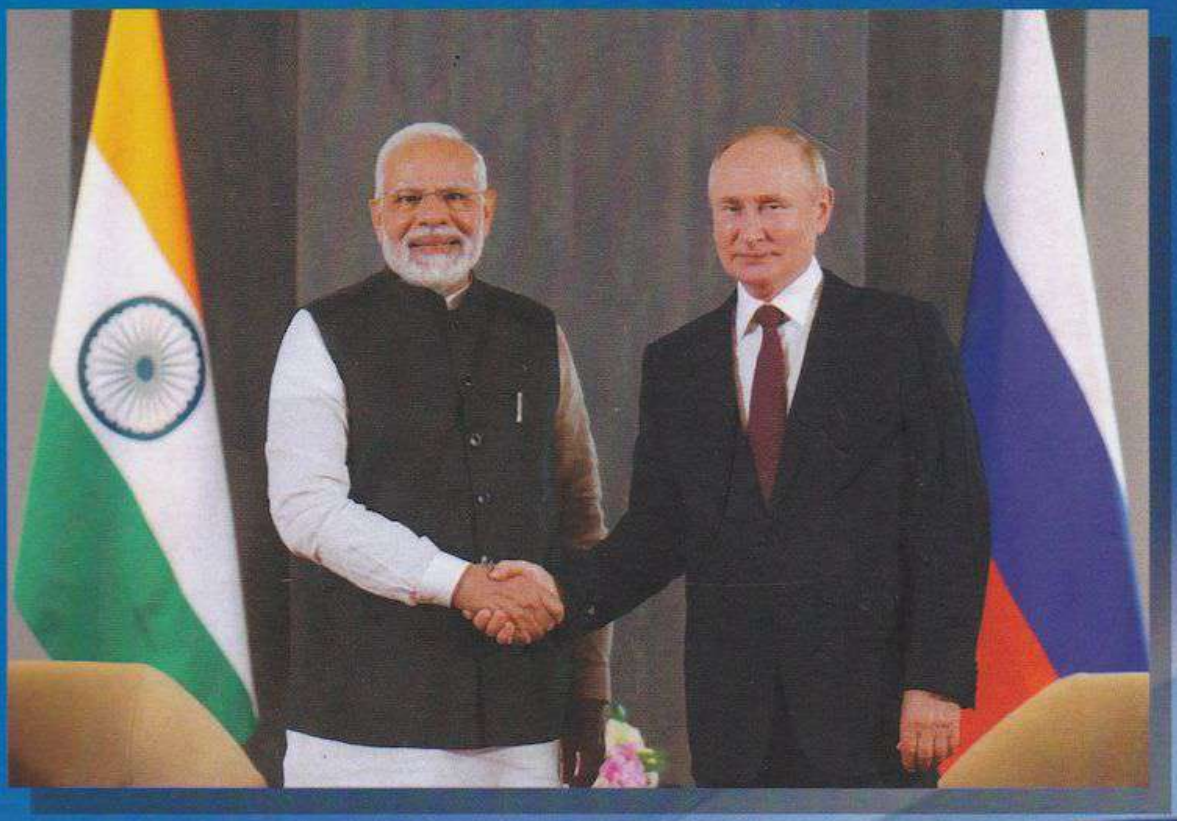
RUSSIA-INDIA RELATIONS
STRATEGIC PRAGMATISM



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Russia's Asian Dynamics

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Introduction

Russia and Asia have had a complex relationship across history characterized by periods of cooperation, competition, and warfare. From its expeditions into Siberia and the Far East to its interactions with Asian neighbours like China, Japan, and India, Russia's engagement with Asia has shaped its geopolitical outlook and strategic goals. Driven by shifting geopolitical realignments, economic demands, and security concerns, Russia's relationship with Asia has seen tremendous transformation in the last century. Russia's engagement in the region has been influenced by the geopolitical importance of Central Asia, the economic vibrancy of East Asia, and China's return as a significant global player. Important areas of cooperation between Russia and Asia include energy trade, infrastructure development, and regional security initiatives. The same objectives of creating multipolarity and overturning Western domination have in particular led to an increase in collaboration between Russia and China in recent years. Russia's ties with other Asian countries, such as Japan and India, are nonetheless impacted by historical resentments, territorial disputes, and divergent geopolitical goals. Challenges include the shifting geopolitical competition, economic disparity, and security issues facing Asia and Russia. With the escalation of Crimean

problem in 2014 to full-fledged conflict and Russian involvement in the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, Russia soured relations with Western nations and looked to Asia to deepen its diplomatic and economic relationships. The aggressive activities of Russia in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with respect to territorial disputes and military build-ups, have, however, also worried its Asian neighbours. Considering the future, Russia's relations with Asia will be shaped by a complex combination of geopolitical, economic, and strategic factors. Apart from managing the shifting dynamics of regional integration and cooperation in Asia, Russia will endeavour to achieve a balance between its interests in the East and the West as the global power structures keep shifting.

Crucial Elements

- Russia is primarily an Asian nation, yet Siberia and the Russian Far East comprise two- thirds of its landmass.
- Russia and China have formed a diplomatic alliance, sharing similar stances on matters like national sovereignty.
- Strong Russian-Chinese relations are valuable to both Beijing and Moscow and contribute to international stability. However, Beijing has the upper hand since Russia is essentially relegated to serving as China's resource base. Moscow views the US as a crucial political and strategic counterbalance in the area, thus the US pivot to Asia did not pose a threat to Russia.
- Moscow's relations with Tokyo must be positively transformed by finding a solution to its territorial conflict with Japan over the Kuril Islands. The German-Russian relationship could serve as an example.
- A serious and long-overdue dialogue on matters pertaining to Asia-Pacific security and development should be held between the United States and Russia. A North Pacific alliance, a future source of stability and a catalyst for regional prosperity, might be formed with the aid of such a conversation.

- Although Moscow participates in the Six-Party Talks over North Korea's nuclear program, it needs to create a long-term strategy for the Korean Peninsula that goes beyond that matter. In Beijing's advantage, with Russia being limited to China's resource base. Russia was not threatened by the United States' pivot to Asia because Moscow views the US as a crucial political and geopolitical balancer in the area. (Kortunov, 2023)
- Most people agree that the most important geopolitical trend of the early 21st century was the growth of East and South Asia. Nearly every other country is impacted, but perhaps none more so than Russia. Despite being primarily a European nation, the Russian Federation has two thirds of its enormous territory-Siberia and the Russian Far East-located in geographical Asia. There, China and Russia have a border that is around 4,500 kilometre's long. Russia is Japan's neighbour as well, despite the fact that it appears to be far away. Its ocean shoreline is the longest among all the Pacific countries, yet it's also arguably the least developed. Mainland Russia and Alaska are separated by the comparatively narrow (180 km) Bering Strait, which serves as the entrance to both the Pacific and the Arctic. Russia may be impacted by events in Asia and the Pacific in a number of ways, including economically through trade and investment flows, militarily through proximity to the Korean Peninsula, and demographically through cross-border migration. (Trenin, 2013)

The New World Equilibrium

The current Russian administration prioritizes the rebalancing of the world around Asia's rise. Russia has attempted and failed during the last 20 years to integrate into the wider Western world. All three of Russia's presidents, Dmitry Medvedev, Vladimir Putin, and Boris Yeltsin, sought to forge military and even political ties with NATO and the United States early in their administrations. They were let down each time, though. Since returning to the Kremlin in 2012, Vladimir Putin has reaffirmed Russia's position

as a distinct geopolitical actor, standing aside from a unified Europe and concentrating on creating its own power base in the heart of the continent: the Eurasian Union. If effective, this union ought to provide Moscow greater clout when dealing with Brussels (and Berlin) in the process of building a Greater Europe that stretches from Lisbon to Vladivostok. Moscow, a self-described pole in a world growing more polycentric, is adamant about preserving its strategic independence, which is the fundamental meaning Russian leaders convey when they refer to their nation as a great power. According to the Kremlin, the United States' interventionist policies and global domination pose the biggest threat to Russia's independence at this time. So, anything that reduces the magnitude of the US position in the world-whether it be India's military might, ASEAN's regional diplomacy, or China's GDP-is more than welcome. The emergence of a new global order that is predicated on essentially equal relationships between the world's most powerful nations-some of which are Asian-is imperative. Creating checks and balances to lessen U.S. global dominance is the primary goal of the Russo-Chinese collaboration in this aspect. Thus, in terms of the global order, Russia's interests and the rise of Asia are generally aligned. The rise of Asia stands in stark contrast to the West's, particularly the US, relative decline. Despite their European ancestry, Russians see the shifting power dynamics between the West and the emerging (Asian) East as a beneficial process of global levelling at the top and do not identify with the West or even with political Europe. Russian leaders now have more leeway and breathing room as a result of the changing circumstances.

The Russians' view of the European Union's shadows and the US's partial retreat is tinged with Schadenfreude as well because they are still recovering from the shock of the Soviet Union's dissolution. (Sussex, 2015)

New Challenges

Russia, meanwhile, is far from devoid of issues as Asia grows. Also Russian influence in the Southeast Asia is fading. (Kurlantzick, 2023) Not only are the Russians not attempting to ally with the West, they are also not turning Asian. Only one-sixth of Russia's

population resides east of the Urals, despite the fact that the region makes up two thirds of the nation's total area. Roughly speaking, these 25 million individuals make up Shanghai's population. Despite having a vast Pacific coastline, Russia's ports are small in comparison to those of its neighbours. When traveling from Moscow to Vladivostok, two equally powerful things strike one's mind. Without passing through any foreign borders, the aircraft lands in the same nation after nine hours in the air. Additionally, there aren't many signs of human habitation east of the Urals when gazing down on a clear day. The least developed area of Russia is now physically surrounded by the most dynamic region of the world due to the emergence of Asia. Nothing better captures this than the difference between the decaying, crumbling towns on the Russian side of the Amur River and the opulent, bustling city on the Chinese bank, where, until recently, only primitive villages stood. This truth has the greatest potential risks and is of utmost importance. Moscow's only chance of retaining its Siberian and Far Eastern territories in a more interconnected world of rapid communication and porous borders is if it can successfully develop these regions. In order for Siberia, Russia's former internal colony, and the Far East, its erstwhile strategic bastion, to remain Russian in practice as well as in theory, they must appeal to Russians and support regional economic growth. That's a big order. But if Russia is unable to meet this challenge, it may witness the resource-rich but sparsely populated areas of its territory falling prey to outside forces as outsiders invade to seize control of the more profitable assets, perhaps sparing Russian sovereignty but eroding it nonetheless. The idea that Khabarovsk in the twenty-first century will become a modern-day Harbin ought to terrify Russian strategists and keep them from realizing this goal. Above all, this has to do with Russia's interactions with China. (Yanovsky, 2023)

China

China's ascent is frequently referred to be the "rise of Asia." It's amazing to see how Sino-Russian ties have changed recently. Once a quarter of a century ago, Beijing and Moscow were still locked in a cold war that culminated in deadly border skirmishes with nuclear implications in the late 1960s. China was a minor ally of

the Soviet Union in the "socialist camp" a little more than 50 years ago. (How Has the China-Russia Relationship Evolved?, n.d.) When imperial Russia ruled over Northeast China, then known as Manchuria, a century ago, one of its largest cities, Harbin, was dubbed "little Moscow" because to its 200,000 Russian citizens. China's GDP was only thought to be at most 40% of that of the Soviet Russian republic within the USSR even three decades ago, when Deng Xiaoping was beginning his reforms. China now outpaces Russia economically by a factor of four or more. Its spending for defence is almost double that of the other. China no longer receives machinery from Russia; instead, the country has basically become China's resource base. Under peacetime conditions, no other great-power partnership in modern history has experienced a change as sudden, dramatic, and quick-and no other relationship has experienced such a significant transition so seamlessly. This includes the relationship between the United States and Russia. Russia and China have switched positions in terms of power, and they have cheerfully adjusted to their new circumstances. (Qimao, n.d.) This was neither automatic or predetermined; rather, it was entirely dependent on how the elites and leaderships of the two nations managed their relationship. In terms of the Russians, they have remarkably adapted to a powerful China that they were previously unaware of or had to contend with. There were no ill will or jealousy directed toward the United States. Their interest in China's rising might has not turned into an obsession. They have been content to demilitarize the Sino-Russian border to a significant extent and hardly recall the intense thirty-year conflict with Beijing. To complete the agreement that defines and demarcates that border in its entirety, they were able to make concessions. The deal on the border between Russia and China was deemed by Vladimir Putin to be the crowning achievement of his first two terms as president. That fact by itself says a lot about Moscow's agenda and, in general, the nature of the relationship. In the global arena, the Russians are pleased to support China in the UN Security Council as well as in emerging organizations like the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). They feel that this will increase Moscow's stature and influence internationally. Unlike many of China's other

neighbours, the Russians are undoubtedly challenged by China's remarkable expansion in all spheres but do not feel particularly endangered, at least not at this time. The perception held by the Kremlin that Beijing's leadership is entirely rational and primarily focused on domestic matters, the conviction that Beijing has no desire to offend Russia and that it respects Moscow's red lines, the conclusion that China's primary foreign policy and strategic vectors are directed toward the east and south for the foreseeable future, and, finally, the tacit knowledge of mutual nuclear deterrence are some of the factors contributing to Russia's lax attitude toward Beijing. Regarding post-Soviet Russia, the Chinese deserve praise for their remarkable delicacy and insight. (Qimao, n.d.) Though they may have hated the policies of Yeltsin and Gorbachev in private, they never let the public celebrate Russia's downfall. Rather, they respected Russia and refrained from sabotaging its self-image. They went on to forge an apparently equal relationship with Russia, gained Moscow's consent to the economic encroachment of former Soviet Central Asia, and profited from the Kremlin's propensity to openly challenge and argue with Washington. Crucially, the Chinese have succeeded in obtaining Moscow's clearance for investment in the Russian energy industry by means of a persistent campaign of strengthening relations with Russian energy corporations, including Rosneft. So far, everything has worked out well for both sides. But in the long Chinese tradition, it is incorrect to conclude that Russia has become, or is headed toward being, a tributary state. The Chinese are astute enough to see that Russia's standing as a major power extends to its relations with China as well as with the US. Beijing instead set itself a more practical and realistic agenda: to gain access to Siberia's abundant resources-energy today, fresh water tomorrow-to maintain Russia as a safe rear, allowing China to look east and south without overly worrying about the threat from the north; and to win Moscow's support on matters that are important to China, like the Japanese territorial dispute and U.S. missile defence. Beijing's second top aim is strengthening the armaments relationship with the People's Liberation Army by going beyond off-the-shelf agreements and transferring cutting-edge Russian technology to the army. Due to their shared stances on matters like national sovereignty, territorial

integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, China and Russia have established a diplomatic partnership on the international scene. Beijing and Moscow resisted NATO's use of force against Yugoslavia in 1999 and Syria in 2013 at the UN Security Council. Beijing refrained from supporting Moscow's tougher stance on Iraq in 2003; nevertheless, China and Russia have essentially moved in unison when it comes to Libya in 2011, Iran, and North Korea in the years since. This alliance is strong because it is founded on core national interests about the global order as the governments of China and Russia would like to view it. (Saxena, 2024) But there are no characteristics of a military alliance in the Russo-Chinese relationship. Indeed, there is a relationship cantered on arms and technology that was rekindled in 1992 following a thirty-year hiatus; regular military drills, both on land and at sea, take place within the borders of both nations; and Beijing and Moscow hold the de facto leadership positions in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which places a high priority on security and development. Even though that other major power has significantly diminished compared to the latter half of the 20th century, China is still hesitant to tie its hands by forming an alliance. Russia can't possibly lead a new alliance, and it doesn't want to be led by a more experienced ally either. Thus, rather than being a military alliance, the Sino-Russian security relationship is changing toward that of a security community between the two neighbours. The Russian-Chinese partnership has some issues despite its numerous successes. The overall balance continues to shift in Beijing's favour, making it harder and harder to uphold the idea of co-equality. China has a disproportionate advantage in the structure of bilateral commerce, relegating Russia to the position of Beijing's supplier of raw materials. (Gabuev, 2024) Even still, Gazprom and the Chinese businesses have been at odds over China's gas pricing for years. With Russian assistance, the People's Liberation Army's conventional armed forces have been updated and are a force to be reckoned with. Chinese state-run businesses are still treated cautiously by the Russian government, and many Russians in Siberia harbour misgivings about the 300,000 or so Chinese immigrants who live in Moscow and other parts of European

Russia. Some even refer to Beijing's alleged "demographic aggression." For their part, the Chinese people have never forgotten the injustices done by the Russian empire in the past, including "unequal" border treaties, which has led to the resuscitation of long-standing Russian misgivings about the neighbours' territorial aspirations. A few of times in the last ten years, the unpredictable domestic events in Russia have taken the Chinese leaders by surprise. Examples include the demise of a Moscow market that Chinese wholesale traders relied on, and the Yukos Company, which is China's largest oil supplier. Beijing is particularly worried about how Chinese citizens may be impacted by the current anti-immigrant sentiment in Russia, which is currently concentrated on those from the Caucasus and Central Asia. China is now the main trading partner of Central Asian nations and has economic ties to other post-Soviet nations like Belarus and Ukraine. In the global arms market, China competes with Russia as well and occasionally sells Russian weaponry clones. Russia, on the other hand, provides weapons to Vietnam and India because they regard China as a real military rival. In the South China Sea near Vietnam's coast and in the vicinity of what Beijing considers to be its economic domain, Russian businesses drill for oil and gas. However, Beijing's interest in the region does not thrill Moscow, which believes that the littoral states should handle the Arctic's future development. Moscow and Beijing have been able to contain or manage these differences thus far, and it seems likely that they will be able to do so for the foreseeable future-that is, until the middle of the 2020s-but in the long run, things could get out of hand. (Keith Bradsher, Anatoly Kurmanaev, 2024) Moscow must broaden its Asia-Pacific strategy by interacting with other significant players, starting with Japan, in order to cope with a powerful China more skilfully.

India-Russian Relations

The two nations shared political and strategic viewpoints, which were reflected in their stances on international problems throughout the second half of the 20th century. The Soviet Union's support of India's stance on Kashmir was a significant factor that contributed to India's improved stature in international affairs. (Chaudhary, 2022) India was able to react to the unrest in East

Pakistan, resulting to the birth of Bangladesh, with the support of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971. Even when speaking to their respective home audiences, the two nations seldom acknowledged severe disagreements in public and instead engaged in bilateral negotiations to resolve them. There were only two subjects of dispute that were kept out of public view and handled strictly at the highest political levels: the divergent perspectives on the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan during the 1970s. However, the military-technical coordination between the two governments displayed a high degree of synchrony throughout time. One instance is the delivery of full production lines for military hardware, including tanks and aircraft, from Russia to India. Russia was also a crucial contributor in the growth of the Indian navy, notably in the submarine fleet. India was reminded of the special strategic trust the two nations maintained in the 1980s when the Soviet Union loaned India an nuclear-powered submarine. Along with this, there is a significant economic relationship. Up to the time of its collapse, the Soviet Union was India's most important commercial partner. People in general would rather forget that many of India's indigenous sectors, such as metallurgy, mining, oil and gas, depended on Soviet cash and expertise. This is something that the general people would rather forget. The USSR greatly enhanced India's energy security through swap arrangements with Iraq, ensuring minimal foreign exchange payments by India for energy. There was also a significant level of collaboration in science, technology, and cross-cultural exchange. Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian astronaut, made the first-ever space flight after the Cold War ended. What was the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the five-pillar Indo-Russian relationship after the Cold War? Perhaps the darkest years for India-Russia relations were in the 1990s. Economic activity plummeted, scientific and technological collaboration disintegrated, cultural cooperation broke down, and military-technical cooperation suddenly ended (although some components survived). In a manner, the single characteristic the two nations shared, their political and strategic outlook, outlasted the fall of the Soviet Union. However, this was not solely caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. It so happened that India was going through a serious

social and economic crisis at the same time. (NANDAN UNNIKRISHNAN & ANKITA DUTTA, 2024) It was also logical for India, after the disappearance of its erstwhile friend, the USSR, to turn to the West for solutions to its problems. At the same time, Russians were looking for advice on their economy, shifting from a market-based economy to a planned one. Given the sentiment of elites in both countries at the time, it was hardly surprising that the Western-oriented movement had a negative effect on bilateral ties. Some Russian foreign policy experts pushed for lowering India's profile regarding Pakistan, believing it would help improve relations with the United States. Perhaps the most remarkable event during those times was Russia's withdrawal from a deal with India on cryogenic engines. However, thanks to astute decisions made by the Narasimha Rao government and subsequent efforts by several highly engaged diplomats, India was able to find a stabilizing force and prevent Indo-Russian relations from rapidly deteriorating. (SUNIL DASGUPTA & SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI, 1994) India was among the few countries to decide to properly compensate Russia for the billion-dollar debt owed to the Soviet Union annually over a decade. The people of Russia still appreciate this memory. Russia was even more pleased when India resolved to purchase large amounts of military hardware and frequently pay in advance. Keeping its military-industrial complex viable and retaining experts who were being lured away from around the world helped Russia maintain its military-industrial complex. In the nearly three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, India-Russia military-technical cooperation has increased dramatically, perhaps reaching a dynamic point right now. Economic conversations have improved since the near crash, although not dramatically. Collaboration in science and technology continues to expand. Cultural collaboration and political and strategic viewpoints have a long way to go before they diverge further. Interestingly, Russian scholars correctly assert that India and Russia share the same strategic objective of creating a "polycentric" or "multipolar" international system. (Joint Statement following the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit, 2024)

Going Ahead

Russia has recently increased its tactical examination of South Asia, with a particular focus on India. Russia's elite in politics and business have witnessed a change in perspective. Russia is trying to make a name for itself as a major player on the world stage, fearing that a Polycentric world may give way to a bipolar one. However, to become a force that can address the global problems the world faces, such as North Korea, Syria, Afghanistan, and terrorism, Russia needs to significantly boost its prospects and remain a major player in whatever new global order emerges. It will therefore require efforts to close the distance and address the perceived hesitancy of a great power. The overarching result of this strategic vision, prioritizing rivalry with the US and tactically answering specific regional challenges, is partly a result of the Russian policymaking establishment's waning ability and proficiency in strategically managing several geographic areas at once. But generally, South Asia loses as a consequence of Russia perceiving the area through the lens of Afghanistan. As a consequence, the Russia-South Asia connection is being questioned. Does security in Afghanistan indicate stability in Central Asia as well? The answer to it is a fact. So, in order to find a solution, how important is it to engage all parties involved in the war in Afghanistan? The answer to that is a fact. Given that Pakistan is the nation that gave rise to the Taliban, would speaking to Pakistan also entail speaking to the Taliban? The answer to that is a fact. Does this mean that gaining political influence with Pakistan is not wise? This is where the legacy of the Indo-Soviet relationship becomes significant. Russia has already placed all its eggs in the New Delhi basket, trying to sway Islamabad. The outreach to Pakistan has begun. Given Russia's lack of economic influence in the world (less than 1% of global GDP), it is evident that they find the military-technical sector an easier channel to establish leverage in Islamabad than any other industry. Nevertheless, they also support business endeavors such as building a gas pipeline and modernizing a steel plant. India doesn't need to worry too much because Russia plans to sell helicopters and carry out counterterrorism exercises and maneuvers. On another level, it is worrisome because it appears that Russia is okay with leaving India out to achieve a particular military goal.

An example of this is the recent attempt by Russia to negotiate talks on Afghanistan with China, Pakistan, and Russia. Invitations were sent to certain countries for the summit in February, including Afghanistan and India, after vocal protests during the negotiations in January of this year. Despite the apparent settlement of the conflict, Russia's stance to Afghanistan continues to be a key worry for India. Russia explains its outreach to the Taliban by claiming that the danger presented by ISIS is more urgent than the one posed by the Taliban. Whether India is right to oppose this policy is up for debate. This, however, is clearly not the same as in the past when conversations between India and Russia were limited to private meetings. Afghanistan is a significant challenge for India. The Taliban communicates with everyone. The US, China, Russia, and Iran all communicate with the Taliban. Despite the UN's announcement that no state should engage with the Taliban unless they agree to specific demands, India seems to be the only nation refusing to talk to the Taliban. India has to know that it must put its national interest in Afghanistan first because it cannot expect other countries to do the same. Another concern is the collaboration between Russia and China. The gap between Russia and India is rising, not because Russia is getting closer to China, but rather because India is moving closer to the United States. In truth, it's the reverse. India is now gravitating towards the United States, tying Russia as its primary defense against China since 1962. (Zakharov, 2024) India is not seeking an extra balancer against China, even if the Soviet Union operated as one during that period. China and Russia currently have a close relationship, though not an alliance, so India has no choice but to seek closer ties with the US. Ironically, New Delhi is fortifying its intricate connection with Moscow to mitigate Russia's seeming growing dependence on China. Along with significantly reviving the bilateral relations and matters of political and strategic importance, they must also dramatically reenergize commercial ties, particularly in the energy sector. This is important because India needs to live in harmony and would like to have a positive connection with other nations to handle its pressing domestic concerns. Both Russia and India fight the creation of a bipolar agreement between China and the US because it would constrain their capacity to move strategically.

Reimagining the Indo-Russian relationship is a significant problem, and the political leadership of both nations must find a means to reinvigorate the convergence of political and strategic interests so that the Indo-Russian link can transcend its existing constraints. (Sibal, Challenges and Prospects of India's Strategic Partnership with Russia, 2016)

East Asia and Japan

Russia and Japan's ties have mostly improved since the conclusion of the Cold War. (Miller, 2024) In other words, Moscow no longer views Japan as a potential military foe. (Chang, 2022) The extent of economic relations has also increased. For instance, the Japanese automobile industry has invested in Russia to produce cars, while Russia now supplies 10% of Japan's needs for gas and oil. Since Russia's repudiation of communism, political ties have significantly improved, and Tokyo and Moscow now have a variety of shared interests on the international scene. But the persistent territorial dispute between Russia and Japan has prevented the two countries' relationship from reaching its full potential. Frustration resulted from the failure of multiple attempts since 1991 to settle the conflict over the Kuril Islands, also known as the Northern Territories by the Japanese. Nonetheless, Russia and Japan are more dependent on one another than ever before given the strategic circumstances currently prevailing in Northeast Asia. For Russia, a strong "Japan connection" would include a significant diversification of Russia's foreign policy options in the Asia-Pacific area in addition to increased investment and technology transfers, especially to support the development of Russia's Far Eastern provinces. The current connection between Germany and Russia provides Moscow with a general framework to work within when approaching Tokyo. Germany has been Russia's main European ally since the reunification of that nation in 1990. Another important factor supporting security on the European continent has been the reconciliation between Russia and Germany. Naturally, there are no direct comparisons between the circumstances in Europe and Asia, but it would seem worthwhile to investigate the possibility of Japan serving as Russia's "Germany in the east." Given its geographical location, Russia may be a valuable strategic ally for

Japan, helping Tokyo maintain a better balance on the Asian continent. Tokyo would receive additional security assurance from a cordial and friendly relationship with Moscow, which would strengthen its long-standing alliance with Washington. Japan's energy security would be enhanced by closer ties to Russia. Japan might also benefit from the general goodwill that Russians have toward the Japanese, which stands in stark contrast to sentiments in China and other countries. A sincere effort to improve ties between people would provide the partnership a solid foundation. Japan and Russia should eventually be able to establish a security community in which using force or threatening to use force is unthinkable. Russia has been making it obvious that its relations with Seoul come first, especially in light of its sudden about-face on Korea in the early 1990s and its following attempts at policy rebalancing to regain some leverage in Pyongyang. Russia views South Korea's sophisticated economy as a partner in modernization. A cooperative economic outreach to North Korea in the shape of a rail link and transit gas pipeline connecting Russia and South Korea across the country has also been proposed by Moscow to Seoul. (Rinna, 2018)Russian strategy is being developed with the vision of a united Korea headed by Seoul in the far future. But, Moscow has been cautious in coordinating its actions with Beijing in the Six-Party Talks on the Korean nuclear problem, cognizant of China's dominant strategic interests on the Korean Peninsula. Russia essentially supports a non-military strategy towards North Korea, seeing Pyongyang's provocative actions to be a survival tactic rather than an assault strategy. (Matsuo, 2023) Moscow has taken a neutral position toward the maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas. It most definitely doesn't want to get engaged in either situation. Adopting China's stance would not only be detrimental to Russia's ties with Japan and several ASEAN nations, but it would also essentially imply Moscow's acceptance of Beijing's leadership and the loss of Russia's strategic independence, which is the most valuable foreign asset to the Kremlin. On the other hand, supporting Manila, Hanoi, or Tokyo would seriously harm Sino-Russian ties and bring back the Kremlin's worst fear-a hostile and potent China just outside its door. In keeping with their prevailing philosophy and giving a slight

nod to China, the Russians advocate for the peaceful settlement of maritime conflicts amongst the involved nations. Russia and Japan stand to benefit a great deal from their reunion in the current climate, building a relationship built on mutual confidence and cooperation. A reconciliation of this kind shouldn't be antagonistic or aimed at anyone in particular. Enhancing the geopolitical balance on the Asian continent would benefit Japan, while Russia would be able to develop its eastern territory and deal with its most critical strategic challenge more effectively. Unlike during the Cold War, the United States should have every justification to back this rapprochement by assuring its ally in Japan that the security alliance between the two countries would not suffer as a result of the Russia relationship, and that a successful rapprochement would improve the balance in Northeast Asia and beyond.

Asia's South and Southeast

Russia has come to recognize the importance of Asian multilateralism, particularly in Southeast Asia, over time. (Kurlantzick, 2023) Moscow sees the gradual expansion of ASEAN's membership as a step in the right direction toward a more harmonious international order. Even while it generally sees ASEAN as a discussion platform and a tool for regional cooperation rather than as a stand-alone geopolitical actor, Russia agreed to become a conversation partner of the organization. Moscow has succeeded in reviving and strengthening its long-standing relationship with Vietnam within ASEAN. With far less success thus far, Russia has also been attempting to exploit the arms trade as a means of establishing connections with other nations in the region, particularly with Indonesia and Malaysia.

In addition to joining the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization in 1999 and hosting an APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012, Russia has also become a member of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which it participated in as an Asian nation, and the East Asia Summit, which addresses security-related matters. (FOSTERING DIALOGUE & COOPERATION BETWEEN ASIA & EUROPE, n.d.) This establishes a network of organizations addressing economic, security, and other issues

throughout the Asia-Pacific region, in addition to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Six-Party Talks. Russia, however, is cautious not to favour the China-preferred option, which does not involve the United States, or the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership, which excludes China, as the rival free trade area projects in the region. Rather, Moscow has been pushing for Belarus and Kazakhstan to become part of Eurasian integration. India has always been Russia's regional ally in South Asia. The relationship, which during the Cold War amounted to a quasi-alliance, was mostly forgotten in the 1990s but saw some resurgence at the start of the 21st century. Even yet, it is still far too dependent on government-to-government ties, Russian weaponry deliveries to India, and technological transfers. Moscow, which has had an unquestionably supportive attitude toward Delhi, wants to use the connection with India to influence the world at large, much like the one that exists between China and Russia. However, less robust economic relations between the two nations and Delhi's obsession with its own neighbourhood have hindered more active Russo-Indian cooperation on the international scene. Both nations are members of the BRICS alliance, which has functioned more as a publicity stunt than as a serious global force. RIC, which stands for Russia, India, and China, has primarily functioned as a ceremonial conference and typically convenes alongside BRICS.

The United States

Without including the United States, no study of Asian geopolitics can be considered comprehensive. The American presence in the area is well known to the Russians. It's noteworthy to note how differently they handled that presence than how the United States handled its presence in Europe following the conclusion of the Cold War. Moscow does not object to the US maintaining its alliances with South Korea and Japan, Russia's neighbours in Northeast Asia, unlike NATO and its eastern expansion. In contrast to American preparations for missile defences in Europe, the Russians adopted a more laid-back stance regarding American missile defence deployments in Alaska and California. The U.S. announcement of a "pivot to Asia" did not intimidate the Russians, though it may have irritated them that then-secretary of state

Hillary Clinton did not specifically mention them in her statement of the new U.S. policy. In essence, Moscow views America as a crucial political and strategic balancer in the Asia-Pacific area. (Klein, 2023) Moscow has a break and some leeway because Beijing and Washington are focused on each other. Perhaps they have come to appreciate not being at the heart of power conflicts since the end of the Cold War clash. But the new circumstances impose their own requirements on Moscow's diplomacy and foreign policy. It must learn how to handle ties with both superpowers, China and America, without too allying or alienating either. It would never tolerate a conflict between Beijing and Washington, but it would also never tolerate a cooperation between the two, which it believes may hurt Russia. Furthermore, Russia must advance its goals while maintaining a relative disadvantage against China and the United States. Russia has been able to adapt to China's rise and establish a fruitful and constructive partnership with Beijing. (Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, n.d.) It's time for America to play an equally significant role in its foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific area. A number of significant regional interests are shared by the Russian Federation and the United States, including the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology, the avoidance of military conflicts, and general regional stability based on balanced relations among the major powers.

Furthermore, Russia has every right to regard the US and its allies-Australia and Canada, for example-as a possible source of modernization for the growth of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Regarding the United States, Washington needs to address the serious fault in the pivot plan by leaving out Russia. Compared to the Soviet Union, Russia is a weaker player, but it is still in the game and is no longer America's enemy. In the twenty-first century, the United States would benefit greatly from a stronger Russia in Asia and the Pacific, enjoying equal relations with China and complete cooperation with Japan. It is long past for the United States and Russia to have a serious conversation about the wide range of topics pertaining to Pacific security and development. It may result in the shared objective of a cooperation across the North Pacific, which

might serve as a future pillar of stability and a catalyst for regional prosperity.

Conclusion

Geopolitical changes throughout the world and Russia's own clear demands have compelled Moscow to focus more on Asia. This change represents a degree of internal rebalancing within Russia's domestic and international policies, although being far from a "pivot." The Russian government is adopting pretty conventional strategies to address the opportunities and problems. At home, it aims to revive the development of eastern Russian regions through a number of state-run megaprojects, such as the planning of a state corporation to supervise the development of the Far East and Eastern Siberia, the establishment of a special federal ministry in Khabarovsk, and the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok. Moscow has prioritized energy and infrastructure projects, including the Northern Sea Route, Trans-Siberian rails, LNG, pipelines for oil and gas, and new maritime lines. Russia has long participated in the Six-Party Talks about North Korea's nuclear program from a foreign policy standpoint. In addition to APEC, it has been able to participate in the East Asia Summit and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). It is now an ASEAN partner as well. Moscow supplies weaponry to China and has maintained active connections with Vietnam and India, both of which have complicated relations with China. Russia has been keen to deepen its economic ties with Asia's most technologically proficient countries, like South Korea and Japan. It has contacted Singapore and is in the process of negotiating free trade agreements with Vietnam and New Zealand. Still, Russia is still mainly unknown outside of Northeast Asia. The problem is that it only offers weapons and energy resources. The transit routes to Europe-which span the Arctic by water or traverse Siberia by rail-have not yet been sufficiently improved to be truly useful. The Russians also find it difficult to function in a global setting where they are no longer the main players. It is undoubtedly difficult to plot a route between Beijing and Washington, Delhi, Tokyo, and Hanoi. Several significant summits of the organizations, like EAS, to which they had battled for

admittance, have been avoided by top Russian leaders as a result of their perception of their relative weakness and the complexities of Asian geopolitics. This ought to provoke deeper and more thoughtful thought. Russia must operate as a force in the Euro-Pacific and consider itself as such. It needs to come up with a solid plan for developing its eastern provinces and integrating them with the Asia-Pacific area as well as Russia. In order to obtain technology and investment, it ought to make contact with the region's more developed nations. Specifically, it must use the resolution of its territorial dispute with Japan as a catalyst to change the Russo-Japanese relationship to resemble the current Russo-German one. It should not just follow Beijing's preferences but also develop a long-term strategy for relations with China in order to maximize its benefits. It must strive for a North Pacific alliance with the US, its immediate eastern neighbour, and Canada, whose climates are similar to those of Siberia. Beyond the nuclear problem, it must have a long-term strategy for the Korean Peninsula. Additionally, it would be beneficial if Russia's authorities decided to temporarily relocate to Vladivostok rather than-or at least in addition to-Sochi. This would support Russia's regional integration into the Asia-Pacific area as well as its internal development. Without a doubt, this is a big order. Whether the current Russian administration will be able to meet the challenge is uncertain. On the other hand, the problems associated with Asia's ascent are not going away; rather, we may anticipate that they will only get worse with time. As they say, be cautious what you wish for, especially in light of Russia's celebration of the end of the "unipolar moment" and the end of Western dominance more broadly.

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