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India-Russia Relations in Global Context



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Research and Information System
for Developing Countries

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

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INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

A roundtable discussion was hosted by the Research and Information System think-tank on 28 July 2017 in New Delhi, India. It was based on the presentation by Dr Vladimir Yakunin. Prof. Anuradha Chenoy and the First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in New Delhi, Ms Ekaterina Semenova, were discussants. The roundtable was chaired by Ambassador Sudhir Devare.

Ambassador Sudhir Devare

Our friendship with Russia has stood the test of time; and today we are celebrating the 70th year since the diplomatic relations were established between the former Soviet Union and India, and the depth of that friendship is reflected in multiple ways. There are a very few countries with which India shares so much in common.

The mutual benefits were so extensive that in the year 2010, the relationship was upgraded to the status of a strategic partnership. We, now, have the valuable tradition of state leaders exchanging annual visits. Prime Minister Modi recently visited Russia, and President Putin's visit has also been often to New Delhi.

Seeing as we have gathered today at the Research Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), it is pleasing to note Russia's engagement in the dialogue with developing countries; especially exemplified by its active association with the BRICS.

Dr Yakunin's leadership of the DOC is a further example of India and Russia's engagement in the dialogue. This dialogue needs to grow in breadth, and I think, we are being hosted by an appropriate institution today, with that goal in mind. Additionally, as the emerging economies represented within the BRICSgroup, we have plenty of motivation for exploring new avenues for partnerships.

Indian and Russian development models differ in certain ways. Since the last 50-60 years, Russia has been sharing consistently knowledge and expertise in education, health, energy, scienceand technology. This has been of tremendous benefit to developing countries around the world.

Indian development has followed a different trajectory, which is reflected in our following global engagements.

We have extended the ITEC programme; which since its 1964 origin, has grown to include 12,000 trainees, experts, and students from around the world;

Indian credit lines are expanding every year, and currently amount to\$14-15 billion.

Cooperation with the developing countries is continuing to grow through triangular cooperation; and its importance cannot be over-emphasized. Be it in Africa, central Asia, Southeast Asia or Latin America—opportunities to develop models of joint cooperation have been beneficial to all.

The RIS – the leading organization of this kind in India – and the DOC could work together in promoting cooperative development, and in this way, could promote the dialogue.

When we would hear from Dr Yakunin, I would welcome his perspective on the Indian-Soviet partnership of the past and on its heritage to us all today, not just bilaterally, but also in terms of partnerships elsewhere in the developing world. His rich expertise

in political economy and infrastructure as well the former head of Russian railways, one of the biggest employers in the world, and his experience as a political scientist, would be received warmly.

Dr Vladimir Yakunin

As a Russian, my considerations, I will always be influenced by my citizenship. Perhaps this is a disadvantage; perhaps it's a strength. Regardless, it is a characteristic I would like to be excused.

The way my mind works, I tend to change my entire thesis, likely, the moments before I present it. Just before this meeting, I met with the representatives from the different areas of Indian society, and I had much to learn; it has been several years since my last visit to India, and the country has changed significantly since the time.

I remember the first time I visited, there was "One bicycle to every Indian family" policy slogan. That was in 2002. Several years later the slogan was different "One motorbike to every Indian family." Now, judging from the traffic, I suppose the slogan has changed again.

I would now like to introduce the ideas and the motivation behind the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (DOC), an NGO, independent of the World Public Forum 'Dialogue of Civilisations' organisation, which you may remember from the earlier era. The DOC Research Institute is a new institute.

Among the DOC staff, you will find Russians, Indians, Americans, Poles, and Germans. They are united by far more than the salaries, they earn. The driving idea behind the organization, and what motivates the staff, is the idea of Dialogue among the civilisations as the only method that can enable humanity to avoid self-destruction and attaining new levels of co-existence.

Our history dates back to before 2002, when we visited Delhi for our first conference, supported by Inder Kumar Gujral, the former prime minister of India, and Jagdish Kapur, renowned futurologist.

Whilst our institutional presence began with this visit, but our ideas had origin much earlier.

It all began with the publication of Samuel Huntington's well-known book, *The Clash of Civilisations*. The first serious response to the theory was made by the then president of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, who promoted the idea of dialogue over the idea of a clash. The World Public Forum 'Dialogue of Civilizations' organisation was the first to institutionalize this method, being established three years ahead of the Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations-supported initiative.

A year ago, we could conclude that we have outgrown the World Public Forum 'Dialogue of Civilizations' discussion platform, and then we decided to create a research centre. We established its headquarters in Berlin, and appointed Pooran Pandey as the CEO. The DOC is still a small organization, and is in the early phase of development, but we have survived already a year in a highly competitive environment.

The DOC's mission is as follows—We aim to formulate expertise that addresses conflicts within contemporary global society and we emphasize dialogue as a means to avoid the escalation of conflict that we see all too frequently around the world.

Furthermore, we aim to collaborate with other research organizations and NGOs with a vision for peacefulness, sustainability and inclusivity.

Widespread analysis since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War has viewed the major conflict of the last century as the ideological clash between communism and capitalism. When the Soviet system ceased to exist, the question arose as to what the major challenge of the next century would be.

From 1991 to 2007, experts also agreed that we lived in a unipolar world. A foundational assumption was that the wider had West; won its ideological battle with communism. Although many were enthused at this idea, it was also something of a pyrrhic victory.

I suggest 2007 as the point of reference because of the Western reaction to President Putin's well-known Munich speech, which was met with resistance. The speech marked a time when tensions between Russia and the West had begun to rise.

In the recent years, the entire post-war system of the international law has shaken to its core. But how is it that within the framework of the international law, the aggressive bombing of Yugoslavia took place in the absence of the United Nations backing?

In Iraq, US military intervention was on the false pretext of removing chemical weapons. Then there was Libya. I was never an admirer of Colonel Gaddafi, but he was absolutely right when he said, "What are you doing? Libya is a barrier between Africa and migration to Europe." The current crisis of migration shows, he was absolutely right.

Additionally, we have, of course, seen the various 'colour' revolutions in different parts of the world. Therefore, I believe the entire system of the international law is currently breaking- up.

Putin's aim in 2007 was to warn the West about the consequences of further developments of this kind. The West did not heed the warning, and we can now see the consequences.

We can say that the unipolar world has come to an end between 2007 and 2017. Bookending of this period is the aforementioned Munich speech on the one hand, and at the other, election of an 'America First' president in Washington, signifying its withdrawal from commitments to neoliberal globalization, as we knew.

Brexit also reflects political and economic tensions that imply demise of norms associated not so much with the process of globalization, but with the ideology of globalism and of presumed dominance of a major power. Globalism presumes a set of universal values manifested in the mainstream policy.

The question is what next?

I don't suppose many people more widely, let alone many in this audience, are familiar with the Russian mathematician and economist, Mark Golansky. In 1987, he had submitted a manuscript to Yegor Gaidar, at that time the chief editor of *Communist*, a political magazine, who refused to publish it, claiming that the author understands nothing of the economic development. The book was published nevertheless. Golansky had predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Soviet system. We plan to translate the book into English, and republish it.

In the second part of his book, Golansky had assertions of the collapse of the capitalist system. The cause could be stagnation, inequality, and disproportionate access to entrepreneurship and mobility.

On the basis of these reflections, I think the necessity of a new paradigm for understanding global development is clear, and I am glad that RIS research is inclined in this direction.

A new course of development would require new leaders. At this point, I would like to introduce something I presented two years ago to the Russian Academy of Sciences, when I was introducing the Eurasian Development Belt.

We had introduced this terminology one or two years earlier than its popularization by the One Belt One Road initiative. In fact, I worked very hard to persuade Chinese colleagues that such projects should be simply not articulated as infrastructural projects.

In contrast to current understandings of development, I suggest moving beyond assessments based on the GDP growth and statistics. Do they actually reflect the development of society? The fact they do not, is now widely accepted. New instruments should assess whether or not economic models work properly. Here we may find grounds for collaboration between our institutions.

The leadership can come from India, Russia, and China, and be institutionalized in the BRICS framework. In the forthcoming years, we should expect leadership to emerge from the Southeast Asia and Africa as well.

However, it is not possible to simply break away from existing global norms. We cannot expect today's leaders, beneficiaries of the existing model, to spectate passively as China becoming world's dominant economic power. We need to present new models which are acceptable for those invested in the existing models.

The inequality of the present system can be seen in the spread of power within the global institutions, where voting power is unreflective of the growth of emerging economies and more generally developing world's purchasing power.

The existing system is also based around the debt economy. For every \$1 of growth globally, the world sinks further \$4 into debt.

In the sense that scientific and technological ventures would always be a global reality, globalisation process is inevitable. Automation and artificial intelligence are but the latest risks to workers in this respect. How to equalize gains in technological progress is an urgent question.

From my perspective, the united efforts of countries like Russia, India, and China – representing what we might call self-sufficient civilisations – are vital. Sustainable development should be a right, and should be established through inter-civilizational dialogue that incorporates historic values and philosophical traditions. Dialogue of this kind would affirm that inequality – today, one per cent of the world's population possess one-third of its wealth – is incompatible with democracy.

Dialogue informed by a sense of equality would promote a development paradigm, as opposed to a growth paradigm. A dogmatic focus on the economic growth is like a cancer to sustainable and in-

clusive development. The driving role of consumption within contemporary economic models, for example, produces tragic consequences of environmental pollution. Although, they cannot be imposed; limit on consumption should be considered for the developed countries.

Turning again to our rich history of bilateral relations, since the time of Afanasy Nikitin, two great civilizations have cultivated both political and economic mutual interests. I'm sure my embassy colleagues would agree that current levels of economic and political communication are insufficient. But think-tanks, like the RIS, promoting certainly a greater depth of communication and research efforts to contextualise bilateral relations within shared approaches to global challenges would be essential within the BRICS framework.

To conclude. I would like to make one final point about Russia's contribution to global security. Although economic growth of China provides a measure of stabilization to balance US global dominance, Russian nuclear deterrent, when not misconceived as a threat, in fact, provides further stabilization in an uncertain world. This should be welcomed in India and throughout the BRICS.

Ambassador Sudhir Devare (Chair)

Thank you, Dr Yakunin. The civilizational paradigm certainly goes some way to addressing various challenges of development, peace-making, and other shared global concerns. In many respects, Russia has both the capability and the willingness to lead on these issues, so your perspective as a Russian- citizen was especially a welcome.

Prof. Anuradha Chenoy of Jawaharlal Nehru University would now respond, followed by Ekaterina Semenova, First Secretary of the Russian Embassy.

Prof. Anuradha Chenoy

The points Dr Yakunin has just raised are the outcome of the widespread engagement with academics and civil society organizations

around the world, and I think the challenges he has highlighted with respect to the international development are especially pertinent. Progress of Russia and India on issues like sustainability, something which the RIS is particularly concerned with, are thus a welcome.

Issues like inequality, global warming, climate change, and job-less growth indeed require alternative models. One idea I liked was that of a roadmap for development as opposed to a roadmap for infrastructure.

I would like to share some observations on the Indian-Russian relations today, and in view of Dr Yakunin's experience, I would be pleased to hear his response.

One concern already raised is the stagnation of bilateral economic cooperation, although we do know governments are committed to developing this.

At the geo-strategic level, the concern in India, which has witnessed Russia attaining the status once again of a confident, self-sufficient civilization, as you call it, no longer catching-up with the West or with China, still remains of a kind of leverage neighbouring countries can exert on Russia. How much would China, for example, rather than simply cooperating, actually be able to influence Russia in ways which concern countries of the global south, especially those in the Asia?

As Dr Yakunin said, there is clearly a need for leadership from Russia, India and China, but the idea of cooperation has been floated since a long time without any taking off because of unresolved problems between India and China. The One Belt, One Road initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are contentious issues.

I know Russia is not officially part of the CPEC and I respect state sovereignty. On another note, Dr Yakunin mentioned the security covering of Russia's nuclear deterrent, but we are not facing a global war; it is more of local issues which are impeding cooperation.

The India-China relationship has repercussions throughout Asia. I would like Dr Yakunin to comment on the Russian assessment of this very complex relationship, the concerns Russia has, and what role we could expect Russia to play.

Ambassador Sudhir Devare (Chair)

Let us now give the floor to Nandan Unnikrishnan.

Nandan Unnikrishnan

Rather than attempting to match the breadth and depth of Dr Yakunin's philosophical understanding of the world, I would focus on the nitty gritty of India-Russia relations and maybe inject a note of dissonance on some of the issues thus far.

The India-Russia relationship – including the Soviet period – has a number of unique facets. The level of trust has been great enough for India to take certain positions while simply knowing the Soviet Union backing us.

One example would be nuclear submarines. Look at any equivalent national project and show me any country that would share that kind of platform. I don't think that level of trust exists anywhere else.

However, the relationship is not perfect, and this is probably down to the strategic visions emerging in India and Russia, related in part to the differences between India and China, as raised by Prof. Chenoy.

My worry is that although the rarefied atmosphere of cooperation on sustainable development may suggest a cosy future, I find myself caught in the nitty-gritty of everyday life and the realities of geopolitical struggle. I think re-emerging – if that is the right word – rivalries between great powers, whether we speak of China and the US or Russia and the US, is disturbing aspirations for development, in India and throughout developing world.

To cite a small example, India and Russia didn't differ on Afghanistan. Alongside Iran, we supplied arms to the Northern Alliance to keep Taliban out. Our stance opposed extreme dealing, hoping for a stable, neutral Afghanistan. Today, our positions are beginning to diverge for the first time. This is partly down to rivalry between the United States and Russia. The US is unclear on its goals in Afghanistan, which means everyone else is scrambling to protect their interests. This isn't good for anyone, least of all for Afghanistan.

India also finds rise of China disconcerting. As much as China indicates that its development would benefit whole of Asia, unfortunately, we in India see other side to it. There is a growing belligerence within China, as the country is growing. The effects can be seen in the South China Sea and the current stand of between India and China.

There is unease also in the Central Asia about China's growth. Chinese investment is a welcome, its infrastructure development too; but some countries are worried about what this would mean.

Another change we are witnessing is Russia's increasingly tactical approach to India, where previously the vision was strategic. India was seen as a strategic partner, and it had a strategic role to play, which had made things less transactional. Unfortunately, we seem to be moving away from this, and of course, I am not saying that India is not at fault.

I am trying to point out that there are growing policy divergences; rooted in evolving strategic visions. I believe that our understanding of capitalism's future is where we differ, and that is the root cause of increasing strategic divergence. It would be good to place India's concerns on the table and discuss them.

Ambassador Sudhir Devare (Chair)

Thank you very much, Mr Unnikrishnan. Your forthright presentation of India's concerns should contribute to a fruitful discussion after Ms Semenova's presentation.

Ms Ekaterina Semenova

Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here in the presence of such bright minds, and I trust I would be just as down to earth as Nandan.

I would like to share a few observations from day-to-day diplomatic work that may help us explore how India and Russia can work together towards a more stable and principled world through cooperation in various international contexts. I will touch on a few items from the contemporary international agenda, as well as bilateral ties

Firstly, we must recognize that India deserves a greater role in global governance. India has been a driver of global economic growth and for a consistent and responsible foreign policy. We, therefore, support India's aspirations for permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council; we support India's accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group ; and we support a stronger position for India alongside other economically powerful countries in the architecture of international trade and finance.

Russia views India as an equal partner within the UN, the G 20, and in other international fora, and shares India's desire to strengthen multipolar order through the central role of the UN, international law, principle of non-interference in domestic affairs of sovereign states, and consideration of interests of all countries.

We are ready to further develop contact with our Indian friends and step- up coordination on new challenges and threats with an emphasis on unacceptability of double standards, joint efforts to combat ISIS, and on prevention of drug -trafficking and money- laundering.

Russia values India's contribution to the BRICS Group. We are developing initiatives put forward by India during its 2016 chairmanship by broadening BRICS' commercial and economic agenda. This includes an increase in interpersonal networking and inter-parliamentary and youth contacts.

We believe in the importance of India's economic and political presence in the Central Asia and India's development of mutually beneficial energy and infrastructure projects.

Close coordination with New Delhi is also necessary for Afghanistan, the Middle East, and for the development of balanced and inclusive security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region.

Given our coinciding priorities in the international arena, the potential of a special and privileged strategic bilateral partnership means India and Russia would invariably remain not only global partners but also close friends. We believe India-Russia cooperation is essential to enhancing world peace and security and ensuring sustainable development.

Ambassador Sudhir Devare (Chair)

Thank you very much Ms Semenova. We do indeed have such a depth of friendship that there is much India and Russia can do for enhancing global cooperation.

Gen. Chopra

I have two questions. First, we have heard several references to the international legal system. How do we deal with instances when great powers disregard legal norms? For example, in the case of China and the South China Sea, who is going to adjudicate?

Second, following on comments from Nandan Unnikrishnan and Anuradha Chenoy, I would like to know Russian policy towards Pakistan and China in the context of Chinese military support to Pakistan and also on the ongoing Doklam stand-off. Our concern is not a tactical piece of ground. Our concern is Chinese violation of state sovereignty. What is the Russian view on these matters?

Ambassador Yogendra Kumar

I agree with Dr Yakunin's basic premise, that we have to see relationships among India, China, and Russia in civilizational terms, and I also agree that think-tanks can play an important role in making that happen.

With respect to the BRICS model that has been discussed, however, we should note that China is now talking of a G2 relationship, a great power relationship in which neither India nor Russia figure. This is between China and the US. That has been President Xi Jinping's aim. Looking at the Doklam crisis, which is a China-Bhutan issue rather than a China-India issue, I wonder what the use of the BRICS framework is if a basic strategic vision is not shared. It could be that in reality, China is thinking in quite different terms to the rest of the Group.

Having said that, I don't think it serves us well to look at everything in terms of great power rivalries. Although I think Russia has been badly treated by the US in the post-Cold War period, we still have to look beyond these kinds of relationships because in some cases we can end- up overlooking details, which really make the difference.

Reconstruction in Afghanistan would be one example of this, and I also see weaknesses in the BRI and CPEC infrastructure projects, which have been mentioned, where exporting of China's own economic deficiencies is causing doubts within China itself as to the viability of this kind of engagement.

Ambassador Ramiah Rajagopalan

Great powers should not allow strategic goals to be interfered with by shorter term tactical goals, but this is exactly what is happening in the case of Pakistan. The relationship among Russia, India, and China is at the heart of BRICS's vision. However, Pakistan, which represents a much shorter term tactical gain for China, is increasingly

coming between China and India, and is complicating Russia-India relationship too. Strategic relationships must be able to look beyond short-term tactical gains.

Alok Bhardwaj

As a director of the company that imports new technology, I would like to point out that trade relation is a key stimulus for bilateral relations. A lot of Russian technology is not yet available in India, and it could have significant impact on some of our national programmes, like Clean India for example. I would like to see greater cooperation in this area. It would be good for both Russia and India.

Ashok B. Sharma

I have two questions. Firstly, what is Russia's view of China's One Belt, One Road initiative? Secondly, how sincerely is Russia reviewing India's North-South Corridor proposal?

Indrani Talukdar from the ICWA

My first question relates to first naval exercise of Russia and China in the Baltic Sea. When we say that India and Russia are all-weather friends, what message does this send to India?

Secondly, in relation to Russia's nuclear capabilities, how do you think this contributes to global peace and stability? In my opinion, nuclear weapons satisfy a kind of national ego, and I don't understand how this is compatible with a perspective that sees inter-civilizational dialogue as a route to peace.

Thirdly, I would like to hear more about how inter-civilizational dialogue can work in practice, and how productive dialogue can guard against the kind of egos and national interests, which complicate other multilateral initiatives.

Dr Vladimir Yakunin

To the best of my ability, I will answer these questions in my capacity as chairman of the DOC Research Institute board of directors. Of course, my life experience as a Russian- citizen would as well influence my perspective, and in advance I should also ask you to excuse me for being out of my depth in answering some of these questions.

One group of questions related to bilateral relations between Russia and India, the strategic and tactical considerations, which might come into play, and how Russian's attitude towards development may shape particular policies, for example, in Afghanistan.

I would like to pay particular attention to the One Belt, One Road (BRI) initiative because here I am able to share something of a professional outlook. The question of where responsibility should rest in future for establishing international codes of behaviour is also interesting, as is the question of whether nuclear arms today represent a stabilizing factor or simply an ego to be fed by battlefield casualties.

I will begin with the last of those points.

Historically, Russia never – except, I should admit, from one small instance with Finland – acted aggressively in the international arena. Russia was seen as a victim of aggression rather than as an aggressor. From this point of view, when I refer to nuclear capabilities as a stabilizing factor, I mean this in the first place with reference to relations between China and Russia. You may remember, for example, the Damansky Island conflict on the border between China and Russia. Despite the proclamation of the end of the Cold War, I believe we still experience manifestations of old ideologies, and I think many of us are the product of Cold War.

I am, in fact, is a supporter of the idea of nuclear disarmament and of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and here I am completely aligned with Russia.

But on the other hand, we still live in an age of conflict, and it is not possible for one side to simply disarm and say, “Listen, we are well-behaved; please embrace us and accept us into the developed-country club.”

In an age of conflict and ongoing crisis, nuclear armament – with respect to the NPT – can play a stabilizing role in the world because political egos still exist.

I think, the Russian position always was absolutely clear. We were the first to redirect our warheads during the period of so-called détente. This wasn’t reciprocated by the other side.

However, we should of course be aware of the dangers of nuclear proliferation, and we should operate with respect for the principle of sovereignty, i.e., non-intervention into the internal affairs of other states.

Moving on to the BRI initiative, because I was in part responsible for plans for a Euro-Asian Development Belt, you can, of course, understand my support for global infrastructure development. But who is against it? A recent United Nations document on sustainable development contains at least 26 paragraphs on infrastructure – a significant proportion of the plan.

For huge countries like India and Russia, it is not feasible to advance the economy of all our respective regions. Compare Moscow and St. Petersburg with Siberia, for example, where the Russian health-care system has no presence, and care is offered only by corporate providers.

However, collaborative action to establish simply not infrastructure but development belt projects has far more potential than what one country can achieve alone. If such projects can be framed appropriately, politically-speaking, then spare capitals can surely be unlocked to finance them.

When considering the development needs of the various far-flung regions throughout Russia, India, and China, what could be wrong with China's BRI proposals? Political implementation is, indeed, a challenge and that should be something for unions like the BRICS to consider.

The North-South Corridor was a joint initiative from Russia, India and Iran, which is still undeveloped, representing huge potential in untapped trade. The national interest is the only explanation for why the progress has been so limited. Short-term political approaches should be weighed against strategic versions. As Churchill said, the difference between the politician and the leader is that the politician thinks in terms of the period between two elections, but the leader thinks in terms of generations.

Unfortunately, we are lacking such leaders. But why should we as think-tanks are not taking responsibility for introducing new development concepts, not only to governments, but also to business communities?

A few things are worth for consideration when we are thinking of international norms and codes of behaviour.

Firstly, the history of humanity demonstrates unfortunate influence on the global environment from a sense of danger rising from widespread inequality. Since the 18th Century, there have been only two periods when Gini coefficients have fallen—During Russia's October Revolution ; and at the end of World War II.

As we speak, inequality is rising dramatically. Although, India had a proud record of social equality when I visited 15 years ago, neither India nor Russia can boast about it as per current trends. Both countries seem to be following the US example, one of drastic inequality.

Secondly, it is important to recognize that significant political change only occurs when society – that is to say, not simply civil society, but the broader consciousness of the people –pushes politi-

cians to reconsider existing systems. Change takes time; perhaps true change is only seen over the course of a generation, so we have to be realistic.

Speaking briefly to the points made about Russia's approach in Pakistan and Afghanistan, I shouldn't go beyond my professional boundaries by addressing things that fall more within Ekaterina's remit, if she wishes to speak from an official standpoint, but I can offer one or two broader reflections.

I would say that policy-making is never a one-way street. Policy-makers are forever squeezed by multiple considerations, as well as their own culturally determined assumptions about processes and desired outcomes.

In the midst of this, one thing I would like to see would be a mechanism for balancing differences. Taking India, Russia and China, for example, the BRICS framework should operate as an institutionalized means of conflict resolution, among other things. If not properly addressed, differences in attitude can lead to wider divergences in policy. Again, I would say it is for us as think-tanks to present assessments of and resolutions for what can be improved.

In closing, I would stress that we live in a globalized world. It isn't just that we interact and collaborate; we influence one another. On that note I would end, by repeating my respect for the RIS think-tank. I trust we shall continue to influence one another for the better as time moves on.

Commodore Uday Bhaskar

Thank you very much Dr Yakunin. In closing today's roundtable, I would share a few brief reflections on some of our main themes.

I think what has been appropriately highlighted throughout in today's discussion is that we are living in times when consideration of our respective positions, differences, and aspirations is increas-

ingly necessary. We have to also consider the other's viewpoint. If we begin to work more like that, perhaps relations between India and Russia would be understood better.

In light of the current events involving China and Bhutan, and the critical situation on the China-India border, it has been valuable to have perspectives from our Russian friends. We are not seeking direct assistance but I believe their views have real significance.

What Dr Yakunin's presentation was, emphasizing dialogue between civilizations, was a truly alternative perspective? In comparison with a number of other frameworks for analysing international affairs that have been in today's discussion – national, strategic and tactical considerations, foremost among them – this is something we really must give more thought to.

The DOC and RIS think-tanks clearly have plenty of themes on which we can work together. The most striking is surely the small magnitude of trade between India and Russia. Six billion dollars of trade annually is a pretty poor joke. For comparison, India's trade with the UAE is about 90 billion dollars, and trade with the ASEAN countries is of a similar volume.

There is no reason why trade between India and Russia shouldn't increase, and I would argue that the comments made earlier about technology represent a fruitful avenue for deeper bilateral ties – Russian technology would be immensely helpful to India and would certainly go some way to addressing pitiful volume of trade, we currently exchange.

It is not very often that we have Russian experts visiting RIS and speaking on such a wide range of issues. This has been a very educative and very beneficial experience for all of us.

On behalf of the RIS and from everyone else here, I would like to conclude our discussion by reiterating our very warm thanks to our Russian guests.

RIS A Think-Tank of Developing Countries

Research shaping development agenda

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues.

The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged across inter-governmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

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