented a composition depicting an episode from Ramayana. About 50 guests attended the event, which was a component of the ‘Year of India’.

6. **Visit of the President Pratibha Patil to Russia. September 2–6, 2009**

 Despite the global financial crisis, trade and economic relations between Russia and India have continued to grow. Dmitry Medvedev made this statement during talks with President of India Pratibha Patil. Over the first five months of this year, the most difficult year in the past ten, trade between the two countries has increased by nearly 15 percent. And the goal of raising the volume of bilateral
trade to 10 billion dollars will be achieved in fairly short order. The priorities of Russian-Indian relations include enhancing cooperation in energy, metallurgy, mechanical engineering, knowledge-intensive industries, transportation and banking sectors.

Mr Medvedev also stressed the proximity and overlap of the two countries' approaches to many international issues such as strengthening the role of leading international institutions particularly the United Nations, ensuring security and stability in various parts of the world, including the Middle East and Central Asia, fighting against terrorism and drug-trafficking. In the evening Dmitry Medvedev and Pratibha Patil attended a gala concert at the Bolshoi Theatre hosted as part of the Year of India in Russia.

Speaking at the concert, Mr Medvedev said that the development of Russian-Indian relations has always been and will remain one of Russia’s foreign policy priorities. Recently we have had many contacts with our Indian friends. These consisted of bilateral activities and multilateral regional activities, in particular in Yekaterinburg, where the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit was held, followed by the meeting of the BRIC countries. I think that this kind of dialogue is very helpful. In this context I would like to single out your state visit, which marks one of the high points of what is now taking place in our country, the Year of India in Russia. This is a splendid and auspicious continuation of something that began in India, I mean the Year of Russia, and now we are celebrating the Year of India in Russia. This is why we are putting on various events that are of genuine interest for our people. The volume of trade is growing despite the fact that the world economy is slowing. This is also a very important indicator that shows how our relations have developed. The work of various intergovernmental commissions is ongoing and there have been investment forums, all of which suggests that this is a very good atmosphere in which to celebrate the Year of India in Russia. For these reasons I hope that the discussion of economic matters, regional problems and cultural issues that you and I have initiated and that will continue in expanded format will constitute our contribution to the annals of Russian-Indian cooperation.
Partibha Patil said that India places great value on its strategic partnership with Russia, and I think that my visit to Russia is an important milestone in our unique bilateral relations, one that will enable our relations to move forward. Our relations are based on the mutual interests of our two countries, but our partnership also reflects the unique nature of mutual trust that has existed for generations between the leaders of both our nations. And although some say that there can be no such thing as an enduring friendship in the current world order but only enduring mutual interests, India and Russia have managed to give the lie to that view by keeping their friendship unchanging in a changing world. Since our independence, the people of India have always felt a strong emotional attachment to Russia. The key role and support of your country in our first efforts to seek self-sufficiency, sustainable economic growth and development has not been forgotten. Strengthening links with Russia is a goal that has the support of entire India, and this policy has been carried out in many different areas. The development and strengthening of these ties has always been a priority for our foreign policy.

For several years, governments of both countries have recognized that bilateral trade and investment ties between India and Russia do not reflect the close political cooperation that has always existed between our two countries. India and Russia decided to set and achieve the goal of 10 billion dollars by 2010. I'm talking about trade. As far as I know, despite the global financial and economic crisis, we will most likely achieve that goal. But we must also think about why our economies, generating GDP of more than 1 or 2 trillion US dollars a year each, must be satisfied with a trade volume of 10 billion dollars. Russia's economy is rich in natural resources, including energy resources, and in workforce which can produce advanced technology in various fields such as the high-tech and defence industries.

7. **At the State Leo Tolstoy Museum, Moscow-Exhibition**

Under the framework of the Year of India in Russia, an exhibition on "Mahatma Gandhi & Tolstoy: A Unique Legacy" opened on 29 October 2009 at the State Leo Tolstoy Museum, 11/8, Prechistenka Street, Moscow. The
exhibition is curated by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (Gandhi Memorial), New Delhi and organized in collaboration with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. The Exhibition will run for two weeks. The exhibition was jointly inaugurated by H.E. Mr. P.P. Shukla, Ambassador of India; Mr. Andrei Busigin, Deputy Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vitaly B. Remizov, Director of Tolstoy Museum; Mr. Alexander Lvov, Head of State Museum Exhibition Centre (ROSIZO) and Mr. Vladimir Tolstoy, great grandson of Tolstoy and Director of Tolstoy’s Yasnaya Polyana Estate. The dignitaries at the inauguration spoke of the great influence Mahatma Gandhi and Tolstoy had on the world by preaching the enlightened doctrine of non-violence and referred to the correspondence between the two personalities. The original letters are preserved in the Tolstoy Museum and are at display. Children of the Embassy of India School, Moscow presented Gandhi’s favourite religious songs on the occasion. Russian students of Youth Theatre presented folk songs. The exhibition was declared open by lighting of the ceremonial Indian lamp.

8. **India Show**

Within the framework of the Year of India in Russia 2009, one of the largest business events of India in Russia 'The India Show' was held at St. Petersburg at Lenexpo (Pavilions 5 and 5A) from 30 September to 3 October. The India Show is a unique B2B platform for manufacturers, exporters, importers, suppliers and buyers from both India and Russia. The event seeks to project a range of India's quality products and all-round technological advancements to the Russian market. The event is organized by India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) with the support of the Embassy of India in Russia and the Consulate General of India in St. Petersburg. Over 140 leading Indian companies are participating and sectors in display include Engineering, Chemicals and allied products, Information Technologies, Electronic and Computer software, Space Technology, Industrial Products, Textiles, Apparel & Garments, Handicrafts and gift items, Agricultural & Processed Food, Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, and Spices. The
India Show was inaugurated on 30 September 2009 at Lenexpo, St. Petersburg by Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Government of India Anand Sharma.

9. **Retrospective of Films**

A Retrospective of films of the legendary Indian actor, director and producer Raj Kapoor was held at Mirage Cinema, 35, Bolshoi Prospect, Saint Petersburg. Films were shown First of all Awara on November 30; Shri 420 on December 1 and lastly Jaagte Raho on December 2 itself.

**Meeting of High Representatives of BRIC Countries on Security Issues**

At the initiative of the Russian side the first meeting of the High Representatives of BRIC countries on Security issues took place on 29 May 2009. Minister on Security issues of the Federative Republic of Brazil, R.Mangabeira Unger, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation N.P.Patrushev, National Security Advisor of the Republic of India M.K.Narayanan and State Councillor of the Peoples Republic of China Dai Bingguo took part in the meeting. The participants of the meeting were received by the President of the Russian Federation D.A.Medvedev. They discussed issues in connection with the influence of global financial-economic crisis on the national, regional, and international situation, mutual interactions of the BRIC countries in the fight with new challenges and threats, as well as extending cooperation in other areas within the BRIC format. They expressed unified opinion that the dialogue between Brazil, Russia, India and China is not directed at anyone and is based on mutual respect, recognition of interests of each other and with the aim of strengthening cooperation amongst BRIC in the stabilization and development of the participant countries and in the world.

**Shanghai Cooperation Organization SCO: Russia and India**

PM’s opening remarks at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit on June 16, 2009 at Yekaterinburg, Russia while he was attending were that, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation represents a vast land mass rich in cultural diversity, creativity and resources. India has the privilege of having
excellent bilateral relations with each of the Members of the Organisation. Our relations with them go back in time. They rest on solid civilisational, cultural and economic linkages that have flourished over centuries. As an Observer State, we have been following the evolution of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation with keen interest. We wish to see peace, prosperity and stability in the region that the Organisation represents. We have many complementarities and have a lot to gain and learn from each other. It is in this spirit that we approach our engagement with the Organisation and its different organs and bodies. The growth of the Indian economy at an average rate of 8 percent over the last five years has enabled us to generate higher investible resources to cater to the needs of our rural economy, the social sector and infrastructure. It has also opened up opportunities to intensify our interaction with the outside world in the areas of trade and investment, science and technology, and in the revival of the global economy. We seek an external environment that is conducive to meeting the aspirations of our people. Against this background, the Russian Presidency’s initiative to focus on the themes of regional security and sustainable development is most appropriate. The threats we face to our security are global in nature, and require a global response. The prevalence of poverty and under-development in large parts of the world continues to threaten global stability. We believe that with the resources available with us, the SCO and India can mutually reinforce each other’s efforts towards the economic emancipation of our region. We would be happy to share with our friends in the SCO the experiences we have gained over the years in various sectors of nation-building.

There is a lot to be gained through strengthening connectivity between the SCO and India. We would like to cooperate in finding innovative means to strengthen people-to-people contacts, exchanges of businesspersons and scholars, and trade, investment and technology flows. We would welcome closer cooperation in the fields of energy and food security, and infrastructure development. The spectrum of terrorism, extremist ideologies and illicit drug trafficking haunts our region. Terrorist crimes committed today are transnational in nature. No country is immune from them. It is imperative that we genuinely
cooperate with one another and on a global scale to resolutely defeat international terrorism. The issue of stability in Afghanistan is one that is engaging all of us keenly. I wish to congratulate the Russian Presidency of the SCO for organizing a successful conference on Afghanistan in March this year. India is committed to contributing to international efforts for the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, and promoting stability in that country. The economic gains that we have made in the past are today threatened by the global financial and economic crisis. We should convert this crisis into an opportunity for much greater economic cooperation between the Members of the SCO and India. Between us we have a vast market, a large industrial base, a talented human resource base and above all, the political will. We should also work together to reform the institutions of global governance, including financial institutions, to bring them in tune with present and emerging economic realities.

The SCO, keenly nurtured by Russia and China as an exclusive nucleus, had hitherto excluded those with observer status from its core deliberations. The forum became popular as an embryonic counterpoise to the United States after 2005 when it bluntly issued a quit notice to the US from Central Asia and decided to salvage an assortment of autocrats being ostracized by the West. Since then, even Iran has been seeking shelter under the SCO auspices.

Why has Russia changed the summit format this time around to include Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia in the core deliberations? While it reflects the changing international realignment, the spin now emerging clearly indicates that Russia is counter-strategizing to deal with global issues or at the least it is unwilling to concede the challenges being posed by NATO. The rift with the trans-Atlantic alliance continues as Moscow has rejected the idea of exerting pressure on Iran over its nuclear programme in exchange for the US abandoning its planned missile defense system in Eastern Europe. For its part, NATO has not abandoned its quest to bring Ukraine and Georgia within its fold. The standoff over Georgia also continues.

It is also clear that Russia’s showdown with Georgia has changed the rules of the game. Moscow had lost diplomatic face not only in Europe but also in Asia.
Many of Russia’s friends including SCO members were incensed by its adventurism towards former-republics, including the way in which it had been using gas as an instrument for arm-twisting. China and the Central Asian states were wary of Russia’s action and as such they did not endorse Moscow’s call for recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the last SCO summit in Dushanbe. The adroit Chinese were certainly not keen to pick a fight at the risk of ruining relations with the West. Moscow has also perhaps realized that it is fast losing influence in the Eurasian space, especially given that the global meltdown has made Central Asian states more dependent on China. The former Soviet republics are relying more on Chinese driven institutions than moribund organization led by Russia. Unlike Russia, China has showed no inclination for prematurely confronting the West. Instead, it was cautious about admitting Iran into the SCO as a full member and may have moderated Central Asian behavior to the chagrin of Moscow.

It is against the backdrop of this trend of Russia losing economic, political and cultural attractiveness vis-à-vis China that we should see Moscow’s attempt to bring India fully into the Eurasian space. Another reliable partner is Russia’s old trusted ally - Mongolia. India’s inclusion is also linked to the global financial crisis. Both Russia and China have been attempting to evolve a fresh financial architecture, including a proposal for a new global currency to replace the dollar as a way to preempt another financial meltdown. Russia hopes that Brazil, India and China would join hands as part of the BRIC forum to push the idea further.

The SCO meeting would be significant especially since it is being held against the backdrop of the new American Af-Pak Plan and Obama’s attempt to muster the support of regional powers to make his Afghan policy a success. The SCO, under Russia’s presidency, has been talking about Afghanistan more seriously than before mainly because the focus of geopolitics has shifted from Iraq to Afghanistan – Russia’s traditional backyard. In fact, the high profile March 2009 Conference in Moscow clearly set the stage for the SCO to play a stepped-up role, when it announced a roadmap to deal with increasing security concerns emanating from Afghanistan. It called for comprehensive cooperation
against terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. The Russians suspect that the global economic downturn may have had an impact on the Taliban as well and thus strengthen the drugs trade. But SCO efforts are being hampered by the NATO presence in Afghanistan. The Russians claim that Afghan opium production increased 44 times after NATO and US troops were deployed in the region and since the withdrawal of Russian border guards from Tajik-Afghan border in 2005.

Moscow has shown willingness to provide transit routes for NATO shipment across Russia and Central Asia to Afghanistan. But this is being downplayed by the US which prefers to rely upon Pakistani supply routes. Attempts would be made by the SCO to bring Afghanistan within its fold this time. As the US intends to deal with and not confront the Taliban, Moscow fears that there will be a power vacuum in Afghanistan upsetting the existing balance. Some SCO declarations may come as music to Indian ears, since they would be a contrast to the NATO’s military approach and are likely to insist upon Pakistan stopping terrorism emanating from its soil. For New Delhi, the SCO may provide a useful platform to counter the negative fallout for Indian interests emerging from the Af-Pak plan. India had earlier pushed for a policy that integrates development projects in Afghanistan with security initiatives and has also insisted that there are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Taliban.

It is also likely that Russia is once again trying to use its leverage to soften India with regard to ongoing tension with Pakistan. Putin made a failed attempt earlier to bring together Vajpayee and Musharraf at a similar summit held in Almaty in 2002. Vajpayee did not relent.

The SCO carries a range of ambitious goals under its charter as letter of intent, including the development of an energy club, an inter-bank consortium, and cultural centres to set up an SCO university. But all in all, its strength is slightly exaggerated. The grouping suffers from nebulous internal contradictions. Everyone plays a game under the SCO template. There are internal discords and competing interests. Behind the SCO façade both China and Russia are competing for energy deals with Central Asian states. And like in Africa, Chinese firms are
buying resource mines by befriending the region’s corrupt regimes, and in the process is fuelling corruption and undermining a host of environmental and labour standards.

The importance of India is occasionally aired by the SCO members, but in reality Russians and Central Asians only pay lip service while China effectively scuttles anything positive involving India in the Eurasian space. Decades of Indian efforts for an energy deal with Central Asian states remain frustrated. Except on security issues there is little that India can achieve in the SCO. The danger is that though the SCO is not a military block, it is increasingly getting securitized due to stepped-up co-operation to fight terrorism through intelligence consultations and large-scale military exercises. Many have dubbed it as an Asian NATO.

There was nothing wrong in Manmohan Singh attending the Yekaterinburg meeting even if it is a low diplomatic parade. It is also alright if the Prime Minister wants to dispel the myth that he only cares for Washington. In any event, India stands to gain by being courted by other centres of power rather than placing all its eggs in the American basket.41

**Russian Indian Forum on Trade and Investments**

On 30th Sep., 2009, Shri Anand Sharma, Commerce and Industry Minister, during his meeting with the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, in Moscow, reaffirmed India’s abiding commitment to nurture and consolidate the strategic partnership with Russia. In his meeting with Prime Minister Putin, the Minister held discussions on a wide range of bilateral issues including on means to diversify and deepen the economic engagement with Russia. Shri Sharma also held bilateral meetings with Minister for Economic development Ms E Nabiullina, and launched the third India-Russia Forum on trade and investment. The forum was also addressed by Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Alexander Zhukov and attended by over 300 delegates from Indian and Russian industry. During the delegation level talks with his counterpart, Shri Sharma impressed upon the need to diversify bilateral trade and move away from just commodity trading to high-level investments in identified sectors. The priority sectors that
were mutually identified include Pharmaceuticals, Energy (including nuclear energy), IT, High technology cooperation, agro processing and gems and jewelry. The two ministers agreed that the bilateral trade between the two countries needs to have an ambitious agenda, given the strategic nature of bilateral engagement and set a target of $15 billion by 2012. Later in the day the Minister held bilateral talks with Mr. V Khrstenko, Minister of Industry and Trade of Russia. Both the ministers agreed to intensify cooperation in defence and high technology sectors and to move towards an engagement based on partnership. The need to encourage joint ventures through regular business to business interaction was stressed.  

**Indo-Russian Working Group on Science & Technology:**

India and Russia have been cooperating in Science & Technology for a long period. Initially the Science & Technology Cooperation was pursued under the Science & Technology agreement between India and Soviet Union concluded in 1972. Direct interaction between scientists and scientific institutes received a major boost when **Integrated Long Term Programme of Cooperation (ILTP)** was concluded at the highest level by the then Prime Minister of India and General Secretary of communist party of Soviet Union in 1987. During the 5th session of ILTP Joint Council held in Moscow in 1992, considering that Russia was Successor State of USSR, ILTP was termed as Indo-Russian programme. Later, Indo-Soviet S&T agreement (1972) was replaced by a new Agreement on Science & Technology between India and Russia signed in 1994 in Moscow. Considering the benefit of ILTP, the programme was extended up to year 2010 with additional mandate of technology transfer to industry. The two governments have also concluded a Protocol on Protection and Usages of Intellectual Property arising out of Bilateral scientific cooperation.

The Science & Technology interaction between India and Russia is conducted through the following two types of programs:

(i) **Programs Based on Inter-Governmental Bilateral Agreements:** These include the Integrated Long-Term Program of Cooperation (ILTP), the Working Group on Science & Technology, and the Academy Exchange Program.
(ii) Programs Based on Agreements Between Governmental Agencies:
These programs are based on Protocols, MoUs, and Agreements between Russian and Indian agencies.

**Integrated Long-Term Program of Cooperation (ILTP):** Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP) of cooperation in Science & Technology with Russia is the biggest and most exhaustive scientific collaboration, India has ever entered into. The programme facilitates bilateral cooperation between the scientific communities of two countries by way of joint research projects, bilateral workshops/seminar, focussed exploratory visits of scientists, visit of thematic scientific and composite (scientific and industrial) delegations. In addition, ILTP Fellowships are provided to the young and experienced Russian researchers to work in Indian laboratories and industrial units. ILTP is now equipped to catalyse technology transfer from the Russian scientific and production institutes to Indian industry. Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India, New Delhi and Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology of the Russian Federation jointly with the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Moscow are the nodal implementing agencies from the Indian and Russian sides respectively.

ILTP comprises of cooperation in 11 thrust areas related to frontiers of S&T, namely: Biotechnology and Immunology; Materials Science & Technology; Laser Science & Technology; Catalysis: Space Science & Technology; Accelerators & their Applications: Hydrology; Computer & electronics; Biomedical Science & Technology; Oceanology & Oceanic Resources and Engineering Sciences; and seven select areas of basis research in science, namely: Mathematics; Applied Mechanics; Earth Sciences; Physics & Astrophysics; Ecology and Environmental Protection; Chemical Sciences and Life Sciences.

**ILTP CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE** Under this programme 8 joint Indo-Russian centers have been established to pursue the concerted areas where large interactive research work progresses and three mores have been conceived. Among the technology export capable countries, India is placed better in some areas such as technology licensing, number of scientists and engineers, and science and mathematical education levels. It is hoped that both the countries will
resolve and take steps to benefit by industrial realization of high technologies and commercialization of products developed by joint research.

1. Setting up of **Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials at Hyderabad** is a proud example of accomplishments of ILTP. Presently, the Centre is operational with thrust on three major areas, namely, Powder Metallurgy; Surface Engineering and Ceramic Materials. This is a unique example where scientists and technologists work together for joint R&D and transfer of technologies to industry.

2. Another important accomplishment of the programme has emerged in the form of polio vaccine production facility, **BIBCOL** (Bharat Immunological and Biologicals Corporation Limited) at Bulandshahr. This Plant with a capacity of 100 million doses of polio vaccine annually has been receiving continuous help and inspiration from Russia.

3. Setting up of **Indo-Russian Centre for Advanced Computing Research in Moscow** has been another important milestone of this programme. The parallel computing system PARAM 10000, designed and developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) has been installed at the Indo-Russian Centre for Advanced Computing Research. Initially, the system is of 12.8 GFLOPS peak performance which would be subsequently upgraded after the multidisciplinary applications are optimized.

4. **Indo-Russian Centre for Biotechnology** at Allahabad is another addition to the list of Centers of excellence created under ILTP. The agreement for establishment of this Centre was formally concluded on 5th November 2001 in Moscow during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Russia between the Department of Science & Technology on the Indian side and the Russian Academy of Sciences on the Russian side.

5. **Indo-Russian Centre for Gas Hydrates** is the latest addition to the list of Centers of excellence created under ILTP. The agreement for establishment of this Centre was formally concluded during the visit of Indian Prime Minister to Russia in November 2003 between the

6. **Indo-Russian Centre for Earthquake Research** has been established at New Delhi. Several joint R&D projects are being coordinated by the Centre.

7. **Russian Indian Centre on Ayurvedic Research** was established on 1st October 2004 at Moscow. Genotype-phenotype studies on Prakriti and comparison of Indian and Russian population are being presently pursued.

8. **Indo-Russian Centre for Biomedical Technology** has been established at Thiruvananthapuram in January 2008. Few biomedical equipment are being identified for further joint development.

9. MOU for establishment of **Indo-Russian Centre on Non-ferrous Metallurgy** at Jamshedpur and **Laser & Accelerator** at Indore was concluded at Moscow in October 2007. Details on these centres is being worked out.

10. **Indo-Russian Technology Centre** at Moscow is also being conceived with an objective to catalyse transfer of successful technologies to industry.

Following last meeting of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission, this Working Group has been redefined. It is coordinated from the Indian side by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and from the Russian side by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Working Group is servicing thematic cooperation between respective nodal agencies of two countries in the fields of Agricultural Research, Standardization, Metrology & Certification; s are functioning the following areas: Building Materials, Meteorology, Biotechnology, Medical Sciences, Ocean technology, Seismology, and Industrial Realization of High Technologies.

**Inter-Academy Exchange Program: INSA-RAS Cooperation:** This program was initiated in 1970 through an agreement signed between the erstwhile USSR Academy of Sciences and the Indian National Science Academy. The
program has since continued by renewal of the agreement every five years. The thrust of this program is on pure sciences.

**ICAR - RAAS Cooperation:** An agreement for cooperation in the field of agriculture and related subjects between the *Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences (RAAS)* was signed in New Delhi on 5th October, 1995. The agreement provides for scientific and technical cooperation, joint research projects, exchange of information and materials between both the countries and organization of bilateral workshops and seminars.

**DST-RFBR Programme Department of Science & Technology (DST),** Government of India and *Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR)* concluded a Memorandum of Understanding on 7 August 2007 for bilateral cooperation in Basic & Fundamental Sciences, in the areas of Mathematics, Mechanics, Informatics & Telecommunication and Computer Science, Physics, Astronomy & Astrophysics, Medical & Biological Sciences, Earth Sciences & Fundamental Engineering. Scientists and Experts working in academic and scientific institutes are eligible to submit project proposals. The grant from their respective national agency could be up to $ 200,000/- per year (in national currencies). First call for proposals was made during September-December 2007 and 33 joint research projects were approved for implementation in June 2008. Second call inviting proposals for joint R&D projects was made in September 2008 and was open till 15 December 2008. 95 joint proposals were received. Based on independent assessment on both sides, followed by joint prioritization, as done jointly by DST and RFBR officials, it has been agreed to support 39 joint R&D projects

**(ii) Programs Based on Agreements between Governmental Agencies:** There are many programs which are based on the direct agreements between various Govt. agencies of both the countries. These are pursued as per there contractual agreements.
**Joint Declaration on deepening the Strategic Partnership to meet Global Challenges**

During the visit of the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh, to Russia for the Annual Summit from December 6 to 8, 2009. A joint declaration on deepening the strategic Partnership to meet Global challenges was signed. Annexure-IV

Prime Minister answered about the significance of BRIC, G-20 etc. multilateral mechanisms in the new global architecture that such multilateral groupings represent the growing interdependence of the world we live in. It is becoming increasingly clear that today’s global challenges can only be addressed by cooperative effort, with the full and equal participation of major and emerging powers and economies. Such groupings are in many ways the building blocks of the emerging global architecture. India and Russia cooperate closely within the UN systems. The similarity of our views on most global issues enables us to also coordinate closely within the newer multilateral formats like BRIC and G-20. I believe we contribute significantly through these bodies in providing balanced responses to global issues like the economic downturn and climate change and indeed, in working towards a system of global governance that corresponds to the realities of the 21st century.

**Indo-Russian trade gets a Putin boost**

The Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr Vladimir Putin, arrived in New Delhi on a working visit, on Friday, 12 March 2010. Prime Minister Putin accompanied by an official delegation comprising senior members of the Russian Government and several business leaders. Mr Putin hold talks with Prime Minister Singh on a range of issues of bilateral interest. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s trip has gone some distance in adding a strong economic dimension to ties between the two nations. External affairs ministry officials say a roadmap in strengthening economic ties including in the pharmaceutical sector, getting Russian investments in infrastructure projects and accessing Russian markets for Indian services are in place. “The visit is noted for the success in
taking this vital strategic partnership forward, giving the much needed economic impetus. A host of steps aimed at scaling up the current $7.5 billion bilateral trade to $20 billion by 2015 are set in motion,” said an official. India has been wooing Russia’s largest diamond company AlRosa for sometime now. “It’s a process of now eight to 10 years now. AlRosa have signed pacts with Diamond India Limited. Two more pacts were signed between private diamond trading companies,” said an official. Russian state monopoly Gazprom also inked a pact with India’s ONGC on oil exploration in Russia. The signing of pacts in fertiliser sectors is also an important step. But Delhi is keen on expanding the cooperation into pharmaceuticals, besides getting Russian investments into the infrastructure sector. The Russians have evinced interest in getting Indian private investments in various sectors. And the Russian PM did squeeze in a video conferencing with the captains of Indian business and industry. Officials said Putin spoke highly of Indian banks and the IT sector and sought greater cooperation from them besides heeding to Indian demand for expanding ties in the hydrocarbon sector. 44

Agreements signed during Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's visit to India:

1. An agreement between Russia and India for cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.
2. A roadmap for strengthening large-scale cooperation between Russia and India in the peaceful use of nuclear energy in 2010.
3. An agreement establishing a joint venture to manufacture ground-based navigation equipment that will interface with the Russian *Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS)*.
5. A framework agreement (contract) for the export of inorganic fertilizer to India
Former President of India H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to Russia (9-11 Sep., 2010)

Former President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam visited Russia from 9-11 September 2010 to participate in the prestigious annual Global Policy Forum held at Yaroslavl. Dr. Kalam spoke at the Plenary Session of the Forum on 10 September on the topic "Global Vision, Regional Cooperation and National Missions". In his presentation, Dr. Kalam stressed on the need to evolve multi-pronged strategies to confront global challenges in a global democratic environment. In this context, Dr. Kalam laid out his vision for the world in 2030 towards realizing a people empowered society. During his visit, Dr. Kalam was invited by MGIMO University, Moscow to address the students and faculty members on 9 September. Dr. Kalam spoke on the theme of "Empowered International Diplomacy and Evolution of Happy and Peaceful Society". Mr. Andrei Silantiev, Vice-Rector of MGIMO, chaired the session. Dr. Kalam also addressed the students and faculty members of the Demidov Yaroslavl State University on 10 September. His talk was titled "Journey of Life: Pathways, Challenges and Milestones". He was received by Prof. Alexander Rusakov, Rector of the University along with senior faculty members. During their meeting, discussions were held on ways to promote academic exchanges between India and Russia. Prof. Rusakov expressed his keen interest in promoting exchange programmes between the Yaroslavl State University and universities in India. On 11 September, Dr. Abdul Kalam visited the Embassy of India School, Moscow where he was accorded a warm welcome by the teachers and students of the School. The school children made a cultural presentation in honour of Dr. Kalam. Dr. Kalam gave an inspiring talk titled "Knowledge Makes You Great".

Visit of Mr. R. Bandyopadhyay, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs to Russia

Mr. R. Bandyopadhyay, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, paid an official visit to Russia leading a delegation of accounting professionals from India. The Indian delegation met the Russian
Deputy Minister of Finance Mr. S. D. Shatalov and his team of senior officials from the Finance Ministry on 23 September 2010 in Moscow and had extensive discussions about the status of corporate sector in both the countries and prospects for mutual cooperation. Responding to Russian Deputy Minister’s observations on the status of development of financial institutions in Russia as per international standards, Mr. Bandyopadhyay emphasized the need for sharing of experiences between India and Russia, particularly in the context of both countries being important constituents of BRIC and G-20. Mr. Bandyopadhyay made a detailed presentation on the role being played by Ministry of Corporate Affairs in India in the area of investor education to seek development of a healthy capital market, promotion of a corporate governance framework, activating corporate social responsibility, administration of anti-trust laws and regulation of accountancy bodies such as the cost accountants and the chartered accountants. Mr. S. D. Shatalov, on his part, outlined the role being played by Russian Ministry of Finance in the areas of taxation and orderly growth of capital market as well as in addressing the challenges faced by Russia post-1990 in bringing about stability in the financial sector. Mr. Shatalov expressed the hope that Russia will soon overcome the economic crisis and their efforts to develop Moscow as a major financial centre would also meet with success. Both sides agreed that intensive cooperation between the two economies would bring tremendous economic and social benefit to both the countries.46

16th Session of the India-Russia Economic Joint Commission meeting

The Sixteenth Session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) was held in New Delhi on 18 November 2010. The entire spectrum of India-Russia trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation was reviewed during the meeting. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the recent increase in bilateral trade and investments while recognizing that the level of economic engagement remained below its potential give the size of the two economies. In this context, both sides identified concrete steps to further develop economic relations in priority areas of cooperation. The
next session of the IRIGC-TEC will be held in Moscow in 2011. DPM Ivanov is on an official visit to India from 17 to 19 November 2010. He is accompanied by senior officials of the Russian Government and business representatives. During his visit, DPM Ivanov is scheduled to call on the Prime Minister and have bilateral meetings with other Indian dignitaries. The discussions will contribute to the preparations for the forthcoming visit of the President of the Russian Federation, H. E. Mr. D. A. Medvedev to India in December 2010 for the Indo-Russian Annual Summit.

**Salient outcomes of the 16th Session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC)**

**Bilateral Exchanges**

- The Commission expressed satisfaction at the continuation in the momentum of high-level bilateral contacts in the past one year which have delivered concrete results in the further development of bilateral economic relations. Both Sides resolved to work in tandem to proactively follow up on these discussions with a view to finalising some key Agreements/ MOUs in the economic sphere to be signed during the forthcoming visit of the President of the Russian Federation, H. E. Mr. D. A. Medvedev to India in December 2010 for the Indo-Russian Annual Summit.

- Recognising the importance of establishing direct B2B contacts in achieving a quantum leap in bilateral trade and investment levels, the Commission underscored that the *Indo-Russian Trade and Investment Forum (IRTIF)* and the CEOs’ Council have to play a lead role in this regard. The Sides noted with satisfaction the considerable interest of business circles of both countries in the Fourth Session of IRTIF, which will be held in December 2010 in New Delhi. They also welcomed the holding of first-ever India-Russia Business Dialogue within the framework of the prestigious St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2010 and expressed confidence that the MOU entered into by CII and
SPIEF Foundation would pave the way for regular institutionalized B2B interactions and exchanges.

**Review of Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation**

- While reviewing the bilateral trade & economic cooperation, the Commission observed that *trade and investment between India and Russia has been growing but is still modest compared to the sizes of the two economies and their potential*. *Both Sides agreed to make sustained and enhanced efforts to achieve the bilateral trade turnover target of USD 20 billion by 2015*. The Commission called upon relevant Working Groups and agencies on both sides to identify new and innovative joint projects in priority areas of cooperation in order to increase the level of bilateral economic engagement and to speedily achieve the economic targets set by the two countries.

- The Commission agreed that with its proven competence in the fields of IT, financial services, pharmaceuticals and hydrocarbon processing, India can be a strong and reliable partner in Russia’s pursuit of modernization of its economy. The Commission asked for the preparation of a forward-looking bilateral programme on cooperation in the areas of modernization and innovation.

- The Commission noted the strong interest of Indian companies to participate in the privatization programme of the Government of the Russian Federation and called for organizing B2B interactions in this regard inter alia within the framework of India-Russia Forum on Trade & Investment and CEOs Council.

**Priority Areas for Cooperation**

1. **Energy**
   - The Commission expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved in bilateral cooperation in the civilian nuclear energy sector. It welcomed the signing of the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Atomic Energy
Cooperation for Peaceful Purposes and the Roadmap for Serial Construction of Russian-designed Nuclear Power Plants in India, during the March 2010 visit of the Russian Prime Minister to India.

- The Commission agreed on the need to enhance bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector which could be an excellent vehicle to achieve a quantum increase in bilateral trade and investment ties. While noting that India and Russia have made a good beginning in this direction with the collaboration in Sakhalin-I, and the acquisition of Imperial Energy by ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL), both Sides called for tangible steps to move forward on new project proposals.

2. **Diamonds**

- Recognizing the strong complementarity between Indian and Russia in the area of trade in rough diamonds, the Commission welcomed the signing of long-term contracts between Russian and select Indian companies and called for sustaining this positive momentum through conclusion of additional contracts.

3. **Agriculture/ Food Products**

- Recognising the large scope for export of food commodities and processed food products from India to Russia, both Sides resolved to work towards early finalisation of the agreement on mutual recognition/equivalence of standards and conformity assessment procedures for facilitating trade in goods between India and Russia.

4. **Pharmaceuticals**

- Both Sides welcomed the growth in bilateral trade in the pharmaceuticals sector and called for bilateral investments and establishment of JVs. The Commission noted the huge potential for participation by Indian companies in the realization of Pharma 2020 programme of the Government of the Russian Federation. The Russian side conveyed its interest in joint activities for developing new pharmaceutical products and technologies.
6. **IT**
   - Recognising the huge potential for mutually-beneficial cooperation in the IT sector, the Commission emphasized the need to identify specific projects for collaboration between Indian and Russian companies in development of Techno Parks (including Skolkovo Innovation Centre), e-governance, BPO/KPO, IT learning and tele-medicines.

7. **Fertilizers/ Chemicals/ Mining**
   - The Commission expressed satisfaction at the steady growth in the fertilizer trade between India and Russia amounting to a value of over USD 2.1 billion in the period April 2009 – March 2010. The Sides also welcomed the signing of the MOU between the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of India on cooperation in the field of mineral fertilizers, and also signing of the framework agreement on supply of fertilizers between Russian and Indian companies. The Commission identified specific steps to enhance cooperation in this sector including through establishment of JVs in Russia for setting up fertiliser manufacturing units and possible participation of Russian fertilizer entities in the revival of closed urea plants in India.

8. **Mining & Metallurgy**
   - The Commission recognized the interest shown by Indian and Russian companies for collaboration in the area of mines and metallurgy including through conclusion of long-term supply contracts.

9. **Banking and Finance**
   - The Commission welcomed the strengthening of banking linkages between India and Russia through opening of Representative Office/Branch by several Indian and Russian banks in each-other’s countries. It called upon banks and financial organisations of the two countries to work towards providing appropriate banking services, which is critical for developing trade and economic cooperation.
10. **Science & Technology**

- Recognizing the large benefits that have accrued from scientific cooperation under the Integrated Long-term Program of Cooperation in Science and Technology (ILTP) so far, the Commission noted with satisfaction that the Agreement to extend the program for next 10 years had been finalized.

11. **Tourism & Culture**

- The Commission noted the considerable growth in the number of Russian tourists visiting India, and agreed to work towards creating an environment for two-way growth of tourist traffic, including favourable visa regimes. In this context, the Commission welcomed the finalization of bilateral visa-facilitation agreement.

- The Commission agreed to continue providing support for holding of exhibitions, conferences, lectures, film shows and artistic performances between the two countries. The Commission also agreed to finalise at earliest the programmes of the Festival of Indian Culture in Russia in 2011 and the Festival of Russian Culture in India in 2012.

- Both Sides noted the importance of large-scale celebrations planned by the Government of India to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore in 2011. The Russian side confirmed their intention to organize commemorative events in different regions of Russia.

- Both Sides agreed to facilitate further development of cultural linkages through direct contact between cultural institutions of the states and regions and city authorities.47

**Russia-India Strategic Partnership in nutshell**

The Russia India Strategic Partnership has been a time-tested and enduring one for more than a quarter of a century. Geo-strategically and geopolitically Russia has stood by India under trying circumstances and contributed to India’s national security interests where as US-India Strategic Partnership is still an evolving one. With just one change of US Administration, the US-India Strategic
Partnership stands strategically and politically endangered. Secondly, Russia, creditably, has never indulged in balance-of-power strategies in South Asia and provided strategic ballast to India’s South Asian predominance where as United States strategic tilts in the past and now underway have been in favour of Pakistan and at India’s strategic expense. The United States has never effectively restrained Pakistan in its anti-India political and military adventurism, despite US tremendous leverages over Pakistan. Thirdly India can still count on Russia to act as “the sheet anchor of its foreign policies” where as the United States has yet to provide that assurance and confidence to India.

Therefore, the Russia-India Strategic Partnership serves India’s national security interests more effectively. As on date the Russia-India Strategic Partnership encompasses a wide spectrum of providing muscle to the Indian Armed Forces by supply of advanced military hardware, predominantly underwriting India’s economic growth with the large number of civil nuclear reactors contracted for and provision of other high technologies including joint R & D and production of futuristic weapon systems.

The US renewed tilt towards Pakistan is tactical or strategic, both carry serious security implications for India. India's policy establishment therefore urgently needs to weigh US-India Strategic Partnership on more realistic scales of how effectively it is contributing to India's national security interests.

In nutshell, it is clearly indicates that the Russia-India Strategic Partnership is a time-tested strategic partnership. It was the sheet anchor of India’s foreign policies during the Cold War when India was being buffeted around strategically. It continues as the sheet-anchor of India’s foreign policy even contemporarily when the contextual geopolitical situation portends that India would once again be likely to be buffeted around on Kashmir and other contentious issues with which Pakistan Army is at odds with India and asking USA to pressurize India. While an equally vibrant US-India Strategic Partnership is also desirable for India, but regrettably that vibrancy is unlikely to emerge till such time the United States gives up its propensity for periodic strategic tilts towards Pakistan. With Russia not carrying any “Pakistan baggage” in its policy
approaches to South Asia and towards India, the Russia-India Strategic Partnership is better placed to serve India’s national security interests. To some Indians it may be devoid of glamorous embellishments but then in the end-game in strategically and politically in turbulent times for India, a strategic partnership requires the assured stability of a strongly and deeply embedded sheet anchor. The Russia-India Strategic Partnership carries that distinction which stands validated historically. 48
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48. Article Russia India Strategic Partnership in contemporary Geopolitical Context by Dr. Subhash Kapila Paper No. 3732 dated 25 Mar. 2010 in South Asia Analysis Group