

Russian Perspective on BRICS and India–Russia Relations¹

I am truly privileged to be invited to the well-reputed Amity University Haryana to discuss prospects of Russia-India cooperation. I will take this unique opportunity to give you a sense of the Russian position on vital global developments as well as modern trends in the Russia-India special and privileged strategic partnership, which gets growing significance in the current irreversible transition to a polycentric paradigm and brings us more confidence to deal with an extremely turbulent scenario.

To a large extent behind it is a fact that the US and the West, whose economic dominance is objectively challenged by the emerging independent centers of power, by all means want to retain their control over global affairs. Quite typical became their neo-colonial practice of double-standards based disrespect for international law and the principles of the UN Charter, including sovereign equality of states and non-interference in domestic affairs. Hot spots like Middle East and Ukraine crises are merely elements of a more intricate dynamic that, like a mosaic, encompasses a vast array of elements and factors shaping the new reality. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, it is followed by the combination of the decades-nurtured tools of unlawful competition through unilateral sanctions and artificial disruption of supply chains, regime-change policy and other proxy-war instruments, including massive disinformation campaigns, under pretexts of non-compliance with Western-style neo-liberal standards. Imposing confrontation and divide-and-rule tactics are clearly aimed to contain the development of others with absolutely no care about their interests. Cooperation in that scenario hugely becomes politically conditioned.

Russia not only withstood external challenges but is also actively laying a solid foundation to advance its strategic plans for economic development, setting ambitious yet achievable goals in demographics and healthcare, education and youth development along with clear objectives to strengthen technological sovereignty. Even Western experts are starting to grasp the futility of anti-Russian sanctions, which have proven counterproductive – not only failing to harm Russia but causing substantial damage on those imposing them. Sanctions don't solve problems rather compromise to a huge extent their initiators as unreliable and untrustworthy partners. Russia ranks as the world's fifth-largest economy with the goal to become the fourth one by 2030. Despite over 17,000 sanctions, Russia's GDP grew by 3,6% last year. Furthermore, we are steadily building strong ties with friendly nations, both bilaterally and through organizations like the EAEU, BRICS and the SCO.

This new phase is characterized by the increasing influence of countries from the Global South and the Global East, which we now refer to as the Global Majority. These nations are asserting their sovereignty and prioritizing national interests over external influences, including by more extensive coordination in multilateral platforms focusing to ensure their equal access to financial and technological resources and boost legitimate development partnerships.

A glaring example of how diverse countries can cooperate across various sectors, respecting mutual interests and reaching consensus without coercion is **BRICS**. This cooperative spirit is attracting more



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nations, doubling the Association's membership and expanding its influence in global governance. The Russian presidency in 2024 under the motto "Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security" prioritizes a robust agenda covering such domains as policy and security, economy and finance, humanitarian and cultural spheres. Key priorities include seamless integration of new members into the BRICS eco-system, enhancing the democratization of the international relations as well as strengthening ties with developing nations through "outreach" and "BRICS+" formats.

As we stand a third of the way through our term, comprising of overall more than 200 events, it is safe to state that our collaboration in the expanded format has gained full momentum. The BRICS Summit will take place in Kazan in October. The importance of BRICS in the current environment is growing as it offers cooperation alternatives to be independent from illegal unilateral restrictions. In this regard our financial track is of paramount significance. Along with the promotion of the NBD-sponsored infrastructure projects, we are exploring new reliable payment mechanisms to facilitate the use of national currencies.

Through the implementation of the BRICS Economic Partnership Programme we enhance e-commerce and synchronization of trade and customs regulations. Traditionally strong is our dialogue in the areas of healthcare, food and energy security. In terms of innovation, we cooperate through the BRICS Technology Transfer Network and the BRICS Network facilitating contacts among scientific and higher education institutions. We aim to elevate our discussions in digital education and expand the capacity of the BRICS Network University. On artificial intelligence, our objective is to establish premier platforms that set the highest standards globally. In February in Moscow, we initiated the BRICS Nuclear Medicine Working Group.

Furthermore, the cultural, sports, and youth exchanges under our chairmanship are vibrant and dynamic. Events like the BRICS Sports Games, Youth Forum and others provide plenty of new opportunities to the creative energies within our union.

BRICS has earned its reputation globally for its coherent strive for just and equal multipolarity that becomes vital for the member-states and provides a great scope for coordination. Along with traditional Foreign Ministers and National Security Advisors tracks designed to expand mutual understanding and elaborate on a common response to the global and regional issues as well as new challenges and threats, it has got very instrumental to push forward the development agenda. Indicative was the support of the Global South countries, including BRICS states, of the initiatives of the Indian presidency in G20 in 2023 with due credit to be awarded to the Indian team who managed to prevent "Ukrainization" of the forum and bring its focus back to the pressing economic issues relevant for the developing world.

When it comes to the **Ukrainian crisis**, which at the current stage became a watershed moment in the Western crusade against Russia in the post-cold war history, it gets absolutely clear that the Global majority, including India, doesn't buy the Western Russophobic narratives around it. Ukraine has been positioned strategically as both a tool and a battleground, from which aggressive actions against Russia are coordinated in order to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, remove it as economic competitor as well as strongest advocate of equal multipolarity and traditional values.

The majority of combat operations against Russia are nurtured by Western finances and armaments, including prohibited depleted uranium munitions and cluster bombs. Above all, some hotheads are even contemplating the deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine, being fully aware that such a move would lead to a direct confrontation with Russia with unpredictable escalation and consequences.

Since the onset of the Russian Special Military Operation, Western support to Kiev has exceeded \$230 billion – a stark contrast to the modest \$4 billion in humanitarian aid for the entire African continent in 2023. The April decision of the US Congress approving new financial aid to Ukraine confirms that the US

doesn't seek any peaceful solution. Symptomatically, the White House wants for the Ukrainian armed forces to hold out at least until the November US presidential voting without damaging Biden's image.

Considering this, we confirm that Washington's actions as an active party to the conflict will be rebuffed unconditionally and decisively, and its increasingly deeper plunge into the hybrid war against Russia will end up in a fiasco for the United States as scandalous and humiliating as in Vietnam and Afghanistan. In any case, frenzied attempts to save Zelensky's neo-Nazi regime are doomed.

Russia has never shied away from a diplomatic **resolution** to the Ukrainian crisis, a stance we have reiterated on numerous occasions even after negotiations were stopped in April 2022 under the direct guidance from the West. Apparently, reaching any substantial agreement with the current Kiev regime, which prohibited itself to speak to Russia directly by national legislation, and its Western sponsors unless the Russian interests and concerns are fully respected is unlikely.

They aggressively promote Zelensky's so-called "peace formula", which represents nothing, but a list of ultimatums aimed at the unconditional surrender of Russia, including the withdrawal of our troops from Donbass, Crimea, Zaporozhye, and Kherson regions. For Russia, territorial gains have never been the case – the accession of new regions, which happened in full compliance with the international law, was the only way to protect the Russian speaking population from neo-Nazi forces that were brought to power in Kiev in 2014 with the support from the West. A fair and sustainable settlement is only feasible if the foundational principles of Ukraine's sovereignty are reaffirmed – its neutral, non-aligned, and nuclear-free status recognized; the territorial realities on the ground acknowledged; assurances that Ukraine doesn't represent any threat to its neighbors fixed.

The coming "peace conference" in Switzerland in June is an attempt to legitimize "Zelensky formula" at a higher level. The goal is to bring together about 120 countries with the focus on the Global South countries, including India, which, on the other hand, largely stand for a genuine Russia's involvement in the process as a pre-condition for a lasting solution.

Since 2014, and particularly starting from the Special Military Operation, Westerners have systematically worked to **undermine Russia's stance on the international stage**. They've constructed a comprehensive system of interlocking initiatives aimed at holding our country "accountable" for "aggression", "occupation", and "annexation". From an ideological perspective, it is crucial for them to brand Russia as a violator of the "civilized world's norms", while simultaneously seeking to legitimize their unlawful anti-Russian actions.

Against this backdrop the narrative surrounding Ukrainian issue, as framed by Western powers, has increasingly found itself isolated, lacking traction even within multilateral mechanisms, traditionally seen as their sphere of influence. A compelling demonstration of this is seen in the UN International Court of Justice's decision at the beginning of 2024 rejecting nearly all of Ukraine's claims under conventions on combating terrorism financing, racial discrimination, and genocide, including motions regarding compensation. The Court refused to label Russia as a "state aggressor" or "sponsor of terrorism".

The extremely selfish ambitions aggressively implemented by the US and its Western allies to the detriment of other nations' interests continue to rapidly fragment **the international security landscape** and heat up the global situation.

Having grossly flouted the principle of equal and indivisible security, the US-led NATO bloc undertook a malicious expansion into the post-Soviet space, forcing our country to take necessary measures to protect its external security contour. Typically, our responsive actions are presented as a challenge followed by the narrative of the Russian threat.

The unilateral withdrawal of the US from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and Open Skies Treaty as well as the refusal to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, led to the alarming situation in the nuclear missile sphere. Now, Washington is implementing its plans to deploy weapons that were previously prohibited under the INF treaty as well as those being part of the global Ballistic Missile Defense system in various regions of the world. This dangerous course is supplemented by the continuing NATO “nuclear sharing” practice with non-nuclear European countries in violation of the NPT obligations.

In these circumstances Russia finds itself not in a position to respond positively to the US proposals to re-launch the New START Treaty negotiations since it clearly can be misused under the proclaimed and widely conceptualized intention to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. The same reason is behind the Russian decision to withdraw its ratification of the CTBT.

Negative trends in international security directly affect the functioning of other international institutions. The multilateral structures, which constituted the backbone of cooperation in the fields of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, are becoming dysfunctional due to the attempts of the US and its allies to subordinate their activities to a so-called “rules-based order” with no clear explanations of what is behind it. Under such an approach vital mechanism such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (**OPCW**) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (**BTWC**) become hugely politicized. For a long time, Russia has openly made claims about military biological activities of around 400 dual-use bio-laboratories carried out far from the North American continent under the pretence of cooperation for peaceful purposes but with a direct involvement of the US Department of Defence. Jointly with other independent states of the Global majority we stand for consolidated efforts to strengthen the BTWC regime, primarily by adopting a universal, legally binding protocol to the Convention, that is the need of the hour.

The United States and its allies are also engaged in actions that threaten stability across vital **Asia-Pacific region**. Under the guise of promoting security there, narrow-group structures such as AUKUS, US-Japan-South Korea and US-Japan-Philippines troikas are openly involved into practical cooperation with NATO. QUAD would have fallen into this line as well, if not for India that notably maintains its stance of strategic autonomy. These formats actually serve to acclimatize the regional players to a bloc-discipline to contain those who stand against unipolar confrontation approaches and cold-war mentality, namely China and Russia. Such efforts, however, significantly undermine the pivotal role of ASEAN, which has traditionally been at the center of fostering inclusive cooperation and stability in the region.

On various occasions we keep reiterating that with due understanding of the complexities between India and China, Russia confirms its sincere desire to support normalization of ties between our two closest partners and the promotion of the dialogue between the three of us that would be a strongest contribution to the stability in the Eurasian Space.

The evolution towards a multipolar world is not just inevitable; it is already underway. The principles of sovereignty, mutual respect, and genuine multilateral cooperation must be the cornerstones of international relations. The challenges we face are substantial, yet they offer opportunities to reshape the world order into one that is more equitable, just, and sustainable. Russia, through its actions and policies, is steadfast in its commitment to this vision, advocating for a global system that respects the diversity of civilizations and the multiplicity of development pathways.

As we delve deeper into the fabric of international trends, it is impossible to overlook the pivotal role of **Russia-India relations** in the current mise en scene. Against the backdrop of the complex geopolitical environment, our dynamic and time-tested strategic partnership significantly influences the global processes.

Historically friendly, trusted, coherent, diverse and exceptionally stable Russia-India strategic partnership appears as a core factor for the promotion of just and equal multipolarity. This is an example of mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation based on legitimate national interests. That explains why even under the current pressing circumstances our relations remain robust and keep growing in all directions. Naturally, all attempts to derail our ties that were openly declared by the Western politicians failed as we enjoy unshakable goodwill and national consensus in both countries defining our ability and capability to manage the new conditions. As Hon. Dr S Jaishankar used to say, Russia-India friendship is a constant. The reason for that is that our priorities have always been largely coinciding on universal basis as none of us wants to dominate and target our partnership against anyone, while both our nations aspire democracy and equality in international affairs based on the central role of the UN, its Charter and international law.

Apparently, amidst the current unprecedented challenges we have found new opportunities for our relations to grow and transform. We significantly intensified the **contacts at all levels** with regular and warm dialogue between the leaders remains a driving force. This year they spoke already twice over the telephone, including on March 20 when Prime Minister Modi-ji congratulated President Putin on re-election.

Almost uninterrupted is the communication between Foreign Ministers in 2023, they met in-person 7 times on various occasions. Last month NSA Mr. Ajit Doval attended the High-Level International Security Conference in Saint Petersburg and had a fruitful bilateral meeting with his Russian counterpart Mr Patrushev as part of their traditional coordination. Active engagements in all working groups are on under the two – civil and defence – intergovernmental commissions with their next main sessions planned later this year. It's also high time to resume our "2+2" format between Foreign and Defence Ministers.

Dramatically increased the number and scope of **business missions** and events as well as **high-level interregional visits** along with invariably popular **cultural festivals**, dedicated interaction at the books, museums and tourism fairs and generally intense humanitarian ties. The first Russia-India Education Summit in April 2024 in New Delhi was well set to strengthen institutional foundations and expand opportunities in this promising and future-oriented area.

It is a matter of satisfaction that we re-discover each other and successfully utilize a new momentum that looks like a modern layer to the fundamentally solid background of our previous proud achievements.

Our **economic ties** have leapfrogged to record high levels adding to the expansion of mutual complementarity of our economies. After 2023, Russia managed to solidify its position as India's fourth largest trading partner with the turnover of USD 65 bn, according to the Indian statistics, and it keeps increasing. Although it happens due to the fact that Russia retains its leading positions in supplies of oil ensuring around one third of the Indian import as well as fertilizers, it anyway testifies the status of Russia as a major and reliable India's partner in energy and food security. Prevailing in the Indian market is also the share of Russian agricultural products, coal, diamonds, etc.

We recognize the problem of a huge trade imbalance amounting to around USD 55 bn, and we are committed to resolve it. The expansion of the Indian business and supplies to Russia, especially in the areas of high-technology engineering, machinery, pharma, electronics, smartphones, auto-components will be most welcome. Along with that the diversification of economic ties is gradually ensured by the increasing number of joint ventures in petrochemicals, metallurgy, rubber production, railways, mining, airports modernization, construction, start-ups. Encouraging is the growing mutual interest in the investment projects in both countries, including in the energy sector. Ongoing is the dedicated dialogue in smart cities, civil aviation, shipbuilding, AI, infrastructure, water and waste management.

To even multiply our engagements, we work on the facilitation of smooth and **independent logistics and financial architecture**. Particularly, we implement the International North-South Transport Corridor and

Vladivostok-Chennai Eastern Sea Route projects. The dialogue is going on in fintech, insurance and the establishment of new interbanking communication channels, including for the extended use of national currencies. A big task is to expedite the negotiation process to conclude FTA between the EAEU and India that would be instrumental to remove barriers, expand market access and support eliminating trade imbalance.

The above developments are very desired to supplement to the options to further upgrade our cooperation in the **branded strategic areas** such as atomic energy, defence and space. We demonstrate dedication and an innovative approach to comply with contemporary requirements and keenly share the best technologies, importantly – without putting political conditions in return.

Russia remains the only foreign country, which practically follows its commitments with India in the **nuclear power sector**. We successfully implement our Kudankulam NPP project comprising of six 1000 MW blocks equipped with the safest technologies. This area also involves active engagements in nuclear science and medicine, small modular reactors, emergency response, education and localization. More so, we are getting a promising experience in the Rooppur NPP construction in Bangladesh, which potentially can be utilized in other third countries.

With India consistently undertaking efforts to diversify the sources of arms supplies, Russia had always been and remains a key **defence partner** of India with at least 50% share of the country's arms market. It was Russia that became a pioneer in the localization and transfer of military technologies as well as the establishment of joint ventures even before "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiatives were launched. More than 170 military and industrial facilities have been created in India with the technical assistance of Russia. A highly successful supersonic cruise missile "BrahMos" joint venture is of course the most successful example of our bilateral engagement. Almost one thousand T-90 tanks and around three hundred Su-30MKI fighters with the localization of 70 to 90 percent have already been produced in India under licenses. We have fully operational joint venture "Indo-Russian Rifles" producing AK-203 assault rifles. We are enhancing the dialogue in the field of Research and Development on several prospective projects and see a growing interest from our Indian friends as our approach is also based on the experience of the Special Military Operation.

Russia also remains one of India's leading partners in **outer space exploration**. The Russian State Corporation "Roscosmos" and ISRO are deeply involved in the implementation of the Indian Gaganyaan mission by training astronauts, aiding in the development of a manned spacecraft, supplying life-support and crew-escape systems, flight suits, couches, rate sensors. Our vibrant partnership includes space propulsion engineering, cryogen engine construction, satellite navigation, establishing ground stations for receiving communication signals, space medicine. To achieve a new level, we need to explore new tracks emanating from the prospects of wider involvement of the private sector.

Whatever achievements we make, they would not be possible without our deep-rooted **humanitarian connections** that are cementing the good will to strengthen the relations. Throughout the epochs the peoples of Russia and India have developed the mutual trust and understanding. We take profound interest in each other's history, culture and traditions that trace back to the names of Afanasy Nikitin, Leo Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, Roerichs family and others, whose legacy in many ways creates the philosophical and cultural basis of our engagement.

The desired spectrum of dedicated events was significantly enriched by growing youth exchanges. This March Russia hosted the World Youth Festival in Sochi in March 2024 that brought together 20 thousand most passionate young people from all over the globe with almost 400 Indian delegates among them. To our delight, the Tiranga was one of the most recognizable symbols at the Festival. The programme included more than 800 various activities, such as Knowledge. First marathon, Russian language club, numerous exhibitions, music and dance performances, sports events, the Yoga session,

discussions on economy and world politics, business networking and eventually the interaction with President Putin.

As part of our educational cooperation, we take targeted measures to increase the number of Indian students in Russia that is currently amounting to 20 thousand annually as well as to promote joint programmes between the institutions. Obviously, that is not the limit. What is especially important is that there is a growing demand for such graduates in the bilateral initiatives in various sectors – medicine, engineering, civil aviation, defence and even finance. Even more opportunities open up for those who have excelled their knowledge of the Russian language – the classes are widely available in the Russian Houses in New Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai and Trivandrum as well as in around 50 Indian universities. Students from Amity University will be most welcome to join it next year.

A positive development is the steady increase of scholarships provided by the Russian Government. It is expected to grow from the current 200 to 500 specifically allocated for Indians. It is important to note the highest standards of the Russian education even though many of our universities don't feature in various Western rating lists.

There is huge scope for expansion and diversification of scholar's exchange and joint research projects. Over the recent years, we've witnessed an increasing number of initiatives and the establishment of direct contacts between the Russian and Indian universities, including Amity. Twinning programmes, double diplomas, visiting professors practice and other forms of student and academic exchanges can play well to upscale our educational partnerships.

Dear friends,

The year 2024 in Russia-India relations is full of important engagements in the mentioned and other areas. They will take our multifaceted cooperation further for the benefit and the best interests of our two proud nations. I have no doubt that strengthening of our ties and coordination at the international platforms will keep contributing to the promotion of multipolarity as a core precondition to create a favorable environment for our countries to grow and prosper.

I would like to specifically mention that this year we also celebrate several important jubilees – the 40th anniversary of the first Indian cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma flight to outer space as part of the Soviet crew, the 150th and the 120th birth anniversaries of Nicolas and Svyatoslav Roerichs as renowned Russian painters and philosophers who lived in India. These events are both a reminder of a deep-rooted background of our ties as well as a source of motivation for succeeding generations. That also means that whatever we do, it is an integral component of a sophisticated matrix of this unique and unparalleled friendship, which gives us unlimited opportunities to explore its potential.

Thank you very much!