

## PRESIDENT PUTIN'S VISIT TO INDIA - KEY TAKEAWAYS

By  
**Muhammad Taimur Fahad Khan**  
*Research Associate*  
*Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP), ISSI*

Edited by  
**Dr Neelum Nigar**

January 7, 2022

*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



**On December 06, 2021, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin paid an official visit to India<sup>1</sup> for the 21st leg of India-Russia summit, amid increasing Indo-US ties, Sino-Russia relations, waning Indo-Russia ties and the COVID-19 pandemic still at large.**

President Putin's visit to New Delhi in the first week of December was his second visit overseas since the pandemic (first being the Geneva Summit in June 2021). He was accompanied by the Russian Defence (General Sergey Shoygu) & Foreign Ministers (Sergei Lavrov) during this visit.<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, President Putin's Delhi visit was highly significant & a meaningful interaction between himself and the Indian Prime Minister Modi. In a world which is becoming increasingly multi-polar, President Putin, by choosing India as his first destination to visit (for an official trip) delivered a strong message to emphasize Russia's major power status in the global chess board and simultaneously declare (explicitly) that India remains a vital strategic partner of the Russian Federation.

<sup>1</sup> Roy & Kaushik, "Putin meets PM Modi: 'India great power, friendly nation, time-tested friend'", The Indian Express, published on December 06, 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/vladimir-putin-india-russia-summit-narendra-modi-7659202/>

<sup>2</sup> Pradip R. Sagar, "Vladimir Putin's Delhi visit shows India to be a key priority for Russia", The Week, published on December 19, 2021. <https://www.theweek.in/theweek/current/2021/12/09/vladimir-putin-delhi-visit-shows-india-a-key-priority-for-russia.html>

As per reports, although the Russian President spent only four hours in India, a significant amount of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between Russia and India during this visit.

A total of 28 agreements were signed during the visit,<sup>3</sup> during which the first-ever 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between Russia & India took place between the Defence and Foreign ministers of both states besides meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

In the 28 agreements that were bilaterally signed, most notable ones included:

- a 10-year defence cooperation programme that will last till 2031
- a deal worth millions of dollars (approximately US\$ 600 million) for the joint production of more than 600,000 AK-203 assault rifles (at an Indian facility in the Uttar Pradesh)
- intent of collaboration (worth billions) between Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC) & Russian petrochemicals firm SIBUR to setup a Dual Feed Cracker Unit in Odisha
- an MoU between two pioneering scientific institutes of Russia & India which seeks to set up a Centre for Excellence to research & collaborate in Blue Economy
- an agreement between IOC and Russia's Rosneft company for the uninterrupted supply of 2 million tonnes of crude oil till December 2022
- an MoU on the long-term supplies of coal from Russia to India for steel production

Besides agreements and MoUs in domains of defence & economy, multiple agreements were concluded in a plethora of diverse fields such as: health; energy; transport & connectivity; civil nuclear energy & space; technical cooperation; science & technology; education, culture & tourism; and cooperation in multilateral forums & matters of outer space.

Furthermore, in a joint statement it was also pledged to boost bilateral trade to US\$ 30 billion by 2025.<sup>5</sup> The current bilateral trade between Russia and India stands at US\$ 8.1 billion with the deficit in favour of Russia.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> "These are 28 agreements India, Russia signed at summit-level talks", The Print, published on December 07, 2021. <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/these-are-the-28-agreements-india-russia-signed-at-summit-level-talks/777650/>

<sup>4</sup> "INDIA-RUSSIA: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity", India-Russia Joint Statement following the visit of the President of the Russian Federation, Media Centre, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, published on December 06, 2021. [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34606/India\\_Russia\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_following\\_the\\_visit\\_of\\_the\\_President\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Federation](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34606/India_Russia_Joint_Statement_following_the_visit_of_the_President_of_the_Russian_Federation)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**Key Takeaways:**

The timing, nature and substance of President Putin's visit to India was of great essence. It substantially reinforced the strong bilateral relationship between Russia and India which New Delhi termed as '*Special & Privileged Strategic Partnership*'.

This visit was efficiently used by both states to bring some balance into their relationship and deliver subliminal messages to concerned quarters, particularly the United States.

For the past several years, Russia & India seems to have grown apart for multiple reasons pertaining to foreign policy & geo-strategic interests. However, both countries have also forged new relations and strengthened some old ones during this time.

Nevertheless, the strength and depth of Indo-Russia relations should not be judged by the contemporary situation of their bilateral relationship. The visit was symbolic in the sense that it commemorated 50 years of the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship & Cooperation & 20 years of Declaration on Strategic Partnership between Russia & India. It was also a reiteration of the underlying, intrinsic strength of this relationship which has been currently camouflaged by recent developments & some differing national interests in the international arena.

It is important to note that Russia still remains the 2nd largest arms supplier to India.<sup>7</sup> President Putin in his remarks during his visit to New Delhi termed India a '*great power & a time-tested friend*'.<sup>8</sup> As per India's Ministry for External Affairs (MEA), currently, Indo-Russia bilateral trade saw an increase of 38% in the 1st half of 2021.<sup>9</sup>

India remains the only country in the world with whom Russia has signed a long-term agreement on military technology cooperation and the former also enjoys Russia's permission for production of several military and defence equipment and armaments.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Brief on India-Russia Economic Relations", Economic and Commerce Wing, Embassy of India in Moscow, Russia, accessed on December 08, 2021. <https://www.indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/overview.php>

<sup>7</sup> "SIPRI Yearbook 2020: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security - Summary", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), accessed on December 08, 2021. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sipri.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2020-06%2Fyb20\\_summary\\_en\\_v2.pdf&clen=1849444&chunk=true](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sipri.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2020-06%2Fyb20_summary_en_v2.pdf&clen=1849444&chunk=true)

<sup>8</sup> Roy & Kaushik, "Putin meets PM Modi: 'India great power, friendly nation, time-tested friend'", The Indian Express, published on December 06, 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/vladimir-putin-india-russia-summit-narendra-modi-7659202/>

<sup>9</sup> "INDIA-RUSSIA: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity", India-Russia Joint Statement following the visit of the President of the Russian Federation, Media Centre, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, published on December 06, 2021. [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34606/India\\_Russia\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_following\\_the\\_visit\\_of\\_the\\_President\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Federation](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34606/India_Russia_Joint_Statement_following_the_visit_of_the_President_of_the_Russian_Federation)

Although the US enjoys the centre stage on India's foreign policy theatre at the moment, it would be naive and unrealistic to think that Russia has been pushed to the house. As mentioned earlier, Russia remains a vital strategic partner of India despite the former's closeness to China & Pakistan and the latter's newfound bonhomie with the US.

Both countries are investing large sums of capital in each others' economies and working towards developing relationships in new areas such as emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, outer space and energy security.

Russia and India share a symbiotic relationship that helps both countries in effective pursuance of their national interests. Russia is vital for India's goal of achieving "*Strategic Autonomy*" which cannot be achieved by completely alienating or ignoring a major global power (Russia) and joining a rival bloc (US) exclusively. Whereas India also carries great significance for Russia, a country which is a lucrative market for Russian goods, high-end consumer of its natural resources and is on its way to becoming a major player in the Asia-Pacific region.