

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 International Relations – Bilateral groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

On MEA's Russia Visit – Express View on Jaishankar in Moscow

Dr. S Jaishankar's recent visit to Moscow underscored the enduring camaraderie between India and Russia while shedding light on the evolving dynamics of their bilateral relations.

Jaishankar rightly emphasized the steadfastness of the Indo-Russian bond amid fluctuating ties with other nations. This relationship has remained largely stable, devoid of significant disagreements, with both countries often finding common ground in their geopolitical objectives, especially in maintaining a balanced power structure in Asia.

Status of India-Russia Relations:

1. **Trade & Energy:** Bilateral economic engagement has surged notably in recent years, with trade soaring from \$12 billion to \$50 billion. This surge largely attributes to substantial oil imports from Russia.
2. **India's Stand on Russian Actions:** India faced criticism from the West for refraining from condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine. This drew attention to India's expanded economic cooperation with Moscow despite the conflict.

Significance of the Visit:

1. **Maintaining Political Engagement:** The visit aimed to uphold robust political ties with Russian leadership, particularly crucial as annual summits between Modi and Putin have been disrupted due to Ukraine conflict.
2. **No Shift in India-US Ties:** Contrary to assumptions, the visit does not signify a drastic shift towards Russia amidst purported setbacks in India's relationship with the US.

New Announcements:

1. Talks on a free trade agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union and India resumed.
2. Collaboration in future Kudankulam nuclear power projects was affirmed.
3. Continued rise in imports of Russian hydrocarbons despite Western sanctions.
4. Prospects for cooperation at platforms like the expanded BRICS summit hosted by Russia.

Changes in Bilateral Relations:

1. **Economic Shift:** India's GDP now surpasses Russia's (\$3.6 trillion to \$2.2 trillion), altering the economic dynamics between the two nations.
2. **Reduced Military Dependence:** India is diversifying its arms imports away from Russia, engaging more with France and the US.
3. **Growing Partnerships with the West:** India's commercial and technological ties are increasingly aligned with the US, Europe, and the UK.

India is recalibrating its relationship with Russia as one between equals. Challenges exist in defense supplies and payment methods for Russian imports, yet both nations aim to sustain a pragmatic bilateral relationship to navigate an increasingly bipolar global order.