

Strengthening Indo-Russian Ties

On November 8th and 9th, 2022, Dr. S Jaishankar, the Indian Minister of External Affairs, visited Moscow to engage in high-level discussions aimed at fortifying the longstanding relationship between India and Russia. This visit was crucial in exploring the future scope of their bilateral ties, focusing primarily on expanding economic cooperation and trade.

Background and Context

India and Russia have shared a “substantial and time-tested” bond since the 1950s, initially founded on a straightforward buyer-seller dynamic, with the USSR acting as India’s guardian angel on the international stage. Over the years, this relationship evolved into a multidimensional alliance characterized by mutual trust and understanding. The balance of power has also shifted, with India now taking a more prominent role.

However, since the mid-2010s, this fruitful relationship has encountered challenges due to Russia’s growing closeness with Pakistan, a historical rival of India, and China, a nation recently hostile towards India and her interests. Despite these strains, significant improvements have been observed since the 2018 Modi-Putin Summit in New Delhi. Dr. S Jaishankar’s recent visit to Moscow continued this trend of high-level bilateral engagements.

Key Actors and Their Objectives

The Republic of India and the Russian Federation were the primary actors in this geopolitical interaction. Both nations, represented through their respective ministries, sought to achieve a set of mutual and individual goals.

Mutual Goals

India and Russia share a deep understanding on the geopolitical stage and aimed to discuss the future of groupings such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). These discussions were crucial for their common ambition of De-Dollarization, a move to reduce dependence on the US dollar in international trade.

India's Objectives

India, with its growing stature on the international stage, has a pressing need for a veto at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This need is currently met by India's strategic ties with both Western and Russian camps, where one nation or the other supports India. Despite its closer yet unpredictable alliance with the West, India encourages Russian presence in its defense sector to maintain balance until it can achieve complete self-reliance, or "Atma-Nirbhar."

Russia's Objectives

Russia's primary objectives revolved around the Ukraine conflict and its economic implications. In the aftermath of Western sanctions, Russia's consumer market has suffered, with many international manufacturers pulling out. Consequently, Russia is looking to Indian companies willing to enter its war-torn economy. Furthermore, due to strategic distrust and power

asymmetry favoring China, Russia seeks to maintain cordial relations with India to balance China's influence.

Energy Sector Interdependence

The energy sectors of India and Russia are currently interdependent. The Indian oil refining industry benefits from discounted crude oil supplies from Russia, selling refined petroleum products globally. Meanwhile, the continuous high oil supply to India bolsters the struggling Russian economy.

Nature of the Interaction

Despite the potential for a coercive approach to secure the most beneficial outcomes, both nations chose a cooperative route. Dr. S Jaishankar's visit significantly expanded the understanding and trust between the two countries. This event showcased both parties' willingness to deepen their partnership, signaling their intent to continue this cooperation into the future.

International Institutions and Sovereignty

Upholding sovereignty is vital for nurturing mutual trust and understanding between India and Russia. Both countries, through this bilateral event, pushed for developing frameworks and organizations promoting regional cooperation and stability, driving the world towards a "more just" and "polycentric" (multipolar) version of itself, with institutions like BRICS at the forefront.

In the realm of sovereign states, such as India and Russia, no higher legal authority exists to enforce laws binding international actors. Therefore, no international organization (e.g., UN, G20) governed their interaction.

Conclusion

Dr. S Jaishankar's visit to Russia was a pivotal event in fortifying Indo-Russian ties. By choosing a cooperative strategy, both nations demonstrated their commitment to mutual understanding and long-term partnership. As India seeks a close ally and Russia aims to balance China's influence, this bilateral relationship is poised to play a crucial role in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the future.

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