

India and Russia Sign Strategic Partnership, Back Multipolar World

by Ramtanu Maitra

A whirlwind four-day trip to India, on Oct. 3-6, by Russian President Vladimir Putin, resulted in the signing of a ten-point agreement, the centerpiece of which is the declaration that as strategic partners, the two nations will work toward establishing a multipolar world. Both nations agreed that all threats to strategic stability and international security must be addressed, taking into account the legitimate security interests of all nations.

The six-page joint statement, issued at the end of President Putin's stay, said that the strategic partnership signed by the two countries marked a step forward in the further elaboration of the principles contained in the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, and others agreed upon between India and Russia in 1993 and 1994.

The Russian President was accompanied by a high-level delegation of government and business leaders, specialists in the areas covered by several new bilateral agreements. The declaration for strategic partnership included bilateral agreements. These agreements were on enhancing cooperation in science and technology, with special emphasis on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; Russian supply of military hardware and licenses to manufacture Russian tanks and aircraft in India; and a joint effort to curb extremism and terrorism, now being bred in Afghanistan.

Agreements were also signed to enhance economic and trade relations; trade had fallen to only \$1.5 billion in 1999, and while improving this year, it is not expected to surpass \$2 billion. The eagerness of both countries to move beyond this low level was evident even before the summit, in discussions that go beyond the bilateral. These include the statement of intent to develop the North-South Eurasian transport corridor, signed by Russia, India, and Iran last month in St. Petersburg (*EIR*, Sept. 29, p. 22), and Russia's solicitation of Indian involvement in Sakhalin Island oil development, where Japan is also a partner.

New Formulation

The Russian President's trip was originally scheduled to take place in early 1999, when President Boris Yeltsin was in power. However, Yeltsin's poor health, and political instability in both countries, resulted in the trip being postponed. President Putin's trip took place in a much changed environ-

ment, with the Indian political scene seemingly more stable. The overall situation in South Asia, however, has deteriorated further. Ravaged by international terrorism and massive drug trafficking unleashed from Afghanistan, South Asia has emerged as a highly dangerous and volatile region. During the last year, violence in Kashmir has increased rapidly, and terrorism, under the garb of "Islamic extremism," is now spreading toward Central Asia.

During the same period, India's relations with China have improved, although they deteriorated with Pakistan. India's relations with the United States have also improved vastly over the last year.

Russia, for its part, is beset with internal economic problems, as well as fighting the Chechen separatists. Moscow has become increasingly concerned over the rise of an orthodox Islamic regime in Afghanistan, which provides support for insurgencies in the Central Asian republics.

In December 1998, when then-Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov was in Delhi to prepare for Yeltsin's visit, he had spoken of establishing a "strategic triangle" among Russia, China, and India, that would be in the interest of peace and security. That question is still hanging in the air, as evidenced by a Sept. 28 interview with the *Russia Journal* and *India Today*, in which Putin was asked about the Primakov overture. His cautious reply was that "bilateral relations" and "the architecture of international relations as a whole" were his priorities, "with due account for the interests of all interested states. Such states, without any doubt, are India and China and Russia. But everybody will understand us if we are going to say that India, China, and Russia have some common interests as countries located in that region, interests that we want to pursue jointly. I do not see anything special in this, nothing dangerous."

The new Indo-Russian declaration on strategic partnership, issued Oct. 4, was a measured one, as carefully worded as Putin's remarks. Both sides stressed that the strategic partnership agreement is not aimed against any country or group of countries, and would not in any way mean the formation of a strategic alliance. But it is also evident that neither Russia nor India is comfortable with the present unipolar world. In the joint declaration, it was stated that Russia and India would work together for a multipolar world, as Moscow backed In-

dia's inclusion in the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. Russia, India, and China, among others, had earlier objected to the United States' plan for a missile defense system, indicating their refusal to accept the present-day dominance of the United States in military and strategic spheres.

At the same time, the declaration for strategic partnership was quite different from the 1971 Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty. Formulated during the Cold War, the 1971 treaty was defensive by nature, and for all practical purposes was designed to counter both China and the United States—considered then to be common foes by both Russia and India. The strategic partnership now envisaged, takes into account a much wider political objective, one aimed at re-fashioning the international political order. Both sides have committed themselves not to participate in any military, political, or other arrangements or armed conflicts threatening the other side.

Agreement on Nuclear Power

President Putin's trip took place at a time when Indo-Russian trade has flagged drastically. Although bilateral trade grew by about 17% during the first half of 2000 compared with the same period in 1999, trade overall is not expected to go beyond a meager \$2 billion. Last year, total bilateral trade between these two large countries was only \$1.5 billion—a little less than the alleged illegal trade that takes place between India and Pakistan across their borders.

It was evident from the outset that the Indo-Russian economic and trade relations needed more than a push. The strategic partnership declaration calls for annual summit-level meetings of officials dealing with foreign affairs, defense, energy, and the economy. Deeper long-term and diversified Indo-Russian cooperation will be organized in the spheres of metallurgy, fuel, energy, information technology, and communications.

New Delhi is particularly happy over the Russian response to India's request for cooperation in the sphere of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Putin became the first Russian President to visit India's premier atomic energy research center, the Bhabha Atomic Research Center.

India has contracted for two 1,000 megawatt reactors from Russia for installation at the Kudankoolam Atomic Power Station, which is now under construction in southern India. It is reliably reported that Russia will be supplying three more such reactors for installation at Kudankoolam. During Putin's visit, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on intensifying bilateral cooperation in the area of nuclear energy.

New Delhi also noted that Russia, now under the restrictions of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group on nuclear technology exports to aspiring nuclear power nations, such as India, may find it difficult to carry out its promise. India had a previous disappointment in the 1990s, when Moscow, which had con-

tracted to supply India with cryogenic engines for its space program, backed out under U.S. pressure.

However, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov struck a defiant note. On the eve of Putin's departure for India, Klebanov went on record saying that international restrictions would not interfere with Indo-Russian cooperation. He also said that Russia hopes to take part in setting up at least half of India's planned new nuclear capacity—which would translate into 5,000 MW, because India plans to install 10,000 MW of electrical power based on nuclear generation during the present decade.

Military Supply

As was widely reported prior to President Putin's visit, the Russian government has agreed that military supplies to India will remain the cornerstone of Indo-Russian relations. Moscow has agreed to license production in India of SU-30MK1 fighter jets and T-90 tanks. India purchased 140 SU-MK1s and 320 T-90 tanks from Russia. In addition, MIG-29K air defense planes and a 30,000 ton aircraft carrier, the *Admiral Gorshkov*, will be supplied to India. Although the *Admiral Gorshkov* will be given to India free of charge, the refitting of the aircraft carrier will cost India close to \$500 million, reports indicate. Though officials claim that the military supply deal is going to cost India about \$3 billion, reports from Moscow say that the final cost may be as high as \$7 billion.

In the areas of defense and nuclear power, a high-level joint research and development regime has been set up. The need for tighter secrecy was spelled out by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, who said that to guarantee the "mutual security of secret materials" generated in the process of joint activity, both sides have agreed to establish a watchdog committee.

Energy cooperation between Russia and India will be expanded in the area of natural gas. Rem Vyakhirev, longtime head of the Russian gas monopoly Gazprom, accompanied the Russian government delegation. On Sept. 29, Ambassador Satinder Lamba, India's representative in Moscow, told the Russia daily *Kommersant*, that Gazprom would commence exploration in India in collaboration with the Gas Authority of India, while the Indian national Oil Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), through its Videsh Oil foreign section, would join with the Russian state-owned Rosneft firm in Sakhalin Island offshore oil development. In an address to Indian businessmen in Bombay (Mumbai) on Oct. 5, President Putin said that this oil deal "may mark a breakthrough in our trade and economic cooperation," adding that he looked forward to seeing other Indian companies among the largest investors in Russia.

Concern over the Taliban

Less than a week prior to Putin's visit, his special envoy, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, had visited Pakistan to discuss the

Afghan situation. New Delhi became concerned by reports that the objective of that visit was to extend a friendly hand to Islamabad on behalf of Moscow, in order to tame the Taliban rulers in Afghanistan. At the time that Putin arrived, Indian media were reporting on the alleged deal.

To a large extent, Putin succeeded in reassuring New Delhi that Moscow has not changed its policy on either the Taliban or Kashmir. He endorsed India's position on disputed Kashmir, saying that talks with Islamabad can start only when "foreign interference" in Kashmir comes to a halt. Though President Putin had barely veiled his denunciation of Pakistan, at the same time, he urged both India and Pakistan to "compromise" on Kashmir on a bilateral basis.

If the Russian President was less than specific on the Kashmir issue, he nonetheless identified clearly the focus of the alliance between India and Russia as the struggle against international terrorism. Describing terrorism as the principal threat to the objectives of the two countries, he urged India to join Russia to act against international terrorism as the perceived enemy.

Elaborating the theme in an address to a packed Indian Parliament, Putin said that he was sharing "absolutely true and verified information that it was often the same individuals, the same terrorist organizations, that were conducting terrorist acts, from the Philippines to Kosovo, including in Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Russia's North Caucasus."

Putin said that it was time to combat organized international terrorism decisively, and accordingly, Russia has supported the Indian proposal to create a consolidated front against global terrorism.

Mixed Reactions to a Strategic Partnership

Reaction to the Indo-Russian declaration for a strategic partnership has been mixed. While Beijing hailed it as a positive development, the West was less exuberant. Washington has so far refrained from sounding negative. Nonetheless, a senior State Department official told a Pakistani news correspondent that the United States has always encouraged Russia and other countries to take into account the effects of weapons sales on regional stability.

On the other hand, the reaction from Pakistan has been one of unease. A Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Oct. 8 that the huge military supply to India by Russia may trigger an arms race in the area. One leading Pakistan news daily expressed alarm, speculating that there is an American-Russian agreement to appoint India as the "regional policeman."

The largest circulation Urdu news daily, *Jang*, editorialized on Oct. 5, that Washington and Moscow are doing their best to woo New Delhi to strengthen links with it in all fields. "The Russo-Indian alliance, based on agreements signed by Putin in India, especially defense deals, nuclear collaboration, and cooperation in combating terrorism, can create problems for Pakistan," the editorial said.

Brazil Toughens Security in Face of FARC Threat

by Silvia Palacios

The Sept. 22 arrest by Brazilian Federal Police of Jesuit priest Francisco Antonio Cadena Colazzo (a.k.a. Oliveira Medina), who has operated for at least the last two years as the narco-terrorist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (FARC) "ambassador" in Brazil, should not be dismissed as a routine operation, or a one-shot deal. The arrest, rather, signals that Brazil's security policy as a whole has shifted, based on the recognition by Brazilian Armed Forces and related security agencies, that the political advance of Colombia's narco-guerrillas along the strategic Amazon border, and the FARC's open and public links to Brazil's Landless Movement (MST), constitute a threat to Brazil's territorial integrity.

The arrest of "Father" Cadena, on charges that he was "dangerous to national security," occurred as "Operation Cobra" was set into motion. Led by the Federal Police, Operation Cobra has the mission of reinforcing security along the 1,500 kilometer border with Colombia, in the Amazon area which the Armed Forces considers the area of greatest geopolitical tensions in the country. In recent years, the Armed Forces have revamped their war plans, based on the hypothesis that the Amazon is the principal area to be defended, given the drive by the Anglo-American powers to impose the doctrine of "limited sovereignty" upon Brazil. The Army is preparing to rapidly double the 22,000 troops it currently deploys in that border area.

The warnings coming from the Armed Forces have become urgent. One of the principal items discussed at an extraordinary Oct. 4 meeting of the General Officers of the Army High Command, for example, was the repercussions for Brazil of the ongoing crisis in Colombia. As they were meeting, Rear Adm. Helcio Blacker, Deputy Chief of Intelligence for the Chief of Staff of the Defense Ministry, was telling hearings on the Colombia crisis called by the Chamber of Deputies' Amazon and Regional Development Commission, that Brazil would respond militarily to any attempt to invade its territory, whether by guerrillas, drug traffickers, or foreign troops of any nationality.

No More Flirting with the FARC

Cadena had been working on politicians, diplomatic circles, and the Brazilian National Congress since 1998, attempting to get the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government to recognize the FARC as a "belligerent force," which would allow it to maintain official diplomatic offices, with the same