



**ASIA CENTRE, BANGALORE  
and the  
INDIAN COUNCIL FOR WORLD AFFAIRS**

*"India and Russia; Remoulding a Time-tested Relationship"*

**Report on the Joint Seminar held at Bangalore on  
16th December 2017**

**(Inside Front Cover )****ASIA CENTRE BANGALORE**

Asia Centre Bangalore was formed with the objective of promoting political, economic, technological and social exchanges with countries of Asia, and creating new synergies to meet current global and regional challenges. The Centre is registered as a Society under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960. Shri CV Ranganathan is its Chairman and Vice Adm (Retd) RN Ganesh the Director.

Asia Centre is a multi-disciplinary organisation drawing its members from former policy makers, academics, diplomats, defence service officers development bankers and captains of industry. The Centre provides a platform for the free exchange of ideas and analysis leading to policy inputs for leaders in Government, business and industry and civil society.

The Centre conducts seminars, lectures, studies and 'Track two' dialogues on issues of topical importance concerning India and its neighbours.

***Asia Centre Bangalore***

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**INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS**

The Indian Council of World Affairs was established in 1943 by a group of Indian intellectuals as a think tank. It was registered as a non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation under the Registration of Societies Act 1860. By an Act of Parliament in 2001, the Indian Council of World Affairs has been declared an institution of national importance. The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA. Ambassador Nalin Surie, former Indian Ambassador in Beijing, is the Director General.

The ICWA is devoted exclusively to the study of international relations and foreign affairs. Historic international conferences like 'Asian Relations Conference' in 1947 under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu and 'United Nations and the New World Order' in 1994 have been held by this think tank. World renowned dignitaries have addressed huge gatherings of intellectuals in its elegant building, called "Sapru House".

The Council publishes a journal 'India Quarterly' and sponsors the publication of books on international affairs.

***Indian Council of World Affairs***

*Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi*

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**ASIA CENTRE, BANGALORE**  
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**THE INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS**

***“India and Russia: Remoulding a Time-tested Relationship”***

**Report on the Seminar held in Bangalore on  
16<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

“INDIA AND RUSSIA: REMOULDING A TIME-TESTED RELATIONSHIP”

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

**Introduction**

A Seminar on the subject “India and Russia: Remoulding a Time-Tested Relationship” was jointly held by the Asia Centre, Bangalore and the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi in Bangalore on 16th December, 2017.

The Seminar was chaired by Shri Akbar Khaleeli, formerly India’s Ambassador in Italy and Iran. The following were the guest speakers:

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|----------------------------|--|
| a) Smt Achala Moulik       | Author and former Education Secretary, Govt of India                             |
| b) Prof Harsh Pant         | Visiting Professor, King’s College London and Senior Fellow, Observer Foundation |
| c) Air Mshl M Matheswaran  | Former Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff                                  |
| d) Ambassador Kanwal Sibal | Former Foreign Secretary and former Ambassador to Russia                         |

**Opening Remarks by the Chair**

In his opening remarks Ambassador Khaleeli recalled the mutual trust and confidence that had existed earlier between the USSR and India. He noted that we may not be able to renew the past relationship to that extent, because of the large number of Indians who had migrated to the West and made happy and successful lives and careers. They comprised a strong lobby which could not be replicated in Russia because of language, history and cultural factors.

Russia is a big and powerful country that had survived for a long time and would survive long into the future, though it may not be among the wealthy nations. Their major problem was demographic: Russia needs to increase its dwindling population, or would face difficult times.

## **Presentation 1**

### *The Russian Revolution: Its Global Impact and Impact on India*

Ms Achala Moulik gave a brief historical background of the Russian Revolution and the impact that it had had on world history. It had brought humane values into the forefront and inspired the countries of Asia and Latin America to fight and achieve their freedom from imperial powers. Its ideology had made a deep impact on the non-Western world. Irrespective of their political beliefs, many countries followed the example of the Soviet model of the welfare state to a large extent and the assurance of basic needs to all became an essential credo of all states.

India was a great beneficiary of Soviet and later of Russian friendship and support. The non-violent struggle led by Gandhiji was inspired by Tolstoy's philosophy and writings. Subsequently the adoption of the Soviet concept of a centralized planned economy was adopted by India as the way for a country emerging from poverty and without capital resources. The staunch support of the USSR during the 1971 war, its supply of modern weaponry and its backing of India in the Security Council were all crucial in a time of grave danger and enabled India to successfully defeat the existential threats that it had faced.

## **Presentation 2**

### *Indo-Russian Relations: Convergences and Divergences*

Professor Pant began by observing that though it was customary to refer to the historical and time-tested nature of the India-Russian relationship; this was a sentimental approach. It was important for us to understand that we were faced with a new set of challenges in the evolving balance of power.

Whereas our closeness in the past was due to a convergence of interests in the existing balance of power of that era between the West and the USSR, the current changing balance of power has now created a divergence in our outlook and in our interests. We view the world through different prisms. Russia views the Chinese OBOR scheme with favour, and also disapproves of India's involvement in the Quad with the US and its allies. India needs to understand that Russian compulsions are different from ours.

Today Russia's strategic scenario is changed. It is relatively weak because of its economy that is based on a single source, energy. And it is under pressure because of Western hostility. These factors have increased its vulnerability and therefore for Russia a strong relationship with China is a strategic imperative.

For India, too, the strategic scenario is changed. Earlier the relationship with Russia enabled it to stay clear of Cold War confrontations and maintain a non-aligned policy that stood it in good stead. But now India's external threat is not from some remote conflict of great powers but is from our immediate neighbour, China. In every issue of strategic importance to India China is playing a negative role. The changes in Russia's policy on Afghanistan, its legitimisation of the Taliban, and its overtures to Pakistan have upset India's strategic calculus.

There is a fundamental shift in the central driving purpose in the BRICS and the RIC forums now, with China's emerging dominance. These factors are compounded by Russia's and China's total disregard of India's sensitivities on the sovereignty violations embedded in the CPEC and OBOR.

An important aspect that Prof Pant discussed was that there is no constituency in India for the promotion of stronger and closer relations with Russia. The only support for Russian ties appears to be from a section of the diplomatic corps. The relationship has lost its domestic argument as well as its strategic one, largely because of underlying structural realities.

Unless the divergent Indian and Russian strategic perceptions are understood and addressed urgently, the stresses will grow and may result in the rupture of the relationship which many people in India think is very important for our strategic interests.

### **Presentation 3**

#### *India-Russia Defence and Strategic Relationship*

Air Mshl Matheswaran observed that the global power structure is in a transition stage. India will have a major role to play in this; it is however constrained by weaknesses stemming from false perceptions and a failure to build relationships that can be leveraged. For this we need to be clear about our strategic needs.

Indo-Soviet relations during the Cold War were characterized by mutual regard and mutual strategic interests. Russia was regarded as a reliable partner because of its support to India in all fields, especially defence, space and nuclear energy. Our defence cooperation with Soviet Union was a patron-client relationship, and equipment transfers were made at low prices and paid for by counter-trade. This system contributed to our neglect to adopt reverse-engineering to develop our own capabilities. Soviet weapons were used in action in 1965 and 1971, and proved effective.

Much against common perceptions, we have no complaints about Soviet weapons. Our dependence on Russian equipment is 70% even today; we have failed to leverage the relationship during the Cold War. The Chinese, in contrast, have leveraged the Russian relationship smartly, re-structured their R&D institutions efficiently and succeeded in absorbing new technologies. As a result today they design, develop, and manufacture modern aircraft, ships and submarines.

Soviet defence production was dispersed in all the Republics of the USSR. When the USSR collapsed we had major problems on product support and spares supply. While problems in supply do exist, it is the eroding understanding of Soviet technical philosophy and design philosophy that gives rise to misconceptions.

Today we cannot upgrade the Su-30 MKI as Russia is not weak as it was before, and we can't leverage it the way China did. The Russian-Indian Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) and the Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA) projects are making no



progress and the MTA. Our leveraging strategy was flawed- we looked at the final platform, whereas what we needed to do was to invest in and leverage strength in aggregates, spares, design of spares and components.

Technology denial regimes are not going to go away. Collaboration with the US has problems such as ITAR, Foundational Agreements, End User provisions, and interoperability from their angle. They will never go beyond the limits of these provisions. The French will make the latest technology available at a cost and even assure product support. With Russia there is no such problem but language and communication are the big problems with our industry that make them reluctant.

When negotiating for technology cooperation we need to be guided by a realistic appraisal of our own capabilities. Unrealistic inputs given to our decision-makers lead to mistakes.

#### **Presentation 4**

*i) Relevance of India-Russia Relations Today*

*ii) Impact of Inter- Relations of External Powers on Indo-Russian Ties*

*iii) India's Foreign Policy Options*

i) Relevance of India-Russia Relations

Ambassador Sibal pointed out that few countries are as important as Russia. It is the world's largest country and has huge natural resources. Russia is today the biggest energy producer in the world. It has a powerful military and a massive nuclear arsenal, so there is no strategic threat to its security. It has a robust leadership and has taken action to convey that there are certain red lines that Russia would not allow to be crossed.

Russia was very important to us in facing Western pressures on us on non-proliferation, FMCT and CTBT that increased enormously soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and also after India went nuclear. Common views on global governance bring us

together even now. The RIC and BRICS still serve as platforms for non-Western powers to come together on global issues notwithstanding some issues with China. Despite challenges to the Indo-Russian relationship, it remains relevant because there are some issues with the US that could recoil on us.

Russia has now become a power to contend with in West Asia. Our energy and interests and large Diaspora in West Asia make our relations with Russia all the more important. Russia has extended diplomatic support to us for our membership of the Security Council, the NSG, MTCR and earlier in the SCO. This support is important to India and makes good relations with Russia a necessity.

India and Russia have shared positions of opposition to the practice of unilateral sanctions and double-standards on human rights and democracy issues. On the economic side we have a shared interest in opposing protectionism and supporting a rule-based trade order under the WTO.

About 70% of our military hardware is of Russian origin and this dependence will not lessen in any realistic time-frame. Russia provides us with sensitive technologies that are not available from other countries. With such high stakes India should be very careful in the signals we send to Russia. The defence partnership with the US has not produced any meaningful results.

There has been appreciable growth in mutual investment in the hydro carbon sector. Russia is the only country to have built two nuclear power plants in India, and four more are under construction or are planned.

## ii) Impact of Inter-Relations of External Powers on Indo-Russian Ties

America's sustained campaign to isolate and weaken Russia has resulted in the latter strengthening ties with China, which has had an impact on India's security. The US and European sanctions have forced Russia to seek investments from China. Russia has changed its Afghan policy, legitimising the Taliban and adding to India's security concerns.

Their closeness has shifted the balance in the RIC in China's favour, and we cannot count on Russia to try and moderate China anymore. There has been a similar change in this alignment in BRICs and the SCO.

Russia is tolerant of what China is doing in the South China Sea, and is against the Indian participation in the Quad as in their view India has joined the US in a partnership against China.

The United States has not acted against China's expansionist actions in the East and South China Seas. While India is involved in the security of the Pacific and Indian Ocean; through our paper signed on the Joint Strategic Vision, the US does not want a joint strategy on land, where our problems and threats are.

iii) India's Foreign Policy Options

- Maintain a balanced foreign policy: Russia is very important in maintaining that balance. We need to ensure that at a critical time we have a country on which we can rely.
- Strengthen our strategic partnership with the US, but not let it undermine ties with Russia- they are independent of each other.
- We cannot ignore China: we must engage it. We must stand up to China as we have done In Doklam, accept Chinese investment but not allow China use it as an economic weapon.
- We must not join the Belt and Road Initiative, as it is a vehicle for China's geopolitical ambitions.
- Dialogue with Indonesia is very important because it will strengthen our hands, and those of others in this area too, against China.

ASIA CENTRE-ICWA SEMINAR

“INDIA AND RUSSIA: REMOULDING A TIME-TESTED RELATIONSHIP”

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

**Introduction**

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**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Akbar Khaleeli, Chairman**

When we talk about India-Russia relations we cannot but recall the 1971 war with Pakistan and the determination and boldness with which we acted at that time. We shouldn’t forget that we could not have done this without the close and confident

relationship that we had with the Soviet Union. With all the sabre-rattling by the Americans the bluff could not have been called by us unless we trusted the Soviet Union at that time.

However, we cannot renew the past relationship to that extent: while geo-political and other interests keep us linked to Russia (as against the Soviet Union), we should be a little sensitive and be careful not to get carried away by the 'liberal democratic world' entering a new age of globalised economy. With Russia, as with India – or even more than India - history unfolds very slowly. You cannot do things in a rush, but relations can be compromised very fast. What little I know is that while from time to time we make nice sounds about Russia; Russia has not harmed us in anyway so far. I hope we are not waiting for Russia to get very close to Pakistan or for something else to be able to say that now things are changed. One has to understand that Russia's history unfolds in its own way, and even if the world is globalised and Russia is not a great economic power, we should somehow find a way to maintain that confident relationship.

One of the problems, of course, is Russia itself; I don't see chances for people to interact that much with Russia, because since the '70s and '80s all the NRIs seem to be in America and Europe. I take a historical view in these matters: Indian indentured labour went to Fiji and other places; they built those countries and they advanced; but the middle and upper class and caste have all gone to America for various reasons - because they have been pressed out of India, because of reservation, or other causes. So this group, without even being particularly political, has cemented good relations with Western countries to the detriment of relationships with others. In the old days we had a political structure but now there are millions of Indians in the Gulf and millions of highly educated Indians in America who are happy and doing well. They are a very important lobby - you cannot counteract that lobby because Russia can never offer that kind of people-to-people interaction. You have to be conscious of these things in a globalised economy – you may like Russia and so on, but I think the drift is not related only to politics but also to this reality.

The second thing that I would like to say, not being an expert on Russia except for having read a great deal of its literature - one should not forget what a big country

Russia is. Take a map and look at its location: we may be in the space age but Russia is the heartland of the world. That is something that does not change. It stretches to the north from Iran and in the hinterland there are Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Xinjiang (China) – people can huff and they can puff, but whoever dominates this land will never go down; Russia is never going to give up beyond a point. We should bear this in mind. We are not a country that will disappear tomorrow or the day after; we have been here 5000 years and by God's grace will be here another 5000 years. Russia is also in that sense an eternal country - the only problem they have, according to me, is a demographic problem. They should produce more Russians; if they don't I am afraid they are in for difficult times.

With that I will yield the stage - I won't go too much into modern politics as I think you know as much about that as I do. At the time of Independence there was some influence of the Russian Revolution and we built certain ties with it; there was the Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship and the military arms and nuclear cooperation.

I shall now give the floor to Mrs. Achala Moulik, who is the wife of my very dear friend and batch-mate. Before that, I shall ask the Director to introduce our guest speakers.

Introduction of Speakers The Director Asia Centre then introduced the speakers of the day. Their profiles in brief are placed at the end of this report.

## **Presentation 1**

### ***The Russian Revolution: Its Global Impact and Impact on India***

- ***Achala Moulik***

Ambassador Akbar Khaleeli, Admiral Ravi Ganesh, Director of the Asia Centre, Ambassador Kanwal Sibal, Air Marshal Matheswaran, Dr Harsh Pant and members of the Asia Centre: I would like to express my thanks to the Asia Centre for organising this discussion. As a background to the discussion on Indo-Russian Relations I will talk about the Russian Revolution and the general impact that it had on the world.

The inexorable march to the upheaval of the Russian Revolution, its dramatic course, its transformational effect on Russia and the world can be discussed interminably

without any final conclusion. The subject evokes awe and admiration in some, and bitter antagonism in others but even the most objective observer cannot do full justice to this event that not only shook the world, as John Reid wrote in his eye-witness account, but which many would agree, changed the world.

Background: the Russian Revolution My book titled "*The Russian Revolution and Storms across a Century*" tries among other things to understand the deeper causes of the Russian Revolution. Russia's turbulent history, her thoughts and movements, and response to oppression partly explain this event. Rabindranath Tagore was one of the first foreigners to be invited to the Soviet Union in 1931. Seeing the transformation going on, he commended the ease with which a millennium of oppression had been torn asunder in 1917. I believe that the flame of rebellion was ignited by Russian poets Pushkin, and Lermontov, novelists such as Tolstoy and Turgenev and social prophets Herzing, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. The egalitarian ideas of Karl Marx propounded, ironically, in the heyday of imperialism, provided this aim. The votaries of this ideology - Lenin, Trotsky and others, provided leadership for the Revolution.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 had a vision more sweeping than those of the English and French Revolutions. Communism was the ideological foundation: it was not intended only for the benefit of Europeans. The universality of Marxist ideology made it appealing and acceptable to the non-Western world. Carrying the mantle of these ideas, the Soviet Union declared itself the champion of those who lived under colonial rule. Soon after the civil war in Russia Lenin annulled all unequal treaties and guaranteed freedom for all non-Russian nationalities of the former Czarist empire. These actions enhanced the Soviet Union's prestige, especially when it began to support wars of liberation in the non-Western world.

Ideological Foundations of Soviet Foreign Policy In my book I have demonstrated how the Bolshevik Revolution influenced the destiny of other nations. The ideological foundations of Soviet foreign policy were enunciated in Lenin's Decree of Peace in 1917. The new Soviet Republic advocated a world order that would offer peace and protection to the peasants and workers of the world. But global peaceful coexistence was not the only goal. Lenin's decree also enjoined working classes to overthrow

bourgeois capitalist societies and their governments. The dichotomy between peaceful coexistence and support for the struggle against capital oppression soon became apparent. At the outbreak of the Second World War Soviet leaders realized that the defence of the country becomes paramount in a crisis and ideological compulsions have necessary to be compromised. The ideology of the Soviet Union made a deep impact on the non-Western world. My book narrates why the Soviet Union was so warmly welcomed in these lands. The Soviet Union offered them a message of hope, of liberation from economic exploitation and political subjugation. The existence of a superpower opposed to imperialist ambitions provided moral support, material support and even military support to people fighting colonial powers. A small Island like Cuba, a poor nation like Chile could defy the USA. South African, Congolese and Angolan rebels could evict their oppressors when they were assured of Soviet support. I believe that without Soviet support and power, liberation movements might have been suppressed as many had been in the past. More importantly, Soviet power guaranteed balance of power. We have all seen the carnage and chaos in Afghanistan, West Asia and parts of Africa following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, where the quest for regime change has all but destroyed these nations. The Soviet Union was the first nation to recognise the peril of Islamist fundamentalism. It is to contain this that it intervened in Afghanistan in 1979. American policy to incite Mujahedeen and Jihadists against the Soviet Union, and even now in Iraq and Syria has cost the world very dear.

Creation of the United Nations Organisation As World War II ended President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin wanted to establish an international organisation that would maintain peace throughout the world. They drew lessons from the failure of the League of Nations and so the charter of the United Nations was composed in June 1945. But the United Nations suffered from the same impediment as the League of Nations: the conflict between international law and national sovereignty. The United Nations proved effective in maintaining peace only when both the Soviet Union and USA supported the same cause as in the 1956 Suez crisis.

The Cold War Russia's resounding victory over Germany in the World War, its subsequent emergence as a superpower and the resultant Cold War transformed international politics. It was the longest 'War' in history and was unique because there



was no formal declaration of war. The two antagonists did not fight on battlefields – they fought for ideologies that were a camouflage for power and influence.

There was a third party in the war – the so-called third world which had been under foreign yoke. These nations watched the chess game of the superpowers with secret relish and flaunted their political neutrality before those who sought to claim both their soil and their souls. Some countries like Pakistan tried to play a dangerous game between the two Cold War combatants. Paradoxically, the Cold War was accompanied by an elusive peace in Europe never experienced before in the last millennium. Neither camp dared to declare an armed conflict, which could destroy both. The certainty of mutual destruction was regarded as a nuclear deterrent, a myth that Japan rejected after the incineration of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Marshall plan enabled the economic recovery of Europe. It was not mere altruism that prompted the USA to assist Western and Southern Europe. The US' intention was to prevent these nations from turning to the Soviet Union for military and economic aid. There was a fight for rival ideals in the Cold War. The Cold War cast its long shadow on most international events between 1946 and 1991. The West insisted that this war was between fundamental differences in perceptions in economic and social development, private enterprise, and individual freedom.

#### Moral Stance of Russia's Foreign Policy

Russia held a trump card in this game, challenging the West from a high moral ground. What about the socio-economic conditions of the non-Western world which had been colonized and plundered for centuries to build the industrial bases and capitalist systems of Europe, it asked. Asians did not experience either political freedom or human dignity under colonial rule. African slave labour had been the basis of the United States economy until President Lincoln abolished slavery. The pernicious doctrine of Apartheid debarred Africans from entering places in their own country that had been occupied by white settlers. Yet it found many champions in the enlightened liberal West. Crucifix-brandishing adventurers from Spain and Portugal decimated indigenous populations in Latin America and then built their colonies. Western nations did not raise righteous voices against these demographic and ecological disasters until Fidel Castro and Che Guevara fought against them in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. As for the much-vaunted religious freedom, the Russians answered

that the Christian Church had never taken the side of the poor and the oppressed at any time.

Russia's Early Vulnerability It was not an easy ride for the Soviet Union; before she entered the international arena she had to consolidate her position on her vulnerable frontier in Eastern Europe where pro-Soviet governments were established. Eastern European Governments headed by Communist Party members came under Soviet influence and formed the Warsaw Pact for the defence of the Alliance against NATO.

Achievements of the Revolution The most enduring achievement of the Bolshevik Revolution was the progress made in the field of education, not only in Russia but in former Soviet Republics. It was this that made the transformation of Russia possible. The Russian Revolution ushered in a system that made not only political changes, but made dramatic changes in education, state health care, and state-sponsored cultural development. Western governments hastened to introduce the welfare state in the 1920s to counter the Soviet challenge of providing basic needs to citizens. These measures were meant not for the privileged, as in Czarist times but for ordinary people – factory workers, soldiers, students and teachers.

Soviet Support to India India was a great beneficiary of Soviet friendship. It helped that India had connections with Russia long before Gandhiji's freedom movement. Russia was the only European nation that supported the revolt of 1857. Czar Nicholas the First, the Russian media and Count Tolstoy condemned the cold-blooded brutality of the British Raj. When Indian revolutionaries wrote to Lev Tolstoy about India's pain and humiliation this great Russian writer offered a formula for passive resistance and non-cooperation which was adopted by Gandhiji. Lenin predicted that the success of the Bolshevik Revolution would inspire Indians to revolt against British rule. The Indian freedom movement fructified because of two reasons: the weakening of imperialist powers after the Second World War and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower that supported all anti-imperialist movements. India adopted many socio-economic ideas from the Soviet Union such as the planned economy which was necessary for a poor country with meagre resources. As mentioned earlier, the Soviet

Union gave unequivocal support to India in the UN Security Council on the Kashmir issue.

In 1971 when India encountered the formidable and combined hostility of Pakistan, the United States and China, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi asked the Soviet Union for support, which was unconditionally given. The Soviet Union continued to provide arms, technical and scientific assistance to India.

Impact of the Russian Revolution and its Ideals      After a hundred years, the Russian Revolution may be assessed for its vision and intention. Like any political order, the Soviet system had its own shortcomings. But the main relevance was its impact on the world. The Russian Revolution challenged the existing political, economic and social system both in the Western and non-Western world. It condemned racialism and contradicted the theory of racial superiority. Its message inspired resistance and revolutions in the non-Western world. The renaissance of the 15<sup>th</sup> century moved away from the piety and dogma of medieval times. It harked back to the classical Greco-Roman past. Humanism, rather than religiosity was extolled. Unfortunately the humanistic culture remained confined to the Western world. The West's concepts of liberty and equality were intended for Europeans and did apply to people living in far-away continents.

The Russian Revolution changed all that. It gave a new call to humanism; the ideals of the Revolution leapt over racial and national frontiers.

Thank you.

## **Presentation 2**

### ***Indo-Russian Relations: Convergences and Divergences in Perspectives***

- ***Harsh Pant***

Thank you very much, Chair, for having me here today. I am in India for very short periods and I like it very much when the discussion on foreign policy take place outside Delhi because I think in Delhi we tend to know each other and what the other person is going to say; so I think having a discussion here, especially on India-Russia at this point is very interesting.

Scope of the Presentation I was given a mandate to address the sources of divergence; I shall stick to that and make a larger point about the sources in my comments and I hope that can be taken on later on by the distinguished speakers. I must also say it is a bit unnerving to see a lot of seniority in the room; I may not be as experienced as people in the hall but I will make an attempt to sound reasonably credible. Academics can be sometimes described as living in their own world but I would like to connect at some level with the policy discourse that is happening all around Indian foreign policy and around the Indian relationship with Russia.

Facing the Reality of New Challenges The relationship between India and Russia is often described as time-tested and unique; these are the words we here often even in the contemporary context; if you read any op-ed the standard line that we start with that it is a time-tested relationship, a historical relationship, we stood by each other in difficult times, and may that continue. But the reality is that while the relationship was a very strong bulwark during the Cold War and it survived those tumultuous times in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, when both Russia and India went through a distinct phase of change, I would claim that today we are facing a new set of challenges in which the rapidly evolving global balance of power is being interpreted differently in Moscow and Delhi. So I think our expectations from that evolving balance of power are very different, and that is why a lot of the stress that we are witnessing in the relationship is a response to the challenge. Delhi and Moscow view this relationship through different prisms and therefore our understanding and our point of view about the emerging realities of global politics are diverging. We can't resort to the sentimentalism of the past: that it being a historical relationship and therefore the necessity for it to continue. We need to understand that something fundamental is changing in the way that we look at the balance of power. In the balance of power which was the heart of the relationship during the Cold War, there was a convergence; in the present balance of power there is now a divergence. That has to be understood, and it cannot be brushed off simply because we had a historical relationship with each other and because there is a defence relationship.

Need to Understand the Sources of the Change Unless we understand the sources of this change I am afraid we will be misinterpreting a large part of where this

relationship is going; that is what I would like to expand upon. Earlier this week there was a Russia-China-India trilateral foreign ministers' meeting at the Vivekananda Foundation and the Russian foreign minister made two comments which were particularly striking. One was on OBOR; he pointed out to India why it should join the OBOR and that it should consider that OBOR may present opportunities. He said that there were good enough diplomats in India who could make a good argument for India joining OBOR. In his other comment he expressed displeasure with India's Quad initiative and the idea that India, Japan, Australia and America would be working together or have meetings. Though nothing has fructified in that realm but there has been some discussion around this idea of a Quad in the Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific. Some in India may question why a long-standing friend of India is fails to understand the reason for India doing what it is doing. That is a reasonable question: it doesn't mean that the Russians have lost India, but if the Russian foreign minister comes to India and says that he thinks there is something in the OBOR for India despite India's position having been very clearly enunciated on this, or if he expresses displeasure about the Quad, I think it is for us to recognise that that this is as much a matter of compulsion for Russia as a matter of choice. That, I think, lies at the heart of the discourse that we are witnessing today around the Russian-Indian relationship.

#### Challenges to Russia's Global Aspirations

If you go back to what Mr. Putin wanted when he came to power, he from the very beginning has wanted to establish Russia as the kind of global power that it used to be; his idea of Russia harks back to the idea of the former Soviet Union; that Russia needs to restore its status as a major global actor. That in a sense has been his foreign policy approach, and he has been relatively successful in that; today Russia is a major interlocutor in the Middle East. He has displayed ability to use power without actually having the sources of that power – if you look carefully at Russia today it is a relatively weak country domestically. Economically perhaps it is not as strong as it is made out to be; it relies on a single source at this time, and the diversification of the economy that Mr Putin has been trying for some time now has not has not materialised to the extent that Russian decision-makers would like. It is losing ground in the defence market, as China may soon stop importing everything that it imports from Russia and that would be a major setback to

Russia. So if that is the case I think there are significant vulnerabilities there. On the other hand the relationship with the West has become more antagonistic. It is also very interesting that the Trump administration that initially came to office saying that he would like to have a very good relationship with Russia is now mired in the Russia-centred domestic political crisis. This makes it very difficult for the Trump administration to reach out to the Russians as it would have enormous domestic political implications for Trump who is mired in this crisis that links him to Russian interference.

Strong Relationship with China is an Imperative for Russia The balance of power that Russia is confronting is largely one of geopolitical rivalry with the West and that is the dominant frame through which Russia views the world. We need to understand that there is a larger geopolitical prism – the rivalry with the West – through which Russian policy-makers respond to almost every crisis. A relationship with China is seen as a *sine qua non* if Russia really wants to assert itself, at least in the short to medium term, in the context of its aspirations.

Many in Russia have suspicions with regard to China's intrusion into the Far East, and many Russians will tell you that they are extremely concerned about it. Concerns also exist about the Chinese profile in Central Asia and Europe. Despite these disquieting factors being there, Russia views the developing situation through the larger prism of the geopolitical antagonism with the West that it has not been able to resolve and that the West has been able to push forward. It therefore finds that joining hands with China on global issues where it can to scuttle Western interests is a good policy option.

Indian Perspective In the larger frame for us and for Russia, India of course has its own world view and our dominant challenge today is to manage the negative externalities emerging out of China's rise. That is a challenge and a reality unique to India today. India's priority throughout the Cold War was that we should prevent the intrusion of great power politics into what we felt was our own back yard. Whether you call it non-alignment or whether you call it the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, the intention was to keep great power politics away and we did not want to get sucked into the great power politics tangle. In that India has succeeded to a large extent because there was some semblance of great power balance in the system. The great powers

were far off, the Russians and Americans would balance each other out and when needed India could use the Russian geopolitical argument *vis a vis* the West. That created a situation where India could, in large measure, prevent great powers from intruding into its sphere of influence, or prevent them from thwarting it in achieving some of its core vital interests. China's rise is different. China is not a far-off country engaged with great power competition with America somewhere in the Middle East or South West Asia. China is on our doorstep, and as we all know, it is a country with which we have a longstanding border dispute. Even countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives are rapidly entering its orbit, and on every single major strategic issue of concern to India, China seems to be playing a negative role.

#### India Experiencing Shocks of Divergence in Relationship

For India, therefore, engagement with the US and with other like-minded countries in what is now being called the Indo-Pacific has to be a priority. This makes it difficult for India and Russia to have an approach on the change in the balance of power which I think was the source of our convergence in the Cold War that is now rapidly receding or is non-existent. That dissonance or divergence is giving us some shocks; it is creating some issues in the Indo-Russian relationship which did not exist before and we are today talking about those divergences such as for example what we perceive to be Russia's changing attitudes towards Pakistan. (Let me also point out that on almost all these issues Russia has indicated that nothing substantive is changing, but if we are careful and if we are smart enough we know that something is indeed changing.) Russia's overtures to Pakistan are not simply straws in the wind; there is an underlying logic to that and an underlying reality that needs to be acknowledged. Of course they are free to have defence cooperation or limited military exercises; India cannot have a veto on that. But given where the India-Russia relationship used to be, this is a major change for India. Our firm idea that Russia, for good reason, would always back India on key issues and would always side-line Pakistan or would not take Pakistan into consideration is something that is being challenged, and we have to accept that.

#### Divergent Perspectives on Afghanistan

This is linked to Russia's attempt to carve out a new position on Afghanistan, a position that is used to be in sync with America. The all-encompassing idea from India that there is no good and bad Taliban,

and that peace negotiations would have to be constructed around an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned initiative, was widely accepted to be the case in Moscow. But suddenly now the argument is that Russia wants to play a larger role; and the larger view with which it is looking at Afghanistan is that certain elements of the Taliban can be reconciled into the peace process. We may look at it differently but a large section of the Russian elite today now looks at Afghanistan not through the prism of South Asia, where India may have certain concerns. They view it through the prism of their geopolitical rivalry with the West, for they now see an opportunity for Russia to become a major player, and to intervene and make its relationship with China useful so that a *modus vivendi* can be achieved around Russia's role in Afghanistan. So we are looking at this through two very different perspectives. Our approach of course is Pakistan-driven; it is driven by what has been happening in South Asia in relation to Afghanistan. Their approach is driven from outside - through a different lens.

Changing Emphasis in Multilateral Forums Many in India believed that BRICS would become an organisation where Russia and India could jointly put pressure on the China and moderate its stance; suddenly in last year's BRICS summit this was turned on its head when the Russians and the Chinese prevented India from putting the issue of Pakistan in the joint declaration. That changed this year, but I think it is very clear that increasingly as Russia enters into the Chinese orbit the space for India to maneuver in that forum whether it is BRICS or the trilateral would reduce. The whole idea behind these forums was initially based on the polarity of America. The idea was that that the three were together to oppose American predominance. Suddenly that is out of the question because China's resurgence is shaping these forums rapidly. So rather than looking at it through the prism of America the question now is how are Russians and Indians going to be viewing these platforms through the prism of a rising China, and whether there is convergence or not in this regard. I think that we are looking at a future where increasingly there will be divergence in these forums.

Russian Displeasure over Indian Quad Participation We therefore come to a situation where there is a certain amount of displeasure over the Quad; this is why Russia's argument is that India is now gravitating towards America and is participating in an arrangement that would be led by American. Russia would prefer Russia, China



and India to form a separate sort of platform. Whether or not that goes to India's advantage I think is slightly outside the frame for them.

Indifference to India's Sovereignty Concerns in OBOR As regards their advice on OBOR, nobody in Delhi has said that trans-regional connectivity is something that they don't like. Most Indian policy makers have argued that connectivity is going to drive the next phase of globalisation. But on OBOR the separate point that India's making is Indian sovereignty. Sovereignty used to be the guiding principle that at one point brought Indians, Russians and Chinese together - we were called sovereignty hawks. When the West was going on about its interventionist policy the Russians, Indians and the Chinese were saying that they did not want such intervention and they wanted state sovereignty to be sacrosanct. Now for Russia to be giving us advice on OBOR is interesting because somehow the idea of sovereignty is being challenged; India is making the case that China is violating the fundamental principle of our bilateral, trilateral and multilateral engagements. So this kind of advice from Russia that India should be cognizant of the fact that there are opportunities in OBOR would be seen by many in India, not by all, that there is something that is not in sync with Indian sensitivities on this issue.

Decline in Trade and Defence Links We have seen time and time again that the top leadership in both Russia and India is putting great emphasis on the relationship. Every time there is a visit they say that the relationship is very productive, there is a new momentum; but underlying this are structural factors are now making this relationship divergent. And this is the underlying structural reality of India and Russia looking at the world through very different lenses. And they are being shaped also by an economic relationship that is not gaining momentum despite the best attempts on both sides. The economic relationship is in decline and in spite of the fact that we continue to set higher targets for bilateral trade we are not meeting those targets: that is a challenge that both of us face in managing this relationship.

On the other side is the defence relationship that is also under stress. On the one hand New Delhi is diversifying (its sources of defence supplies); that is clearly going to be a slow process, as diversification does not happen overnight. On the other hand there are

serious concerns that Russia is willing to sell almost anything to China at this point. Of course China very soon is not going to import anything from Russia. From the Russian point of view an argument has been made that this is a small window of opportunity for them that they should make the most of, because five years down the line the Chinese would stop importing anything from them.

So there are arguments on both sides, which are now nested in this larger argument of two countries which used to be friends, and are still friends, looking at the world now through different lenses and facing certain hiccups in the process.

Lack of pro-Russian Constituency in India Another important feature that we need to consider at this point is that there is a lack of a vocal constituency in India to make a case for a strong relationship with Russia. This is the reality that has been alluded to by the Chair earlier, and one that cannot be wished away. By and large the only segment today that calls for a strong India-Russian relationship is a section of the Indian diplomatic corps. If you get out of that then there is no middle class constituency, no economic constituency. The trade establishments don't talk of Russia at any of these Chambers of Commerce. The cultural relations have subsided significantly; they used to be at one point of time the biggest element of the relationship. As for the educational constituency - at one time most of our professors particularly in the JNU used to go to Russia to study. Russia used to be a great support. Students who want to pursue PhD now are not going to Russia – they are going everywhere else.

This is very serious in terms of future generations of the relationship. How can we sustain a relationship that is primarily coming from a section of the diplomatic corps that wants to make a case on strategic priorities? This element - how this relationship is nested in the larger Indian consciousness - is very important for us to understand. This relationship is losing not only its strategic argument because the strategic lenses are divergent; it also does not retain the domestic element.

Need to Address Evolving Realities to Prevent Rupture This does not mean that the relationship should not be viewed as important - after all we are investing in so many organisations whether it is the Russia-India-China trilateral (RIC), the BRICS forum, or even the SCO where the Russians have been instrumental in getting us in.

The engagement is there and of course the technical and defence cooperation is there we know that Russia is the only country that supplies strategic technology of the kind that few countries are willing to do.

What is important for us to understand is that the challenges are growing and these challenges cannot be addressed by simply saying that we have a time-tested and unique relationship. If the rapidly evolving realities for India as well as for Russia are not addressed sooner we will have a problem of the divergences becoming very serious and rupturing a relationship that many in India think is very important for our strategic interests in the world.

Thank you.

### **Presentation 3**

#### ***India-Russia Defence and Strategic Relationship***

***Air Mshl M. Matheswaran (Retd)***

Thank you, Mr Chairman, my distinguished co-panelists, Admiral Ganesh, and this distinguished audience; it is a pleasure to be here.

Palmerstone and the 'Permanence of Interests'      Let me start with this principle that I know everybody is aware of: we don't have to lose sleep over any relationship as long as we are aware of a fundamental axiom: there are no permanent enemies and no permanent allies - only permanent interests. That is Lord Palmerston's famous quote. I think India does pretty well in this area - there are ambiguities in certain ways of projecting things but at the core we tend to follow that principle.

The Age of Power Transition and Indian Role      Before coming to the Indo-Russian relationship, I'd like to flag a few issues regarding the current International system, much of which has been covered by Professor Pant. In the 21st century the global system which I call the Euro-American-dominated system that prevailed for the last nearly four centuries is in a state of flux, in what we may call the power transition mode. The decline of the US is evident in the way that it behaves the way and in the way in which it takes action on many fronts. This decline is not going to be overnight;

the US will still remain dominant for three-fourths of the century. But as Barry Buzan says, the world will move towards no more superpowers; a consortium of global powers will come together by the middle of the century to run the international system, and the rising powers will be India, China and a resurgent Russia. BRICS is important and it will be unlike in the historical past, where in the power transition mode the challenger built up power and went past the dominant power, resulting in conflict. I think that is past, given the nuclear environment, given the technological changes that are taking place, and the fact that for the first time in human history a globalised world has come into being. The economic centre of gravity is no more located in small areas of Europe. BRICS will become a facilitator to transform the world, therefore it is a power transition age that in the process and that indicates clearly in this process India has an important role, but it has major weaknesses. The weaknesses come from false perceptions and failure to build relationships in a manner in which we leverage these relationships. And that is where Palmerston quote comes in. We need to be very clear about what we need. Strategic relationships between countries are for mutual interest and therefore you should be able to leverage those relationships to your advantage.

#### Soviet-Indian Partnership

The partnership between India and Russia came into being in the age of ideologies in the Cold War, much of which has been covered, and our relationship also had mutual regard and mutual strategic interest and therefore we went along the route of socialism. For our development projects we adopted the command economy model. We pushed investments in the development model into public sector units; we pretty much copied the Soviet system of development in the 50's and 60's. Then of course there was the India-China war of 1962 that had a major impact on the entire process. The strategic relationship also evolved with policy alignments on international issues, and on the Kashmir issue. As Professor Pant pointed out there was a lot of engagement and cultural interaction. In fact very recently I heard an old timer singing the famous 420 song in Russian to the same tune; so there are people who still look for the old nostalgic relations. Educational interaction was good and the strategic relationship culminated in the 1971 Treaty; that was the peak time. It also created sort of dependency in India. In our view of Russia it came off very well as a reliable strategic partner. What were the issues about strategic reliability that gave strength to that

perception? It was support to India's industrialisation; they contributed significantly to technical education in the initial stages. Defence cooperation was almost entirely in import and in the public sector-dominated defence industry with the licensed production model. In space and nuclear sectors there was extensive cooperation which was different from the defence pattern, and cooperation in these sectors was extremely important. It continues today: we launched the first satellite Aryabhata in 1975 with a Russian rocket, Bhaskara was launched on a Russian rocket and Rakesh Sharma the first Indian cosmonaut went to space with Russian support. Russia still managed to support us in developing the cryogenic engine despite being grievously weak in the 1990s with the Americans breathing fire on them, and the cryogenic engine materialised in 20 years' time. Much of that materialisation was possible only because they honoured part of the agreement and gave us the initial lot of engines that were required to form the core of the development process.

In the nuclear field too there has been extensive support. In both these areas - nuclear and space - there's been cooperation both in the research and development side and on the scientific and technological side and that continued as an important strategic element in the Indo-Russian partnership.

Defence Cooperation Our defence cooperation with Soviet Union was a patron-client relationship, as all decisions were taken at the government-to-government level; they were not based on economic principles as the fundamental issue was because of the ideology environment of the day the equipment was available at low cost on a counter-trade arrangement. Investments in India for defence production were made as part of the licensed production process. Because the costs were not alarming they did not have a significant influence on the management. This also contributed to not addressing parallel reverse-engineering research and development in any significant way. Post 1962 many events strengthened this relationship: defence cooperation was accelerated by the coincidence of Sino-Soviet break up in 1960, the Cuban crisis, and India being in a defence build-up overdrive post 1962. During the 1965 Indo-Pak war a large amount of Soviet weaponry was inducted and it almost became like a successful testing ground. In the international relations domain Russia played a major role in Tashkent to end the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The 1971 war was the culmination of this entire

process; as I said the Indo-Soviet Peace Treaty was the peak of the relationship. The Indo-Pak war was well conducted with Soviet support in all domains. Soviet defence equipment was well proven against American equipment fielded by Pakistan. So we have no complaints as far as Soviet weapons were concerned, much against the common perceptions that prevail; and there are factors why these perceptions gained credence because of other issues and not because of performance or reliability.

Key Factors of Defence Relationship The key factors on the defence issue are: military dependence on Russian equipment even today is 70% and therefore to wish away that dependence overnight is impossibility. We need to have a strategy if we want to move away, and we need to move away if we want to be a great power. If we want to play a strong role in the BRICS then we need to have minimal import and maximum dependence on indigenous capability; but we haven't done that and because of the conditions that existed during the Cold War we have not capitalised on them and leveraged them like China has leveraged its dependent relationship with Russia at that time. Our defence industrial relationship worked on a licensed production model and therefore the Russians would just give us the drawings, tell us what to do and when to do and we would repeat the build to print models that they gave us.

Leveraging Defence Links – India's Failure and China's Success India's failure to leverage the strategic partnership was its single biggest failure. And that was because of not understanding that no country does anything good for any other country out of altruism – it does it for its own benefits. During the Cold War the Soviet Union needed India on its side and China was also on its side. But the Chinese leveraged that relationship: even though they broke up in 1960 they got much of the leveraging done which we failed to do. Technology transferred to us was limited to production technology. And that you can contrast with China; now when the Chinese give Russians piecemeal orders the Russians have no choice but to agree, simply because the Chinese order 200 Su-27s and say they would buy 18, and the rest would be produced in their factory in Eastern China. And more than that - by the time they finish the 200 they would have reverse-engineered the whole aircraft and fielded the J-11. The J-11 which they claim is Chinese- designed and built, is nothing but a Su-27 reverse-engineered. And the next 200 that was promised to be ordered on which these

technologies were leveraged - that order never came. But the relationship continues because they give big orders, they place the orders strategically and they have taken care to re-structure the R&D institutions so well that the technology absorption and leveraging is very efficiently done. That is why in the period from 1991 till now from a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation reverse-engineering aircraft producer, China has transformed itself to a 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft designer, developer and manufacturer.

Importance of Accountability and Efficiency      Public-sector unit models where we invested all our capabilities were a poor replica of the Soviet system. Efficiency was a big casualty. Stalin catapulted the Soviet Union from a status where it could not be compared with the US, Britain or France to a superpower within a matter of three decades. He had to wield the stick, and carry out a wholesale reorganization and restructuring of institutions and processes. It doesn't come easy.

Accountability is extremely important. Sergei Korolev who was the man who launched the Sputnik and brought USSR such fame and he put Yuri Gagarin into space in 1961 cooled his heels in a gulag for 6 years in the 1940s for lack of accountability at some point of time. So while we only know about Stalin's dictatorship and concentration camps, I think much of the development of Russia today rests on the industrial foundation that was laid in Stalin's time. Therefore accountability and efficiency are very important.

Impact of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union      Starting with the MiG-21, much of the Air Force inventory was of Russian origin and so were the Army's tanks and other weapons. The Navy got frigates and submarines; that is well known but after the USSR suffered an economic and political meltdown that had an adverse impact on the defence industry. A number of Soviet Republics became independent; the Soviet philosophy of dispersal of defence production across the country was a strategic measure to ensure the production of various components and spreading technology development during the Cold War throughout the whole of the USSR; the integration took place at selected centres in Russia as it is today. But when the Republics broke away it all spun out of control and therefore we had problems on reliability because product support ceased and spares did not come in time.

With the economy being in complete disarray educational institutions and research Institutions also declined, quality standards and accountability for quality standards became suspect and that became a major issue with us at that time. In the '90s till the early 2000's we faced major problems, particularly the Indian Air Force and I'm sure the Navy would have faced the same thing. Economics was something that Communist Russia never understood in contrast to the West. We bought much of our equipment on barter and pricing became a new issue. The Russians were still trying to figure out costing methodologies. In terms of specific aspects we went to discuss intellectual property issues with the Russian side in Moscow when Ambassador Sibal was the Ambassador there. Much of the spares were outsourced by then from the former Republics. The Russians said that they were losing business and that would be an issue of intellectual property rights. They wanted us to put a stop to our practice, and not to outsource from anywhere else. They said that they would get it from the Republics and supply it to us. This demand from them failed because we argued very strongly and said if it impacted strategically on our systems we would give them first choice but if they were not able to supply the equipment or spares then we would go to anybody who could. They had to accept that because they were not in a position to meet our demands. Their industries were in a restructuring mode they were not in full control. This will give you an idea about the kind of chaos that we went through in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Russia's investment in defence was dropping drastically: in 1988 the defence budget was 350 billion, 60 billion in 1992, and 19 billion in 1998. And China catapulted from 21 billion in 1988, to 215 billion in 2015, and nearly 300 billion now, according to some estimates.

Misconceptions about Russian vis-à-vis Western Technology

So we these were the factors that spread misconceptions; problems and supply issues do exist but there are lots of misconceptions in comparisons between West and East that we need to understand. Firstly India is the only country in the world that uses both Russian and Western equipment on a large scale - nobody has that experience other than India on the scale that we have actually operated. Therefore we are experienced in understanding various nuances of technology and user systems and their performance and operation. I think we have made the Americans aware of our capabilities in this



aspect. There is very little of Russian technical education and experience in the Indian industry. The Navy is an exception but even there it is dwindling. Therefore the basic issue is that understanding of Soviet technical philosophy and design philosophy are eroding and that gives rise to misconceptions. Indian education and philosophy is Western rooted, particularly in engineering and sciences, and designs flow from that kind of logic. So comparing the Soviet/Russian design philosophy with Western philosophy, the Western philosophy brings in the business, commercial angle and efficiency of investment right from the design process. The Communist military design and manufacture looked at meeting political and security objectives and the State would fund anything that was wanted, without the military industry having to worry about the cost. The performance had to be there – that was the design logic that evolved over 50 years. Therefore when you talk about condition-based maintenance design it is Greek to the Russians, when you talk about life-cycle costs again it is a problem for the Russians to understand that. So the design development testing process, the GOST standards, or the validation of product technical life, and so on are a little different from the Western practices. But product support, spares utilisation and life-cycle costs are impacted when there are misconceptions on these issues. In the early 2000s, when the Mirage 2000 and the Mig-29 were compared much of that information I would say was deeply flawed because some serious inputs were not taken into consideration and the understanding of differences in the philosophy was missing on the two sides. The focus on performance and reliability in war needs to be given a lot of weight. This is now possible, as they (Russia) are also moving towards understanding and working in a global economy, which is largely a Bretton Woods dominated economy system, and they are bringing in costs and that sometimes lacks clarity and logic so we get into a problem. I think it is a developing issue and we shouldn't be losing sleep over that.

#### Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

When Russia was weak and the meltdown happened, countries that were smart leveraged it immediately. So much of the design knowledge - China was able to plug its gaps between 1991 and in much of its aerospace technological capabilities the crux lay in poaching scientists and competences from Russia and the former Soviet Republics. Ukraine was a big provider – in fact Ukraine was the brain of the Soviet Union. We had some good deals - the

MiG-21 Bison was a good project where we integrated Western systems into a Russian system. We managed to put 3-4 countries to work together – it was a Herculean task but I think the lessons learned from that were imbibed into Su-30MKI deal. But we did not leverage it enough, otherwise we would have been doing the same thing that China is doing with the Su-27 and J-11. Today when we want to upgrade the Su-30 MKI, Russia has moved away. Putin has brought Russia back from that weakness using the petro-economy and today Russia is in a strong position, not weak as it was before. So you can't leverage it the way China does any more, and if you want to upgrade the Su-30 MKI without Russian involvement, it is a big problem. You cannot do the full upgrade. Similarly in the Navy, we had cooperation in technology and R&D. Russia's strengths even today are in materials, mechanical engineering and performance. And we need to leverage that.

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships - the Indian Experience The Russian-Indian Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) programme and the Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA) joint venture project are examples: the FGFA is making no progress and the MTA programme has been scrapped. All these issues happened simply because our leveraging strategy was flawed. The FGFA came in when the prototype was already designed - so to get technology access when the design is almost complete would be ridiculous. Now we are trying to leverage technology which in our own system would not be very beneficial. So we brought in a competitor Mikoyan, which was in the doldrums; Sukhoi, which had come up because of our project and the Chinese purchase, had come into some strength and the Russian government backed the Sukhoi. Actually the Russian Air Force had selected the Mikoyan project that was technically sounder. We said let us bring in both into a competition and the competition brought an offer of 50% technology transfer. We recommended that a choice be made bearing in mind that one of the companies was offering ownership of intellectual property rights in a joint venture. We would get access to technology and if the prototype was to be made it would be jointly done. The reliability factor would come into it, diplomacy would come into the picture; our Government should decide how to go about it. The Russian government quite naturally wrote and said that while they were happy that we were choosing one of the two firms, the risk would be entirely ours if we

went with Mikoyan, as their government had partly funded the Sukhoi. With that ended our leveraging the FGFA, which is still stuck in problems and has not moved forward. We looked at the final platform, whereas what we needed to do was to invest in and leverage strength in aggregates, spares, design of spares and components, and that is something that was not been addressed effectively. And there is a lot of capability - there are a lot of industries in Russia that can actually come in. And contrary to whatever announcements Western companies may make, the French, American and the Israelis collaborate with the Russian companies, leveraging their technology. Brahmos is a unique model that could be replicated in many more areas.

Some Strategic Issues      Technology denial regimes (even though we have become a member of the MTCR and will become a member of the NSG) will continue in different forms- no country gives away its family jewels in one go. You have to know the art of leveraging and the technology diffusion effect needs to be leveraged. That is what China has done- we need to study China well. Collaboration with the US has its own problems - ITAR, Foundational Agreements, End User provisions, and interoperability from their angle. They will never go beyond what these provisions authorize them to give. This will continue until the USA realises that its dominant position is coming down, and when the situation reaches a stage where the US needs to bring in more partners on a firmer footing, and only then; and that is going to take a long time. The French are equally adamant. There is an interesting book in which the French national security strategy adopted the defence and armament industry as the core and this was the basis on which the National strategy was developed by DeGaulle, that lays down very clearly the issues of technology control - they are they are not going to part with technology easily. But at a cost the latest technology and platform will be available to you at a cost and even product support will be assured. That is the assurance of reliability..

There is no problem with Russia with regard to technology denial but language and communication are big problems with our industry and that pushes them on the back foot.

Looking to the Future      So what is the future? India's options at its core will always be governed by the strategic autonomy principle. So how you make decisions will need

to be looked at from that template. But when we make our decision and when we want to move ahead, particularly in industrial cooperation we need to be guided by a realistic appraisal of the technology that we have and that exists with us at the moment. I feel that we make a lot of claims that do not give the right inputs to our decision-makers and that leads us into a lot of mistakes. Strategic partnerships are governed by mutual interests. We should be governed by what the partner is looking for and what we are looking for, assess whether it is worth leveraging that strategic partnership, and whether there is a long term benefit- we should always have a long-term view – and then decide to strengthen the existing relationship or keep it at a level that still addresses our interests. The world order is in transition, and the importance of BRICS I have already spoken about. The decline of the dominant power is a reality so while we go with the US we need to be conscious of the fact that the USA beyond 2050 or 2060 will be considerably different from the US of today.

Thank you.

#### **Presentation 4**

***Importance of India-Russia Relations in the Changed Global Power Structure; Impact of Inter-Relations of three Great Powers on Indo-Russian Ties; and India's Foreign Policy Options***

- ***Kanwal Sibal***

I would first like to thank Ambassador Khaleeli our Chairman. In my first posting in Paris he was the First Secretary in charge and I had the benefit of his very interesting, original and profound surveys of Islamic history. What he talked about I had never read anywhere else, and I wondered what his sources were and what he delved into to get this kind of insight; clearly he thinks about these issues a lot and has his original way of looking at them. Admiral Ganesh, thank you for the invitation.

Scope of the Presentation                      India–Russia relations form an important subject and we need to be clear-sighted about how we are going to handle these relations in view of

the challenges that we are confronted with, and Dr Harsh Pant has outlined some of these challenges. In fact in his talk to you he covered some of the ground that you asked me to cover in my talk. You have given me three points to anchor my talk on: the political and strategic relevance of India-Russia relations today in the radically changed global power structure, the impact of the mutual relations of other big powers on Indo-Russian ties, and our future policy options.

### **Relevance of India-Russia Relations**

Importance of Russia to India I find it surprising that one should at all question the relevance of our ties with Russia, no matter what the challenges are. Because how many countries are as important as Russia? You look at Latin America, Africa, South-east Asia, and Central Asia: there are very few countries barring two or three big powers that have as much global influence. Even a declining Russia is a very major power. It is the largest country geographically as we know, and it has huge natural resources. Madeleine Albright once asked why Russia should continue to be the sole proprietor of the whole of Siberia, which has enormous resources, and this caused a great flutter in Russia because they thought that it was the game plan of the United States to separate Siberia from Russia. It has a powerful and as we see now from the manner in which they have intervened so effectively in Syria, a rejuvenated military. It is self-sufficient in energy: the lack of energy resources creates a huge dependency on external sources for most countries and thereby limits options in foreign policy and strategy. But Russia is today the biggest energy producer in the world, if one combines oil and gas output. It can defend itself: it has a massive nuclear arsenal. So there is no threat to its security in the deeper strategic sense. It has a strong and stable leadership: one may decry that leadership, and call it authoritarian and whatever else, but the manner in which Putin has re-established state authority and prevented a further breakup of Russia, and has intervened in both Georgia and Ukraine in order to convey that there are certain red lines that Russia would not allow to be crossed, shows that it has a well-functioning political leadership that has confidence in itself. On top of this it has a vast Asian dimension which means, as Ambassador Khaleeli said, that they are dominating the heartland of Asia. Since we are in Asia this is an additional reason why Russia is politically relevant and our relations with Russia remain very relevant.

### Benefit to India from Changed Global Power Structure

When talking about the radically changed global power structure one has to look at it a little closely as there are certain nuances in this. One is that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union opened up the space to build up relationships across the earlier blocs, and opened up choices for countries like us – non-aligned countries in general - because establishing close relations with one bloc was no longer seen as being against another bloc. With the disappearance of bloc politics one can establish productive relations with any country in whichever former bloc. India has also gained from this because it has opened up for us the possibility of close relations with the United States, as our ties with the United States during the Cold War were problematic for many reasons, one of which was that we were seen as being in the Russian camp. Our leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement was in some way bolstering the Soviet Union; but now with the dissolution of the Soviet Union the road is open for us to improve our relations with the United States.

### Negative Consequences

While this did benefit us in opening up, it also had a negative consequence, which was that the pressures from the United States on India increased enormously during the phase just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially on non-proliferation issues. I remember a conversation I had in Washington at that time with an official from the State Department. There was some issue about which I spoke to the Assistant Secretary in the State Department, and she said “Look, we have no reason to molycoddle you – you no longer have Russia to back you.” The CTBT and FMCT processes started because they felt that the Soviet collapse had left India bereft of any great power support and they could push us towards the elimination of our nuclear capability. Russia was very critical to us at the time. Russia was not part of the process, though in the Security Council they did vote on the necessary resolutions, but in critical areas like defence matters continued as before and for Russia it was business as usual. And I must say that within the group formed by P-5 to study the consequences of India going nuclear, Russia was helpful in toning down the actions contemplated by the United States; France was also helpful in this regard.

### Common Interest in Multipolarity

After that the United States emerged as the sole global superpower and embarked on a policy of regime change, crusades for

democracy and human rights in very sensitive parts of the globe, and the war against terror was conducted unilaterally. Now again India and Russia had a common interest in promoting multipolarity. It was not only India that wanted multipolarity –France, too, was deeply concerned and was very vocal about it. So we had this commonality of interests with Russia to oppose regime change policies that were based on violating the principles of not interfering in the internal affairs of countries and respecting state sovereignty. In other words we had a different concept of how the globe should be governed that brought us together and in some ways brings us together even now.

Continued Relevance of Trilateral Dialogue The Russia-India-China dialogues that later evolved into BRICS was initiated by Russia as a platform for non-Western powers to come together and evolve an agenda to promote some introspection at the global level on some issues confronting the international community, and to create an alternative narrative. And that purpose is still being served despite the issues we now have with the rise of China and some complications in our relations with Russia. There may be a part of the India-Russia relationship that poses challenges to us but there is another part of our relationship that continues to be relevant, because it is not as if at the international the conflict is between angels and demons – the United States and the Western powers are not angels either. I shall come to that – why we just cannot afford put our eggs in any one basket; even though we have greatly improved relations with the United States, there are a number of issues with the US that could recoil on us if we were to go too far into their camp.

Emergence of a Polycentric World Now the unipolar world has ended and we have a multipolar or polycentric world – or at least it has begun to emerge – and everybody seems to be agreed that the while the US will remain the dominant power its power has diminished. Its Wars on Terror have failed – miserably one might say - in fact they have given rise to new threats and insecurities. The whole of West Asia is in serious turmoil, and radical Islam and terrorism are gaining more strength on the ground. Despite the fact that the Islamic State has been defeated, its ideology has not. The over-extension of the US military in several wars has led to repercussions on its economy. Public support within the US for foreign interventions has also eroded. The process had begun under Obama, though his record has been rather inconsistent: while

on the one hand he wanted to withdraw the United States from foreign entanglements his record in Libya and in Syria pointed in just the opposite direction.

#### American Efforts to Isolate and Weaken Russia

From India's point of view Obama was responsible for creating problems for us because he was principally responsible for the massive deterioration of relations with Russia. He is the one who began the process of imposing sanctions; he is the one who interfered in areas of acute geopolitical sensitivity in Russia's neighbourhood like Ukraine, and the expansion of NATO and the EU continued during his presidency. His whole game plan was to weaken Russia. And he said some very pejorative things about Putin himself and about Russia, calling Russia a mere regional power and listing it as one of the four or five threats to the international community. Which were according to him war, Islamic terrorism, and climate change and then Russia. The whole aim was to weaken Russia, and to cut it off from Europe as much as possible. The result of this has been that Russia has been compelled to move eastwards and strengthen its relations with China, with consequences for us that I will revert to later.

#### Current Unpredictability and Inconsistency of US Policy

Under Trump we have additional problems because he is unpredictable and inconsistent. He has upset his allies in Europe by questioning NATO and by demanding more burden-sharing by them in defence matters. He has attacked the EU, and Germany in particular. He has walked out of the climate change agreement, he has walked out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and he is also subverting the WTO. The structures that were built up by the United States over the years are being slowly challenged and dismantled, and not by Russia or China or RICS or BRICS, but by the United States itself! The US war in Afghanistan has not succeeded, and the Taliban have re-emerged.

#### Negative Impact of Russia's New Afghanistan Policy

This has also led to negative consequences for us as far as Russia is concerned, as has been brought out earlier, because Russia has now begun to legitimise the Taliban as a political force in Afghanistan and in parallel has reached out to Pakistan. All these developments create dangers to our security as well as to our other interests. The short point is that our ties



with Russia remain helpful in meeting many of the challenges that are emerging, though there are areas where our geopolitical interests have begun to somewhat diverge.

Russian Intervention and Influence in West Asia      The Russian intervention in Syria and the destruction of the Islamic State there from our point of view, and from the point of view of large sections of the international community, has made the overall situation better. It has fought terrorism more frontally than either the US or Europe. It is interesting how Russia has sought to tamp down the Iran-Saudi and the Shia-Sunni conflicts by having a strong relationship with Iran as well as, surprisingly, a very good relationship with Saudi Arabia today, as was seen by the presence of the Saudis at the launch of the Arctic project in Moscow a few days ago. Russia would also be very helpful in preventing any re-negotiation of the nuclear deal with Iran. If Trump and Israel – of course Europe is also opposed to it – but if Trump and Israel really pushed in this direction then we can count on saner voices, including that of Russia to prevent an already complicated situation from becoming unmanageable, again with direct consequences to our security. Russia has now become a power to contend with in West Asia where we have major manpower and energy interests, which also makes it very important that our lines of communication with Russia remain open because our interest in West Asia converges with Russia's interests.

Russian Diplomatic Support to India      In other matters that are significant diplomatically and politically, Russia is supportive of our permanent membership of the Security Council, though this is not in the offing in the foreseeable future. It supports our membership of the NSG, unlike China, and it has backed our membership of the MTCR. It lobbied earlier for our full membership of the SCO, and the idea was to balance China's influence within the SCO by bringing India in. When the RIC was first floated I was Foreign Secretary when the first meeting of the RIC at Foreign Secretaries level took place on the margins of the UNGA session.

Changed Objectives of Trilateral and Multilateral Forums      Russia's idea was to see if they could build up a strong Russia-India-China platform to counter the West, and it was predicated on a real possibility of it playing an important role in bringing India and China together and the Russians felt that coming together on this platform would help

stabilise the India-China relationship. When they discovered that this was not happening according to their thinking and their wishes, the RIC was enlarged into BRICS. The Indian membership of the SCO is no longer based on the presumption that Russia had at one time that they could play a role in the India-China relationship. In fact there was another dimension to it: it was one way of balancing China's increasing domination in Central Asia within the SCO by projecting a role for India. This was not achieved as they had to compromise because China would not allow India to be included unless Pakistan was. Now we clearly have a convergent interest in combating international terrorism; Russia is paranoid about the spread of radical Islam into Central Asia, which is something that would be a matter of concern to us.

#### Divergent Perceptions in Af-Pak Region

Admittedly a gap has developed in our perceptions of the Pakistan-Afghanistan region. While in a larger sense we have a real convergence of interests in combating terrorism, Russia is ambivalent and equivocal when it comes to public support for us against Pakistan-directed terrorism at India. If you look at our joint statements they have very carefully avoided any mention of Pakistan. In the BRICS communique this time the Russians were bolder and they obviously had a role in ensuring that China did not veto the inclusion of the mention of the JeM and the LeT in the joint communique. But this had a very strong impact within Pakistan with the result that in the RIC communique this time the LeT and JeM are not mentioned. So while Russia as part of its outreach to Pakistan is careful not to give prominence in joint statements to shared concerns with us in our region, they are not unaware of the LeT and the JeM and the role that they play in promoting terrorism within Pakistan and in the region.

#### Commonality of Interests in Global Issues

India and Russia have shared positions on the US and European practice, especially by the United States, of imposing sanctions unilaterally and we are opposed to double-standards on human rights and democracy issues. On the economic side we have a shared interest in opposing protectionism and we support a rule-based trade order under the WTO. These are all issues that are important and serious, and are relevant to us and India-Russia understanding on these issues is meaningful.

Defence Ties: India's Dependence on Russia for Military Hardware As brought out, we still are dependent to the extent of 70% on Russian equipment. Although we have developed defence ties with the US and Israel in particular, the dependence on Russia has not declined and we have entered into or are negotiating fresh contracts with Russia, whether for additional frigates or release of an additional nuclear submarine or (let us see if the FGFA gets off the ground or not) the Kamov helicopter contract, or the S-400 air defence system. This would mean that the involvement of Russia in India's defence procurements will continue and therefore it is not a likely prospect that we can at political level take a decision to lessen this dependence in any realistic time-frame. Therefore the stakes are very high: if you are dependent to this extent on any country you can't be cavalier. You have to be extremely careful about the signals you send to Russia, especially if you look at Russia's record; despite all difficulties they have never imposed sanctions, they never delayed supplies because of political reasons, and to that extent therefore they are a tried and tested partner. It is not sentimental: it is something that is a reality. And they don't insist on end use monitoring, on signing foundation agreements or going in for interoperability. So you have a lot more political space when you deal with Russia in the area of defence. And Russia provides you with sensitive technologies that other countries do not, and since I was Ambassador in Russia I am aware of some of the things that they do which are very sensitive and which if it became public would embarrass Russia in terms of international practices, export controls and so on. Contrast this with what we are trying to do with the US: neither the Technology and Trade Initiative, nor the US declaring us a major defence partner has produced any meaningful results up to now. My concern is that these initiatives by the United States should not be used to sell more arms to India, to sell F16s or F18s or whatever else, but actually not to do anything meaningful for really building up an indigenous defence manufacturing base.

#### Growth in Ties in Energy Sector

- a) Hydrocarbon Sector The energy ties with Russia have grown in the last few years. When I was Ambassador and I obviously my predecessors too, were pressing very hard to gain access to Russia's hydrocarbon sector, because after the 2001 agreement we had on Sakhalin-1 there was nothing.

We bought Imperial Energy, but that was a British asset which the British sold to us, and which proved a costly mistake on our part. But after that there was nothing. When we talked about a particular oil or gas field Putin would tell us that there were no political obstacles; it was for the companies to negotiate, but there was nothing coming out. Now suddenly in the last 2-3 years there has been a huge change in the situation – in the last 3 years Indian companies have invested 6 bn\$ in Russia's hydrocarbon sector. And the biggest investment made by a foreign company in India is that of RosNeft - of some 13 bn\$ that they invested in taking over the Essar oil refinery. So there are things that are moving: between Gazprom and GAIL we have also signed a contract for LNG supplies for 20 years at 2 million tonnes every year. This is key so far as our relationship with Russia is concerned.

- b) Nuclear Power Sector Russia is the only country that is building nuclear power plants in India. Other countries have not yet reached a stage in negotiations where we can see anything happening in the foreseeable future. But in the case of Russia two have been built and two more are under construction and two additional ones have been agreed to at Kudamkulam.

Regular Summit Meetings One of the unique features of the India-Russia relationship and one that is certainly not based on any sentimentalism: from personal experience I can say that Putin is a very un-sentimental person. But since 2000 there have been unbroken Summit meetings between Russia and India. This has not happened in our relations with any other country - so why would Putin spend so much time on dialogue with India, if he too did not see the utility of India as a partner?

Russian non-Interference in Indian Neighbourhood In the past, one great feature of the India-Russia relationship, which is fraying at the edges now, is that unlike the United States and others, Russia did not interfere in our neighborhood and in relations between India and its neighbours it did not seek to play our neighbours against us. It accepted the primacy of India in South Asia. No other great power has accepted that and that was a big asset but as I said this has begun to fray at the edges. Recently it did supply Mi5 civilian helicopters but until

recently they did not sell arms to Pakistan. Apart from our own diplomacy, they had imposed this self-restraint on themselves because they did not want to send any negative signal to India. Which if you contrast with the United States and others highlights the value there was in this kind of relationship. Even now they have said that there will be no more arms supplies to Pakistan, though they haven't promised that they will not do military exercises with them.

### **US-Russia, Russia-China and US-China Ties and India-Russia Relations**

#### Impact of Deterioration of the US-Russia Ties

The second part of the subject you wanted me to speak on was the impact of US-Russia, Russia-China and US-China ties on India-Russia relations. The impact of the sharp deterioration of the USA-Russia ties on India is negative as I've already spelt out. I think the vacuum created by the decline of Russian power has been filled by China. Russia has been thrown into the arms of China more and more; they have developed a very strong strategic partnership and Putin only yesterday or the day before in his annual press conference spoke very positively about the relationship with China, and how it would outlast any change of leadership in Russia and that it was a long-term strategic partnership between the two countries. Of course for Russia it is important not only in terms of its economic relationship, which Putin pointed out has grown, but their coordination in the UN Security Council is important for Russia because Russia has to impose vetoes on so many US initiatives and it does not want to be isolated. So when Russia and China join together and veto US moves it is a great political-diplomatic asset for Russia as well as for China, though Russia is far more up-front in challenging US power than China is. Russian resources have now been harnessed to China's rise and the energy relationship has grown. US and European sanctions have been imposed on a whole range of sectors of the Russian economy and Russia has to compensate for these by looking for investments elsewhere: China is sitting on huge piles of investible money therefore China has obviously become an attractive partner. Putin lauded Chinese investments in the Arctic passage that is being opened and he mentioned high-speed railways and so on.

Russia's Support for the Belt and Road Initiative      Russia is supporting the BRI; Putin is upfront and Lavrov was very clear when he came to Delhi that they see the BRI as a positive thing, the Central Asians see it as a positive thing and they think the Eurasian corridor which China seeks to build will benefit Russia. They have no reason to oppose the BRI, but we have a specific problem with it because of sovereignty issues and because of the CPEC. If this was not involved – if Pakistan was not involved - what objection would we have to the BRI? There is nothing we can do about it or legitimately object to – in fact what is missing in many analyses is that most of the projects which are being touted as part of the BRI have already appeared on the ground. The pipeline through Turkmenistan, the pipeline from Kazakhstan and the railway line through Central Asia: all these already exist. Putin has again in his speech mentioned that they are looking forward to an agreement between China and the Eurasian Economic Union with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Russian Supply of High-End Military Hardware to China      Russia as we have seen has now started supplying high-end defence equipment to China; earlier they were reticent because of reverse-engineering concerns but for reasons that were correctly mentioned by Dr. Pant there is now a feeling in Russia that within a few years China may not need to buy any weapons from Russia, and so while the going is good they may as well supply the equipment and earn some money.

Russia's Policy to Counter to Aggressive US Posture.      Russia has been successful in West Asia in challenging the United States, particularly in Syria. What they are doing in Afghanistan can be seen as an extension of the same policy: since the United States is bent on cornering and weakening it, Russia is under no obligation anymore to try and cooperate with the United States in diverse regions. The United States is in trouble in the Afghanistan region, and the Russian game there is aimed at making things more difficult for the US. By this they seek to obtain some leverage against the US and to be in a situation where they are part of any negotiations with regard to the future of Afghanistan.

Shift of Balance in the RIC Trilateral      From our point of view because Russia has been weakened, the internal balance between the RIC has moved into China's favour.

In a sense, earlier India and Russia could balance China, but with the Russia-China relationship having become much stronger than the Russia-India relationship, we cannot count anymore on Russia to try and moderate China. There has been a similar change in this relationship in BRICs and the SCO.

Russia, China and the Quad You would have noticed that Russia is not critical of what China is doing in the South China Sea. Russia is not in favour of the Quad as I mentioned earlier, and they have made it very clear that they see the regional security architecture in Asia as being inclusive, which means it should include China and should not be based on any version of bloc politics. In their view some sort of a bloc been created under the leadership of the United States against China. This is an issue in our relationship; frankly we are not looking for an ideal relationship with Russia despite the past ties. Even in the past the relationship was not ideal, as those of us who have dealt with Russia would know; so we have to address this difference in thinking between us even as we move towards the United States and feel very elated about the transformed ties that are taking place. However, if you look at US policies in our neighbourhood, they are not in line with our interests. They also have a Quad here in Afghanistan consisting of China, the United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan of which we are outside. There are other areas one can point out in which US policy is not compatible with our interests; yet the US is extremely relevant to our interests. The media projection of Russia in India does colour thinking in India about Russia and Putin because our people rely on Western sources and all the vicious propaganda against Russia and Putin gets reflected in our articles and sometimes even in our editorials .

US-China Relations As far as the US and China are concerned, their ties are much stronger than India-US ties. The economic stakes of the United States in India will take a lot of time to develop to the same level as the relationship they have with China and the fact that the US corporate sector is so heavily involved in China is a major factor in how the United States is going to deal with China. Therefore any assumption that we may have that the US-India relationship would be built on a basis of creating a real barrier to China's regional or Asian expansion would be misplaced. What the United States would want to do is to make India part of its larger policy towards China and then bargain with China with greater strength. It gives them more

leverage with China if they include India in some kind of hedging strategy; but at the end of the day they will make a deal with China that suits US interests. You have seen how Trump has been totally inconsistent in his views on China from before his election and what he is saying today. Today he is personally lauding Xi Jinping and saying that he has an excellent relationship with him, that Xi is a wonderful man and that he has achieved with Xi Jinping what previous presidents were not able to do. Thereby he is actually making it known that he can be bought off and if 250 billion dollars worth of contracts is given to him he's fine! We have to be careful as we may have the same experience with the United States at some future date with regard to China.

#### USA, China and the North Korea Issue

I think the United States has walked into the North Korean trap. There is a limit to what the US can do to China in terms of putting pressure on them, because the Chinese will do exactly what the Pakistanis have done with the United States in Afghanistan or on the issue of terrorism - give them small bits of satisfaction but keep the larger option open. So China will participate in the UN resolutions against North Korea as they did in the case of Iran, but today the strongest relationship Iran has with any major country is with China. They will similarly continue to support North Korea, because the more they prolong giving full satisfaction to the United States the less possibility there is of the United States using the threat of trade war to bring Xi Jinping down to his knees.

#### Ineffective US Response to South China Sea and ADIZ Issues

There is still talk about a potential G2 between the US and China which we cannot ignore. The United States has not effectively opposed China's militarisation of the South China Sea or declaring an air defence identification zone in the East China Sea. We signed a joint strategic vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions when Obama came here a couple of years ago, and now we're talking about the Indo-Pacific, which makes India much more central to the security of both the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean. My problem with this, however, is that the US wants a joint strategy with us at sea but not on land. Now while it is of course to our advantage if we can build a stronger naval relationship by Malabar exercises, including Japan or potentially Australia, that leaves us exposed in the north because in the north where there are immediate challenges the United States will not come to our assistance. Even in the case of Senkaku their stance



is that they are not going to take a position on sovereignty issues and all that they want is that issues should not be settled by the use of force. Their problem is that if force is used then they would be compelled under their treaty with Japan to actually intervene militarily. They have no such treaty with us, so they will stay away from issues regarding India-China border issues, the CPEC, China-Pakistan nuclear axis and so on. They are not taking a position on the Maritime Silk Road, and they are not, independently of us, trying to put pressure on Sri Lanka and Nepal and others to be cautious about the inroads China is making; even Japan is unsure how much they can rely on Trump and the United States.

US-India Relations Unfortunately from our point of view the improvement of India-US ties occurred at a time when Russia-US ties deteriorated; so it seemed that these two processes were simultaneous and parallel, though there is absolutely no connection between the two. But in the mind of the Russians and some commentators and analysts there is a feeling that we have moved progressively into the US camp and started neglecting our relations with Russia. On defence relations Russia does feel piqued that we have gone in for fairly massive arms procurement from the United States - and the United States has been tomtoming the claim that for the last few years they are India's biggest defence partner. I was in Washington a few months ago and in a meeting there with a group of businessmen they were saying openly that their aim was to supplant Russia as India biggest defence partner. I cautioned them and said that they could do what they liked for promoting their interests but they should not take this line, as this would be counterproductive; but this is what they have been saying.

Our media of course as I mentioned is very negative about Russia and far too focused about the United States even irrelevant and peripheral things like when Obama visits or somebody else visits the event is played up - look at the way Trump's daughter's visit to India was played up; it is silly and it makes you feel small that we don't have the self-confidence in the country to keep these visits in their proper proportion rather than going overboard.

## **India's Foreign Policy Options**

Need for Balanced Foreign Policy: Importance of Russia I think the most important thing is to maintain a balance in our foreign policy and Russia is very important in maintaining that balance. I think that the investment that has been made since the 50's by both countries must not be wasted. There have been ups and downs in relations between India and the US, US and Russia, US and China or India and China: but if you look at the India-Russia relationship there is no case where the relationship between two big powers with such disparate ideologies and economic structures and various other parameters has remained so stable. So that has to be maintained. We need to ensure that at a critical time - we don't know when that critical time may come- we have a country on which we can rely. Despite these little problems I don't think one can conclude that Russia is no longer a tried and trusted partner. I think we should be confident that if we manage this relationship well we can still count on Russia because we have a history. Then I think we should be very active in building the International north-south trade corridor through Iran to Russia, and we should seek Russia's involvement in Chabahar and also in developing the hinterland of Chabahar, given the very positive relations today that Russia and Iran have.

India Needs US Partnership The relationship with Russia does not mean that we should not strengthen our strategic partnership with the United States that serves many of India's needs in terms of technology, investments, business practices, regulations, the digital revolution and all the other things that which we want; for this the United States is critical so we should continue to build that relationship. From our point of view our relationship with the United States does not in any way undermine Russia: that particular process is independent of what we may or may not do. We should continue to act on common platforms like the RIC, BRICS and SCO where the United States is absent, for the reasons that I mentioned earlier. Despite our interest in developing strong ties with Russia we have an interest in a less Western-dominated international system and in increasing the voice of non-Western countries in global governance.

Western Expectations: a One-sided Partnership? There is one point on which the other day I had a conversation with an Australian - that the West continues to tell us that

we should step up to the plate and that we are not doing enough, we should do more burden-sharing; as if we are holding ourselves back and they are opening their arms totally to us. The fact is that they don't step up to the plate where our real security concerns are involved: whether China or Pakistan or terrorism or China-Pakistan nexus or a relationship with Iran which gets complicated in so many ways; they don't step up to the plate. They want a one-sided bargain where we should show that that we are willing to be genuine partners of the West but the West has no obligation to demonstrate to us that they now want to become genuine partners with India. So unless that quid-pro-quo is available we should maintain the independence of our foreign policy.

#### Policy towards China and SE Asia

- a) We cannot obviously ignore China for reasons that I do not have to spell out and therefore we must engage it. We must stand up to China as we have done in Doklam because that will begin to subtly change the equation between us and how China deals with us. At the moment they seem to have contempt for us especially for our armed forces and that has to change.
- b) We can accept Chinese investment where it meets our needs but we must not allow China to reach a position where they can wield the economic weapon against us as they have done with the countries like Japan or Mongolia. South Korea is a very relevant example.
- c) We must not, despite voices in favour, join the Belt and Road Initiative we have absolutely no interest in becoming a party to promoting China's geopolitical ambitions and its hegemonic ambitions in Asia for which the BRI is a vehicle.
- d) We should raise the Quad dialogue to a political level and at some future date not too far away we should also expand the Malabar exercises to include Australia.
- e) We should strengthen our cooperation with Japan as much as possible as well as with Vietnam and Singapore as we are doing, and we should implement our connectivity projects especially those that are part of our 'Act East' policy which has been unduly delayed. Our 'Act East' policy should be reinforced because there is no barrier to it - in the West we are blocked: there is Pakistan, there is terrorism, there is religious extremism and there is history there which will block

us. Towards the East there is nothing; there is no terrorism - in fact history and civilization brings us together with those countries, so we must expand ties with them as much as we are able to do. Relations with Myanmar should be strengthened anyway.

- f) Dialogue with Indonesia is very important because if we can get Indonesia onboard then our hands against China in this area will get strengthened – not only our hand but those of others too.

Thank you.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

**Ambassador Khaleeli (Chair):** I will not try to summarise at this stage - I will throw the house open for discussion and request you to identify yourself and name the speaker whom you wish to respond to your comment or question.

**Air Mshl Rajkumar:** As the Chair clearly mentioned right at the beginning, Russia's biggest problem is their declining population. Could we hear something about more about this from the panelists?

**Achala Moulik:** I was in Moscow soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and I was led to believe that the Central Asian Republics had wanted to leave the Soviet Union and break away. But in discussions with Foreign Service friends and colleagues and others I was surprised to know that they had in fact wanted to remain but separation was thrust on them. The Soviet Union had collapsed and didn't have the financial or military resources. I was also surprised to see that in Moscow and Petersburg there was a large influx of people from the Central Asian Republics. They were there to run shops and businesses they were the major part of the staff in various places. I asked my Russian friends who were prepared to talk frankly who said that the demographic pattern was changing rapidly because of all the hardships during the Soviet times but people started having fewer children. Then it came to such a point that

they said that they would tax childless couples to encourage people to have children. This is a very serious problem because unless they have a rising population they run the risk of large numbers from the Central Asian republics coming into Russia. Probably the Russians among the all the European people are the least racist, so it may not create the kind of tensions that it is doing now in Germany and France and Italy, but it still has some risk for them.

**Dr Harsh Pant:** It is not just an issue of demographic decline - there are also health issues. The younger generation is facing severe problems of drugs and alcohol dependence that create serious problems for Russian society and I don't know what the plans are to tackle this. This is going to pose enormous problems in a future where there not only the issue between the Russians and Central Asians but also the Far East problem with the Chinese, and it becomes a geo-political problem for the Russians to defend their frontier. It is not much talked about but there is that imbalance in the frontier regions of the country.

**Achala Moulik:** The other aspect is that as the population reduces the income per capita in rises and therefore the individual income levels increase as in the Scandinavian countries – this is the brighter side of it.

**Air Mshl Matheswaran:** This is the problem that the Russians have: despite their large territory they have a population of just about 120 million. The responsibility for the air defence of former Soviet Republics with whom the relations are good is still with Russia. A lot of the oil pipelines, systems, and hub centres go to the Russian mainland. Russian is widely spoken, even in Ukraine. People are now advising the Russian government to look at a new immigration policy to encourage people to come for work and take citizenship just as the US has managed its immigration policy.

**Achala Moulik:** I want to ask Ambassador Sibal: do you think there might be a flash point of antagonism between Russia and China in Central Asia? Because I don't think it is possible for two giants to live in peace when they have a competing interest; Central Asia has been the focal point of Russo-Chinese antagonism and tension for 200 years.

**Ambassador Sibal:** It is very odd that an organisation that is centred on Central Asia should be called the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. This in itself shows quite clearly which country is playing the dominant role in Central Asia.

China has the money and resources and they are very good at building infrastructure in these countries, which sorely need infrastructure. Despite all the serious barriers that exist between individual Central Asian countries (you mentioned Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan needing visas to visit each other) China has succeeded in building pipelines that cross more than one Asian country. One must give credit to Chinese diplomacy for their success in creating consensus between all these countries to allow such projects to be built, which goes to show that their influence on the ground is very considerable.

Secondly, The Russians pretend that they are not unduly bothered because Russia thinks that on the security side they are the dominant power they created the CSTO and China is excluded from that; so on security issues which are of major interest to Russia they know their own economic weakness and so they are keeping China out.

Thirdly, the Russians at the very highest level have told me when I raised the question with them that the Chinese are playing a very careful game as they do not want to create any misunderstanding with Russia. So whatever they do they inform the Russians in advance and take the Russians into confidence so that there is no scope for developing any misunderstanding. Thirdly I think from Russia's point of view since they don't have the resources to develop Central Asia, if the influx of Chinese money and everything else can bring more prosperity to the region then the pressure of these people migrating into Russia would be that much less. So despite the demographic factor there is that concern. There have been problems with Central Asians, especially Tajiks and others, who are so poor that they all want to go to Russia for their livelihood. So that would also be a calculation.

Finally, although this would be peripheral, it keeps the United States out if Russia and China increase their profile to that extent. The United States does not have much presence on the ground as it is, but even what they have will slowly disappear. So it serves several interests of Russia to work together with China in Central Asia and I do not visualise a real clash of interest in the near future. As for the oil and gas resources

of these countries, Russia would be quite happy that it is all going to China because if this was directed towards Europe then their monopoly over gas supplies to Europe would be affected. That is why they do not want the Iranians or anybody else to sell their oil and gas to Europe. So in a subtle way since they don't control these resources any more they would be happy that they are going to China.

**Ambassador Muthukumar:** It is clear that Indian-Russia bilateral relations are being dovetailed into what is called the BRICS. This is notwithstanding the fact that for 70% of our military equipment we are dependent on Russia. Given this situation and this scenario I think we need to be more serious with Russia and not be shy to deal with Russia *vis a vis* the US. The bedrock of India-Soviet relations was industrial development starting with the second Five Year Plan in 1956. In 1962 our going into the Soviet camp was not that we asked for such a relationship- India from Independence has been very close to the West because of the background of British colonization. All military equipment was British till we came to the late 50s with the French Mysteres and Alouette helicopters. But going into the Soviet camp actually happened because what we wanted from the West did not materialize. Indo-Soviet relations then were not what we call a seller-buyer or seller-client relationship. Nobody else would have given you a Sukhoi 7 for 1<sup>1/2</sup> lakh rupees, or a MiG-21 for 3<sup>1/2</sup> lakhs apiece. These were what we called 'friendship' prices, which has never happened anywhere else. That is something that we have to hand to them- they gave us the technology of MiG-21 etc. Of course England called the MiG-21 the 'flying coffin', but what was the background to that? Genuine spare parts are manufactured in Nizhniy Novgorod. But when we called for an international tender it was the Bulgarians, Hungarians and Vietnamese who were supplying them – they were cannibalising the used parts and selling them to us. There is nothing wrong with the technology. We have made numerous mistakes in relationships militarily, like the MRCA deal. What we overlooked was the MiG-35 which the world is seeing but we went in for the Rafael for some reason. So we have to understand that India-Russia relations today have to be stronger and we must bear in mind that our dependence, our security and our military interests are dependent on them to the extent of 70%. Given this we cannot dovetail our relationship with BRICS. We take Russia for granted and treat it cavalierly, enjoying

the benefit of the relationship when it suits us but staying shy of dealing with it. So I think we have to take this relationship with Russia very seriously: they are our friends and they will stand by us in many situations.

**Air Mshl Matheswaran:** That is exactly what we are saying - the Russian relationship is extremely important and we are dependent to the tune of 70%, and that's not going to go away overnight - we need to look at leveraging our strategic requirement, keeping the relationship strong and alive and continue with it. We are not mixing this up with BRICS, which is a post -2001 development, but it is a reality. So what we are saying is BRICS is the part of the transition which will start gaining more and more importance under the international system reorganization process and thereby Russia and China become important. We have to manage the diversity and the animosity of these 5 in spite of our differences like at Doklam. I think that's how we need to look at it. We were not mixing up defence relationship with Russia in the context of BRICS.

**Ambassador Sibal:** China was talking about BRICS plus at the time of the last BRICS summit and this idea was resisted. It is because of China that South Africa got included, although South Africa by any yardstick did not merit to be a member of BRICS. But the country in which China has the biggest interest in Africa is South Africa because there are a large number of Chinese who have now settled down in South Africa. They had an idea of including Turkey and this or the other country – they mentioned 3- 4 countries, including Kenya. All the countries they mentioned are ones in which China is present in a very massive way today. The whole idea was that within BRICS+, China would include its client states and actually dominate the organisation even more which would be at the cost, obviously, of Russia and India. So if China - confident, ambitious China - is headed down that direction then I'm afraid BRICS will lose its relevance so far at least as India is concerned: we would have no interest in joining a large BRICS like that.

The other point I want to raise which actually needs reflection but has not been commented on or analysed, is that in the latest US sanctions on Russia all the major Russian defence firms have been sanctioned, and the US has reserved the right (these are Congressional sanctions) to decide whether to take cognizance of violations of the



sanctions, depending on the size of the contract and the entities with which the contract is being concluded. All the major Russian firms which sell arms to India, including Almaz Antei which produces the S-400 are under sanctions. I think this is going to create problems for us in the future, raising questions like how we are going to pay them, and what route and banking channels we are going to follow. I spoke even to the Russian ambassador and there is concern about how this matter might develop in the period ahead.

**Vice Adm Murugesan:** For all the reasons that we discussed, the relationship between India and Russia is very important and defence cooperation is definitely one of the important pillars of this country-to-country cooperation. As far as the Navy is concerned, given the on-going projects, at least for the next 50 years we are engaged in Russia, if not more. So a very strong relationship is going on in various sectors, which is essential.

The only threat that can disrupt this ongoing relationship between India and Russia is China. What Sun Tzu says in his *Art of War* is that if you want to defeat an enemy, break his alliances. That is exactly what China is following - they will disrupt strong alliances wherever they exist. So China's game in bringing Russia to Pakistan is part of this strategy. If there was no China, Russia would not have gone to Pakistan. They are using this leverage to make Russia go to Pakistan's some other country's side. We need to counter this strategy.

**Shri Manmohan Reddy:** We started off talking about this but then we have not really addressed it; Prof Pant observed that except for a section of the diplomatic service no one else seems to be concerned about the relationship.

I'd like to make a comment in this connection and that is that the combat aircraft programme that is most widespread in the world today is the F-35. Not many people know that the initial design of the F-35 was vetted by a Russian firm called Yakovlev. I think we might be making a mistake in assuming that Russia does not continue to have worthwhile technology to offer.

Secondly the point that Ambassador Sibil made is important - if financial sanctions are used as a tool to deny many things, I don't know how they can enforce it. Turkey is

buying the S-400 system, and the US does not seem to be able to do anything about it. I'd like to ask one question of Professor Pant - would you like to expand on where you think the Indo-Russian relationship might be at least in the next 5 or 10 years.

**Achala Moulik:** About the concern that China is going to break Russia's relations with India, from what I know of Russian history - especially modern Russian history, the West played a very devious game in the prelude to the Second World War. They encouraged Germany in the hope that Hitler would finish off Russia; Churchill said "Let them bleed each other to death." And then Russia turned 180 degrees and concluded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. So despite the nobility of its literature Russia can also be very devious, and can also start playing their own games where alliances are concerned. All the East European countries – Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania – were pro-Nazi. There was a complete infiltration of the Gestapo and the Nazis in those countries, and look what happened in 1945 – they formed the Warsaw Pact. So Russia also is aware of the Chinese game in this and I think they will be a little careful about Pakistan, because Pakistan was the main country whose army and ISI conducted the entire campaign against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1979. So I think they know from experience whom to trust.

**Dr Harsh Pant:** Just reflecting on the general discussion I think that there is a tendency to assume that somehow the events of the past would continue to cast a shadow on what will happen in the future; that may not be completely true in all cases. If you just look in the last 70 or 80 years, major powers tend to play the balance of power game very efficiently and those that play it efficiently often win the game. The discussion of the last few minutes suggests that the Chinese seem to be leading in this game and both the Russians and the Americans seem to be trying to catch up. They have been masters at playing the balance of power game. I think the Russians have been equally capable of doing that in the past and they are capable of understanding where their priorities lie. If the priority at this point for the Russians is to emerge as a major stakeholder in certain regions then their interests behoove that they side with the Chinese and scuttle the West's interests. That is par for the course as far as great power politics is concerned and we should be playing this game equally well.

Ambassador Sibal pointed out how we need to balance one relationship against the other and we should play it better than the others if we want to get the outcomes that are to our benefit. It seems to me that the way global politics is evolving, unless India and Russia take cognizance of the fact that we are losing some element of our past and the bonds that kept us together, not only at the top level which I think there is that recognition, but also at the societal level, I think we will lose it that is my fear.

I don't get a sense that there are even stakeholders anywhere. People here in this room point out how important defence partnership is but the Indian military is itself divided on the issue. It is not as if the Indian defence establishment that should be at the heart of leading this relationship is united in this view. So if you don't have any constituencies that can push the government in a certain direction, where the Government is going to get the traction becomes a question. It cannot be the prime minister at the annual meetings sensing that there is a need for the strategic relationship to be on track or to be mended. Where are our Russian experts today? There are hardly any. If you look at the scholarships, at the students, at the universities, where are we teaching Russian studies? I don't know – you would know better, but I don't think there is anything of substance coming out.

As for our think tanks, the only times we think of Russia is when the annual summit meetings between the Prime Ministers come around. Ambassador Sibal pointed out about the media. I think our middle class and those who are in the know of things are much more in tune with the West culturally and politically. That is shaping the foreign policy discourse, in which Russia seems to be marginal. Not in terms of substance which is still there, and we have discussed this today about how significant the interests are. But at the level at which you can have a long-term policy impact, we do not seem to have the sources. And my fear is that if we do not generate the sources or take care of them we will lose them. And if we lose them then the idea that we need to sustain this relationship with Russia will fade away, because I think underlying structural factors are changing significantly.

**Ambassador Sibal:** Just a couple of points. One is that between the Russian International Affairs Council that is headed by their former foreign minister and the head

of their National Security Council, and the Vivekananda International Foundation, we recently did a joint study of Russia-India relations. It is interesting that the Russian side themselves acknowledged that the existing model of India-Russia relations had exhausted itself and therefore we had to look at a new model. So they are very conscious of the fact that they are not going to be able to live on the past and have to redevelop new strategies, and the report outlines what those could be and also touches upon media and other aspects. They also recognise that the elites of the two countries are alienated from each other. So it is not as if only the Indian elite are not paying attention to Russia; they acknowledge that the Russian elite also are not focusing on India.

The point I made to them was that they had been pushed by the United States and Europe to strengthen what they call the Asian factor of their foreign policy. If they were going to develop an Asian policy on a long term basis, they could not develop a reasonable balance and a self-serving policy without also changing their thinking and attitude and engagement with the only other country in Asia which is comparable to China in many ways. Therefore they had to have a much more well-defined and focused India policy as part of their Asia policy; otherwise they would be playing a subordinate role to China. In private they agreed with that line of thinking. I was quite surprised that the Russian International Affairs Council people were very conscious of the developing challenge from China and in conversations with us they were quite open about it.

You mentioned the S-400 system to Turkey- when we were paying Iran for oil and gas we were doing this through the Halk Bank in Turkey. So there are well established channels of payment to circumvent the sanctions and the dollar transactions. But this is a problem down the road if the Americans decide to start putting pressure on various countries to lessen their defence ties with Russia. They will hesitate to do it with us because it will be counterproductive; if they attack us on that point then they will begin to lose their Indian market for their own products - they can't have it both ways.

**Ambassador Khaleeli (Chair):** Thank you Mr Kanwal Sibal, Dr Pant, Achala, Air Marshal Matheswaran, for your coverage of such a vast subject. Whether you like it or

not, anything to do with Russia touches every part of our foreign policy and I think it was the general consensus that the relations are not where they should be. If I may summarise - one is the objective view wherein there is virtually no constituency in India, to push forward a case for Russia.

You can't go against certain tides of history - you can divert to some extent and we after all had Anglophile people and English-speaking people including Gandhiji, Panditji, Rajagopalachari, Gokhale and Tilak. I don't think they would have welcomed the Anglo-Saxons being in the Persian Gulf today, which we take for granted as part of the scenery. We have declined tremendously by taking it for granted that the realities of power are such that there is nothing you can do. I am not speaking of adventurism; you have sufficiently good relations here to encourage your Asian colleagues and neighbours to keep mischievous people away. You are running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

I was discussing with someone privately - I said let us imagine that we settle all our problems with China. We say keep Aksai Chin - just promise we will never have a war. Theoretically if India and China are sure to never go to war with each other, your foreign policy becomes simple - all your problems are solved. But that is not the reality. Somewhere they will ask for something more and somewhere we will need something - it won't turn out alright. There are already models of foreign policy with a number of countries.

The problem with the Russians and our relations with them lies in the links of language and other things; the classes who go and get themselves educated in any country are a lobby. There is no way for the Russians to have a lobby equal to the Western lobby - they have to accept it. This is where government comes in. What they can do is not to promote an artificial relationship with Russia, but there are ways in which governments can promote it. It is at our own peril that we distance ourselves from Russia. My reading: Russia has a Muslim population and they have to deal with it; it is a major problem. China has a Muslim population, but it is not a major problem because numerically it is very small compared to the population of China and the Chinese are much more ruthless. Somewhere they will have a problem because they are not

Tibetans: they will fight. We have a Muslim population, but they are totally different: they are Indian. Of these three countries the relationship the Hindus have with the Muslims of India are a creative synthesis which is a success story. You could be an example to Russia and show them that their Tartars can also be integrated in their country as the Indians have done, so that Russia and the Islamic world live at peace with each other. That will not take place with China because they don't have the cultural capital to deal with minorities.

This is a historical view that I am taking, but it will have to come. Because everywhere greed and money can dominate for a time till they reach a dead end. Now you have a situation when we say we won't let China do this or that, but how will you stop them? All these years the Americans spoke of the transfer of capital and technology and so on. You have Trump who they may call a bully but who can't deal with North Korea. He can't bully anybody except us because he is going to impose sanctions here and there. The Chinese are great believers in globalisation. Who can compete with the Chinese in anything they set their eyes on? If they come to you with any project and give you the money you will have to deliberately exclude them now. Why can't our great business communities deal with China and get the money from there?

The point is there is room for manoeuvre and in all this room for manoeuvre Russia is very crucial. It may not be very rich but as the former Foreign Secretary pointed it's a major power – he did not want to say 'superpower'; but it is a country with a long history, and it not going to disappear. It is quite possible to anticipate that the Europeans and the Americans will run away from here one day. America and Europe also have problems dealing with China. Can Europe and Russia and America have a common policy towards China? Japan can continue to have this dangerous game of fighting with China.

So there are lots of imponderables. One thing India has: that is goodwill – we have not blotted our copybook except for one brief period of time when we virtually turned our backs on Russia. Now we are doing our best to repair the situation in some way and we need to do something within the limits of our polity to make sure of our relations with a tested friend, and apart from our being dependent on Russia for this or that –that is

realpolitik- it is a country that is quite reliable. Within the cynical world of diplomacy, some countries are a little more reliable than others. And I would certainly regard Russia so far as having been more reliable than the Anglo-Saxons who have armed and instigated Pakistan for so many years and now are realising that India is a big country and a great country. Ayatollah Khomeini who knew about these things said that when these people clap for you and clap you on your back you should wonder what they are up to - be very careful. I shall end with that by thanking all our speakers for doing their best to encapsulate all their experience of this vast subject.

The Seminar ended with a vote of thanks and the presentation of mementos to the speakers.

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## **SPEAKERS' PROFILES**

### **Achala Moulik**

Ms. Moulik studied in the United States, UK and Italy, graduating from the London University. She joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1964 and served as Education Secretary to the Government of India, and the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, becoming the first IAS officer to occupy the post. She served as Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Karnataka from January 1991 till her retirement in 2001.

Since her retirement Ms Moulik has been writing books, both fiction and non-fiction, and she has actively engaged herself in literature and dramatics. She is the author of more than 20 books on culture, art and architectural monuments as well as Indian and foreign literature and paintings.

Since 1976, the author has been working intensively on the topic of Russian literature. She has authored many books, research papers and articles on Russian history and culture. For her services in the cause of Russian culture and Indo-Russian friendship she was awarded the Pushkin Medal by the President of Russia in 2011 and the Sergei Yesenin Medal in 2013 for her work on Russian culture.

### **Air Marshal M Matheswaran**

Air Marshal M Matheswaran retired from the Indian Air Force in 2014 after nearly 39 years of military service. As a fighter pilot and an Experimental Test Pilot he has flown over 40 types of aircraft. He has held appointments covering various domains of operations, inspection, flight testing, and research & development. In his last appointment, he was the Deputy Chief of the Integrated Defence staff in the Ministry of Defence.

He is a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College and the National Defence College. He holds a Masters degree in Military Science, M Phil and PhD in Defence and Strategic Studies, and is a Senior Fellow in National and International Security from the



Harvard Kennedy School. He is active in academic research and is a doctoral faculty to the Indian Naval War College. Currently he is an Executive Council Member of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi.

### **Prof Harsh Pant**

Professor Harsh V. Pant is distinguished fellow and head of strategic Studies at Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi. He holds a joint appointment as professor of international relations in the Defence Studies Department and the India Institute at King's College London. He is also a Non-Resident Fellow with the Wadhvani Chair in US-India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC.

Professor Pant has been a Visiting Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore; a Visiting Fellow at the Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania; a Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Peace and Security Studies, McGill University; an Emerging Leaders Fellow at the Australia-India Institute, University of Melbourne; and a Visiting Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.

Professor Pant's current research is focused on Asian security issues. His most recent books include *The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy*, *Handbook of Indian Defence Policy*, and *The US-India Nuclear Pact: Policy, Process and Great Power Politics*.

Professor Pant is a columnist for the Diplomat and writes regularly for various media outlets including the Japan Times, the Wall Street Journal, the National (UAE) and the Telegraph.

### **Ambassador Kanwal Sibal**

Ambassador Sibal joined the Indian Foreign Service in July 1966, and retired as the Foreign Secretary of India. He has served as Ambassador of India to Turkey, Egypt, France and Russia, besides having served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington D.C. with ambassadorial rank.

Dr. Kanwal Sibal graduated from the World Information Distributed University with the scientific degree of International Doctor of Philosophy and the scientific degree of Grand Doctor of Philosophy, in June 2006.

He was a member of India's National Security Advisory Board from November 2008 to November 2010.

He is a prolific writer on international affairs and was awarded the Padma Shree in 2017. He is currently a member of the Executive Council of the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) and is on the Board of the New York-based East West Institute.