

India and Russia's Strategic Partnership

by Grigori Bondarevsky

Excerpts from an article, entitled, "India-Russia: An Ever-Strengthening Strategic Partnership," by Professor Bondarevsky published in Mainstream Weekly, one of India's leading strategic journals, on March 22, 2003. The journal noted in its introduction that "Professor Bondarevsky, an honored scientist of the Russian Federation, is a recipient of Padma Shri and the Jawaharlal Nehru Award." Thanks to Mainstream editor Sumit Charavartty for his assistance.

During the second half of the 20th Century, all Soviet leaders paid state visits to India many a time. Likewise, all Indian leaders visited Russia. Each summit was marked by the signing of treaties and agreements which contributed to the development of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

But the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the cardinal change of the international environment, serious internal and external changes in India itself—which is turning from a big regional country into one of the superpowers of the world—demanded introducing serious changes in the relations between Russia and India. It was necessary to address the challenges of the 21st Century. It is noteworthy that a good answer to the challenges was found by both countries.

The first visit of V.V. Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, to India took place on Oct. 2-5, 2000. On Nov. 4-5, 2001, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister of India, visited Russia. In December 2002, President Putin paid his second visit to India. Very important documents were signed in the course of the above-mentioned three visits. The documents set the basis for a new stage of relations between the great countries—the stage of strategic partnership. The analysis of the documents allows seeing a well-thought-out and successfully implemented architecture of building relations between the two states, which are based on taking into account the interests, peculiarities, international and internal stands, prospects of social and economic development of the two countries. . . .

For the first time, the basis of strategic partnership in the spheres of politics, economy, defense, science and culture between the two states was formulated in the Declaration of 2000. . . .

The second Russian-Indian summit of the 21st Century took place in a principally new environment. Atal Behari



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Vajpayee paid a visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg on Nov. 4-7, 2001. The whole world was then under the impact of the tragic events in the U.S.A. on Sept. 11, which not only showed the degree of the threat from international terrorism, but also demonstrated the vulnerability of the country aspiring to be the only superpower.

During the visit in November 2001, the leaders of the two countries signed two very important documents. These were the Joint Statement of India and Russia on Strategic Issues and the Moscow Declaration of India and Russia on International Terrorism. . . .

On Dec. 3-5, 2002 V.V. Putin paid his second visit to India. . . . Three very important documents were signed during Putin's state visit—the Delhi Declaration about Further Strengthening Strategic Partnership; Joint Declaration on Strengthening and Enhancing Cooperation in the Spheres of Economy, Science and Technology Between India and Russia; and the Joint Statement of the two countries' leaders. . . . Issues concerning the two great Eurasian states are highlighted in the documents. . . .

India and Russia, as strategic partners, resolved to act together in settling regional and international issues. The countries decided to cooperate at international forums on problems related to strategic stability, in the name of development of a multipolar world based on the understanding of the necessity of the creation of a new order, based on common security. The relationship between the countries, based upon friendship and trust, contributes to the stability in Eurasia. It is a factor of international significance.

It is worth noting that the necessity of contributing to stability in the huge Eurasian region was explained in the Joint Statement of India and Russia. The Statement was signed on Nov. 6, 2001 during Vajpayee's visit to Moscow. Attention was paid in the documents signed in December 2002 to the

aspirations of both the countries for the creation of a multipolar world, based on the principles of mutual respect, in the framework of the United Nations and international law, which would eliminate or at least reduce the threat to international peace and security. . . .

Truly, in the new documents, great attention was paid to the fight against international terrorism, religious extremism and separatism, trans-border crimes and drug and arms trafficking. It was underlined that double standards are unacceptable. . . .

In all the three documents, serious attention was paid to the problem of Afghanistan. . . . The documents, signed by leaders at the three summits, relate the situation in Afghanistan to the danger of influencing the neighboring countries in Central Asia. . . .

Through all the documents signed by the leaders of both the countries for the last 50 years, runs the thread of the Pakistan problem. . . .

During 2001-02 the Russian leadership and mass media were attentively following the tense situation in the regions next to Jammu and Kashmir, because of the many raids of Islamic fundamentalists supported by the clerical circles of Pakistan. During the Russian President's meeting with U.S. President George Bush at St. Petersburg on Nov. 22, 2002, the Russian President mentioned Pakistan's role in supporting terrorism and the serious danger if Pakistan's nuclear weapons and other WMD were acquired by terrorists and other "bad guys". . . .

In addition to that, President Putin, during his Joint Press Conference with Prime Minister Vajpayee on Dec. 4, clearly expressed his support to India's position on normalizing relations between India and Pakistan. According to the Russian President, withdrawal of troops from the Indo-Pakistan border is good, but it's necessary to fulfill all the obligations. . . .

What is especially interesting is that in the Joint Statement of 2002, both the sides expressed their commitment to double the efforts for the expansion of trade, economic ties, mutual investments, and elimination or minimization of trade barriers. . . .

It's hard not to notice that the Joint Declaration pays considerable attention to intensification of work on the North-South international transport corridor. In addition to that, the Declaration mentions the desirability of not only bilateral, but also trilateral consultations. Iran is supposed to be the third party where ports, highways and railroads for the corridor will be built. . . .

The role of the Soviet Union, followed by the Russian Federation, in building the Indian armed forces, the fourth largest in the world, is known to everyone. From 1960-2001, Moscow and Delhi signed contracts worth \$29.8 billion in the military technical field. Realization of contracts worth \$3.5 billion is left. Until 2010, the volume is around \$10 billion.

In November 2002, on the eve of the visit to President Putin to India, a seminar on the "India-Russia Strategic Part-

nership in 21st Century" was organised in Delhi. It was noted there that in recent years this partnership is taking new forms. India is not only buying the military equipment, but is also actively participating in its development. . . . Summing up the military technical cooperation and the plans for the next ten years, Gen. Andrei Nikolaev, Chairman of the Committee on Defense in the State Duma, who participated in the above seminar, said that it should be underlined that Russia provides India with the most modern equipment, which even the Russian armed forces do not have. However, by enhancing India's security, we strengthen the Russian security.

Such a level of trust creates the intellectual basis for further cooperation in the scientific resolution of acute problems like terrorism.

Judging from what is mentioned above and the important agreements signed in December 2002, it could be said that the President had all reason to be satisfied to see how the plant, planted by him at Rajghat, has grown in the last two years.

An all-round analysis of the three Russia-India summits allows us to conclude that the two sides strengthened political, diplomatic, economic, scientific-cultural, financial, military-technical cooperation; incorporating the Indian States and the Russian regions; and empowering the middle class; formed new forms of relationship in the real sense—full-blooded strategic partnership, which is destined to play a major role not only in Eurasia but also in the entire world.

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