

Energy Cooperation between India and Russia: Splendid Sojourn with Security

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Abstract– A number of reasons strengthen the positive improvement of India-Russia bilateral relations, however it would be imprudent to set all hopes upon these. Concrete, consistent initiatives and changing Russian and Indian elites' approaches towards the partnership are essential, otherwise the stagnation of bilateral ties might worsen to degradation. At present, the relationship is predicated on cooperation in the defence and aerospace sectors, but the potential of these are insufficient to secure long-term, positive ties. During the 15th Annual India-Russia summit in New Delhi on Thursday, both countries signed several crucial agreements under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The President of the Russian Federation, H.E. Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, paid an official visit to India on December 11, 2014 at the invitation of the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, for the 15th Annual Summit between the two countries. Throughout the Summit, the leaders agreed on a vision for strengthening the India-Russia partnership over the next decade. Identifying that the special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia has been built on the strong foundation of mutual trust, bilateral understanding and unique people-to-people affinities, the leaders highlighted that the time has come for a significant broad-basing of bilateral cooperation to carry the friendship between the countries to a qualitatively new level.

Keywords: bilateral, cooperation, strategic partnership, agreements, positive ties, defence, vision.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the changing dynamics of international politics set in motion by the end of the Cold War and the dissolution 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 proposes a qualitative higher level of relationship reflecting mutual trust and confidence. India and Russia have shown resilience and understanding to diversify their relations to match their interests. This trend has continued in 2015. India expressed understanding at Russia's recently concluded energy deal with Pakistan. At the same time, Russia expressed understanding in India inviting the US President to its Republic Day celebrations in January 2015. The Power industry has been the most promising field in

bilateral strategic partnership with Russia's collaboration. When India was badly short of energy after gaining independence in 1947, Soviet experts helped Indian colleagues not only to prospect for oil, drilled wells to produce more oil and also built the Indian power industry infrastructure. Oil refineries were constructed in Ranchi, Koyali, Barauni and Mathura. As a result, the Soviet Union became India's number one supplier of crude oil and India became its biggest trade partner among the developing nations. The need for energy security re-emerged from the breakup of Soviet Union which was India's most important and reliable supplier of oil and oil products.

2. INDIA AND RUSSIA ENERGY COOPERATION

Russia is a vigorous partner in peaceful uses of nuclear energy and it recognizes India as a country with advanced nuclear technology with an impeccable non-proliferation record. Construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) Units 1 & 2 (VVER 1000 MW units) is an example of fruitful cooperation between India and Russia. KKNPP Unit 1 has become operational in July 2013, while its Unit 2 is at an advanced stage of construction.

India and Russia also have ongoing cooperation in the field of hydrocarbons and power. ONGC Videsh Limited has substantive investments of over US\$ 5 billion in two major oil and gas projects – Sakhalin-1 and Imperial Energy Limited (Tomsk). Russian companies are engaged in several power plant and oil and gas projects in India. Outer Space: India-Russia cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of outer space dates back to about four decades. The two countries are currently engaged in cooperation on GLONASS and other space applications. Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are two related and dominant themes of the contemporary international system. The 2005 NPT Review Conference (RevCon) saw a clash between the 'only nonproliferation' and the disarmament lines of the treaty. This brought about in the failure of the RevCon and raised a big question mark on the survival of the treaty. In a post-mortem of the RevCon, some analysts and diplomats concluded it to be a failure of the treaty, but others Nuclear Non-proliferation/Nuclear Disarmament considered it to be only the

failure of RevCon 2005. Later, Preparatory Committee (PrepComs) of the 2010 RevCon were held, dominated by the relationship between non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The strategic community of the Western world appears to have been convinced that it will be difficult to expect continuous support of the Non-Nuclear Weapon Countries on non-proliferation if some demonstrable move is not made on the disarmament front. Meanwhile, several high profile statements, write-ups and reports are coming in to bridge the gap between nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Some of these initiatives are trying to give a new twist to the discussion on the relationship between disarmament and non-proliferation. Many of the recent seemingly nuclear disarmament moves are considered important because of the support from those who earlier championed the continued relevance of nuclear weapons for national and international security. Many such 'realists' are now teaming up with established demilitarization groupings or persons for supporting nuclear disarmament or to envision a world without nuclear weapons. In this regard, the most noteworthy moves are two op-ed articles written by the United States' (US)-four, namely, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, George Shultz and William Perry, in January 2007. In fact, the January 2007 writings of Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, George Shultz and William Perry have triggered the current phase of the debate and campaign for nuclear disarmament. There is a need to discern the emerging trends in the ensuing debate to find out ways ahead. Importance for Civil Nuclear Energy As several non-proliferation measures associated with the current phase of disarmament proposals and initiatives had to gain legitimacy, the nuclear disarmament campaign in a package deal offered something for peaceful nuclear energy, nuclear export controls and the demand of the developing world for advanced technology acquisition. Kissinger and his coauthors in their 2008 op-ed piece said, 'with the growing global interest in developing nuclear energy and the potential proliferation of nuclear enrichment capabilities, an international programme should be created by advanced nuclear countries and a strengthened IAEA. In March 2008, India approached Roskosmos with a request to arrange a space flight on board the Soyuz spacecraft for its astronaut as part of India's preparation for launching its own manned space vessel. The Russian side displayed a positive attitude to that proposal and provided additional confirmation to its position during the December summit last year. An Indian astronaut is planned to go on a space mission first on board a Russian space vessel. This mission is tentatively scheduled for 2013. It will be followed by an Indian manned spaceflight in 2015. The ongoing India's lunar exploration programme is directly linked with Russia. In 2007, the two countries signed an intergovernmental agreement on a joint lunar expedition in 2011-2012. This time, a space ship consisting of two modules is planned to fly to the moon. The first module will stay in lunar orbit, while the second one will make a soft landing. A lunar rover will roll out of it to collect data on the moon's mineral resources. In the autumn of 2008, the Indian

spacecraft Chandrayaan-1 began its journey to the moon. From a low lunar orbit, it will map details of the moon's surface. The launch, according to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), is the first part of an extensive national programme to explore the moon. Once this comprehensive lunar surface research is completed, it will provide India with invaluable scientific data enabling it to play a key role in an international programme to establish habitable lunar research stations. The Indian government has approved the allocation of Rs 950 million (around \$20 million) to launch India's own manned spacecraft. A capsule (spacecraft) with service module carrying a 2 astronaut crew is planned to be placed into a lower earth orbit. After a seven-day manned mission to space, the capsule accommodating astronauts will splashdown in the defined Indian Ocean water area. The ISRO is developing a training centre for future cosmonauts in Bangalore. Nearly 200 cadets are expected to be enrolled there for training and four of them will be selected as candidates to accomplish a space mission as prime and back-up crew members. Riding high on the success of its first research satellite, Chandrayaan-1, ISRO plans to complete a number of impressive projects. Firstly, in joint effort with the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roskosmos) it is envisaged to implement the Chandrayaan-2 project that will involve a space vessel comprising 2 lunar modules—a lander and a robotic rover—tentatively in 2012, with the help of India's GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle). An Indian astronaut's lunar landing is scheduled for 2020, and participation in international expeditions to Mars is tentatively planned for 2030. During a visit to India by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in December, 2008, Roskosmos negotiated a deal with its Indian counterparts in New Delhi on sending an Indian astronaut on an orbital space mission and also on collaboration in the creation of an Indian-built spacecraft. The Indian astronaut is due to go to space in 2013 whereas the nation's first crew-carrying spaceship is expected to be unveiled two years later. Therefore, astronautics development across the huge territory of Eurasia, the bulk of whose programmes are generated by Russia, China and Kazakhstan as members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), will receive a significant boost from India, which is currently enjoying an observer status in the SCO.

2015 is undoubtedly busier than 2014 in India-Russia relations. India and Russia has given concrete shape or implement various deals signed in 2014. Russia will build 12 more nuclear reactors in India for production of energy in this year. The number may go up. Similarly, the agreements between Alrosa, the Russian diamond company, and Indian companies will witness more trade regarding cutting and processing diamond in India. Both the countries will sign landmark deals on defence. In consumer goods sector, another area – the dairy products (besides the buffalo meat) may be added to the list. The list is indeed long. Good will and mutual trust notwithstanding, India and Russia need to revamp economic relations and clear bottlenecks. In the changing

global order, economic diplomacy has trumped over political diplomacy. It is expected that both the countries will take steps to realize the goal of \$30 billion trade by 2025. Not a tall order at all in comparison to their trade with China, and in keeping in opinion the potentials of cooperation. Russian expertise in defence equipment, space technology, building of smart cities, nuclear energy, and its natural resources of oil and gas are certainly elements of attraction for India. Add this to Indian consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, diamond processing, information and communication technology; the affairs come in a complete package. Even if all the announcements, memorandums of understanding and agreements signed in 2014 are given concrete shape and implemented in 2015 – that itself will be a tall order. Peace and stability in the vast Eurasia will be major challenge for India and Russia in 2015. Whether it is the crisis in Ukraine or the transition in Afghanistan, or defeat of the Islamic state, or the evolution of a multipolar world order – India and Russia can work together for a better world. The international forces, led by the US, have officially withdrawn from Afghanistan. The Taliban has proclaimed itself to be victorious, and already expressed its sympathy for the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria. The emerging vacuum is a big challenge to multiethnic and pluralistic states like India and Russia. Other issues like SCO expansion, climate change, Arctic exploration, drug trafficking and money laundering too need attention of both the countries. It may not be a surprise that in 2015 both the countries push for a comprehensive convention on international terrorism at the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, and strengthen bilateral mechanisms to counter the menace.

3. INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS – A PRIMER FOR REGIONAL SECURITY

Relations with Russia also have to be set against the broader strategic landscape of India's security issues and geopolitical priorities. Forming better ties to its Eurasian ally is crucial in the context of India's struggle to forge better relations with its neighbors and its quest for a firmer diplomatic foothold in the region. Russia can lobby for India's full membership in the SCO, which has eluded India so far largely due to the negative influence of founding member China. Furthermore, the Russia-India partnership is crucial in ensuring stability in the Afghanistan region as the war winds down. India's aims to prevent Islamic extremism and narco-trafficking there correspond to Russia's. Especially given its fraught relationship with Pakistan, India needs to work with Russia, whose Pakistan ties have been steadily improving, on making sure that Afghanistan does not become a sanctuary for the Taliban in the future. And, finally, a more constructive partnership with Russia based on mutual profit and gain can help India remove some of the mistrust that has been building between the two powers in the brewing "Great Game" in resource-rich Central Asia

Relations with Russia are a main pillar of India's foreign policy and Russia has been a longstanding time-tested partner of India. Since the signing of "Declaration on the India-Russia

Strategic Partnership" in October 2000 (during the visit of Russian President H.E. Mr. Vladimir Putin to India), India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, trade and economy, defense, science and technology and culture. Under the Strategic Partnership, several institutionalized dialogue mechanisms operate at both political and official levels to ensure regular interaction and follow up on cooperation activities. During the visit of Russian President to India in December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.

4. CONCLUSION

To sum up it can be said that apparently, the powerful IRIGC is the main body that conducts affairs at the governmental level between India and Russia. Both countries are members of many international bodies where they jointly collaborate closely on matters of shared national interest. Significant examples include the UN, BRICS, G20 and SCO where India has observer status and has been asked by Russia to become a full member. Russia has stated publicly that it supports India receiving a permanent seat on the Council. In addition, Russia has voiced interest in joining SAARC with observer status in which India is a founding member. Apart from these, India is the second largest market for the Russian defence industry. In 2004, more than 70% of the Indian Military's hardware came from Russia, making Russia the chief supplier of defence equipment. India and Russia can upgrade their 'long-standing and time-tested' relationship to 'all weather' partnership. India must invest and strengthen its 'soft power' and democratic image and become a genuine balancer between all powers of the country rather than being a 'zero-sum' player in the international community. The strategic partnership between the two nations has been natural and impartial. Russian and Indian national interests coincide, or at least do not contradict each other. Geopolitical considerations predetermine the need to strengthen mutual ties. A study of voting at the UN General Assembly on a broad range of world politics issues shows that Russia and India vote similarly, while on international security themes they vote unanimously. The two countries reject a unipolar world. Russia and India are also interested in easing the conflict potential in relations between the North and the South.

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