

## General Studies-2; Topic: India and its bilateral relations

### India-Russia Summit

#### 1) Introduction

- The 19th India-Russia annual bilateral summit was held in New Delhi recently.
- The summit process between India and Russia started way back in 2000 and since then, the relationship has been elevated to a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.”
- This annual summity is unique as Russia is one of only two countries, the other one being Japan, with which India holds this summit.
- The current summit meeting comes at a critical time, when the geopolitical and geostrategic relations between nations are fluid.

#### 2) Background

- Relations with Russia are a key pillar of India's foreign policy, and Russia has been a longstanding time-tested partner of India.
- Traditionally, the Indo-Russian strategic partnership has been built on five major components: politics, defence, civil nuclear energy, anti-terrorism co-operation and space.

#### 3) Highlights of the Summit

- India and Russia deepened their strategic partnership by signing multiple pacts.
- The two countries exchanged Memorandums of Understanding in the fields of space, nuclear energy, railways, among others and signed over eight agreements.
- India signed a \$5 billion deal for the Russian S-400 Triumpf missile shield systems.
- A crucial MoU was signed between Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Federal Space Agency of Russia ‘ROSCOSMOS’ on joint activities in the field of human spaceflight programme Gaganyaan.
- The two sides are also looking at the possibility of building a gas pipeline from Russia to India to supply energy.
- A MoU was also signed between India’s Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and Russia’s SIRIUS to further the Interaction between young people of India and Russia, especially schoolchildren.
- The two countries also agreed to step up cooperation in combating the menace of terrorism and drug trafficking.
- While committing to promote green development and low-carbon economy, India and Russia asked all countries to fully implement the Paris Agreement on climate change.
- **Concerns**
  - a. The Modi-Putin discussions did not touch upon China-led BRI, or Pakistan, except in the context of Afghanistan.
  - b. There were no references to terror groups operating in Pakistan.
  - c. Russia has also refused to sign up to India’s Indo-Pacific policy, preferring to look at it as Asia-Pacific.

#### 4) S-400 Triumpf Missile System

- The Russian-built S-400 Triumpf is widely considered as the most effective operationally deployed modern long-range surface-to-air missile (MLR SAM) system.
- China signed a deal for six battalions of the S-400 in 2015.
- Countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iraq are in line.

- The S-400 deal has been one of the major issues challenging India-US relations.

## 5) Why Russia is Important for India?

- The historical character of the bilateral relationship.
- Even as India is diversifying its defense trade partners, Russia still dominates the Indian defense inventory to the tune of about 70 per cent.
- Russia remains the only partner that is still willing to give India critical technologies, such as a nuclear submarine.
- The emerging Russia-China strategic relationship has important security consequences for India.

➤ With a range of up to 380km, S-400 can **destroy hostile aircraft, strategic bombers, missiles & drones**

➤ Radars can **track hundreds of targets simultaneously**; 4 types of missiles to intercept targets at different ranges

➤ Can **intercept even ballistic missiles** with velocity of 4,800 meters/sec

➤ S-400 can **“radar lock & shoot down”** 5th-Gen stealth fighters like American F-35 jets

- Russia also reaffirmed its “unwavering support” to India for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council.
- Russia expressed its support for India’s membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- Both countries have mutual benefits in supporting struggle against terrorism, Afghanistan, climate change; organisations like SCO, BRICS, G-20 and ASEAN.
- The bilateral trade has also grown over the years as it rose to 20 per cent in 2017-18.

## 6) Concerns / Challenges

- India’s move to acquire the S-400 may attract sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (Caatsa) passed by the US Congress on arms purchases from Russia.
- Even as India is trying to stabilise its defence ties with Russia, there are growing concerns in New Delhi about Russia’s increasing tilt towards Pakistan.
- Today there is a change in how Moscow views its regional priorities in South Asia.
- Beijing for a long time was not given access to the best and most modern Russian technology and there was no technology transfer.
- Sino-Russian relationship has grown to an extent where the two are now participating in joint military exercises such as the recently concluded, Vostok-2018.
- The Russia-China oil and gas deals over the last few years also is a testament to this new closer partnership.
- India’s Russia outreach seems to have had an insignificant impact on the Russia-China dynamic.
- Russia has failed to appreciate the India’s strategic engagement with the United States and other partners such as Japan and Australia.

## 7) Way Forward

- India-Russian relationship is passing through an interesting phase.
- There are bilateral challenges that need to be overcome.
- The defense deals and nuclear energy cooperation should keep the India-Russia relationship afloat.
- India has to rebuild on its strengths and common concerns with the Russians.
- Need to focus on increasing trade and investment ties between India and Russia.
- India must attract Russian investors to tap the vast opportunities in India’s infrastructure space.