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| Research Article

Putin's India Visit and Implications on Indo-Russia Relations

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Abstract: The state visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India from 04 to 05 December 2025 marked an important development in the continuing strategic partnership between India and Russia. The visit, held in the context of the 23rd India–Russia Annual Summit and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on Strategic Partnership, provided an opportunity to assess the contemporary character and future direction of Indo-Russian relations. This article critically examines the major outcomes and implications of Putin's visit for bilateral relations as well as for the broader regional and global political order. The study analyses statements made by President Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Joint Statement issued during the summit, and related reports in the print and electronic media. The analysis focuses on five major dimensions: economic cooperation; defence, nuclear energy and space cooperation; cultural cooperation and people-to-people relations; connectivity, Arctic engagement and the Russian Far East; and multilateralism and global governance. The findings indicate that the visit strengthened political trust and reaffirmed cooperation in defence, nuclear energy, science and technology, space, culture, connectivity and multilateral forums. At the same time, significant challenges remain, particularly the trade imbalance between the two countries, dependence on Russian energy exports, delays in defence supplies, concerns regarding diversification and the broader geopolitical pressures arising from the Ukraine conflict and Western sanctions. The visit also demonstrated the continuing importance of India and Russia to one another in promoting strategic autonomy and a multipolar international order. Overall, the visit reaffirmed the resilience and adaptability of the Indo-Russian strategic partnership, while highlighting the need for greater economic diversification, balanced trade and effective implementation of bilateral commitments.

Keywords: Putin's India Visit, Indo-Russia Relations, India-Russia Strategic Partnership, Economic Cooperation, Defence Cooperation, Nuclear Energy, Space Cooperation, Arctic Engagement, Multilateralism, Strategic Autonomy, Multipolar World Order.

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Introduction

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited New Delhi, at the invitation of PM Modi, on his two-day State Visit between 04.12.2025 and 05.12.2025 to attend the 23rd 'India- Russia Annual Summit.[1] This was the tenth visit of President Putin to India since 2000 A.D., when he acquired political power for the first time and his twentieth meeting with PM Modi since May 2014, when the latter acquired political office.[2] The Leaders met each other last time in September 2025 when PM Modi visited Tianjin (China) to attend the SCO Summit.[3] This visit was Putin's first visit to New Delhi since 2022 A.D., when the war with Ukraine began.[4] So far as the terms of protocol are concerned, the Indian Government accorded the Russian President the warmest welcome to date. He was received at the Indira Gandhi International Airport by PM Modi himself, and then he travelled in a car to the residence of India's PM to have a private dinner with him. President Putin, at the end of a 30-hour trip, received a banquet at the President's Palace hosted by President Droupadi Murmu.[5] This visit became special as the year 2025 marked the silver jubilee of the 'Declaration on Strategic Partnership between India and Russia, which was announced in October 2000 during the President Putin's 1st State Visit to India, which was upgraded to the status of 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' ten years later in the year 2010.[6]

Methodology

In this context, this article aims to critically examine Putin's much-touted state visit to India and its impacts on the India-Russia bilateral relationship as well as on global politics, its successes and failures in this regard. For doing so, the article will critically analyse media statements of President Putin and Modi, the 'Joint Statement' issued in the last phase of the visit and ensuing news in the press and electronic media. While analysing these things, the author finds five prominent themes that come to the fore, which would be critically examined and dealt with one by one in detail in the article, which would further be followed by a conclusion.

Results and Discussion

1. Economic Cooperation: Ambition Amid Asymmetry

Economic Cooperation is the main pillar of the Strategic Partnership between India and Russia. The main focus of Putin's New Delhi visit was to intensify efforts to take forward the roadmap for the "Programme for the Development of Strategic Areas of India-Russia Economic Cooperation till 2030", which is also known as the Programme 2030, that targets to enhance the mutual trade to $100 billion yearly by the last of 2030 which was launched last year in 2024 at Moscow during PM Modi's visit to Russia.[7] Russian President Putin stated, during a press conference, that the bilateral trade increased by a tremendous 12 per cent in 2024 and reached a new record level, which, as per the authentic estimate, would have been somewhere between US$64 and 65 billion.[8] This is not a mean success by any standard. To augment economic ties between the two nations, a "Labour Mobility Agreement" was signed between the two parties that intends to help skilled labourers of India to do jobs in Russia, where a labour shortage of thirty lacs jobs is expected by the end of 2030. This is really a very good initiative between India (a labour-surplus country) and Russia (a labour-deficient country), which would be mutually beneficial in addressing labour issues in their respective countries. This would be a classic example of a win-win situation for both nations. Furthermore, Indian and Russian fertiliser companies inked an MoU to construct a urea plant in Russia to ensure a long-term provision of fertilisers to India, and also talked about joint manufacturing in this vital sector.[9] Both Leaders hailed the starting of two 'Consulates General of India' in Kazan and Yekaterinburg of Russia, which will help in deepening not only economic ties but also people-to-people contacts between the two countries.[10]

In addition to these, India and Russia are cooperating on joint initiatives in digital technology, machine building, manufacturing, space exploration, and other research-intensive domains. For example, India and Russia signed a business agreement during the visit, which provides for building a major Indian-Russian pharmaceutical plant in the Kaluga Region using cutting-edge Indian technology for producing high-quality anti-cancer drugs. Simultaneously, Russian companies would

commence producing their goods under PM Modi's flagship programme Make in India, as stated by President Putin.[11] These initiatives will surely deepen bilateral economic ties, which are mutually beneficial for both nations. If we try to critically look at the current state of bilateral trade, it is found that bilateral trade stands roughly at US$ 70 billion, out of which US$ 50 billion comprises Russian crude oil export to India, and the value of Indian exports to Russia stands at meagre US$ 5 billion only, which clearly shows heavy trade imbalance against India (Lidarev 2025). It means out of $70 billion of total bilateral trade, Russian exports to India amount to US$ 65 billion. This hard reality severely blocks the prospects of bilateral economic ties, which need to be tackled at the top level in the near future.

To deepen economic relationship, they hailed the results of the 25th Sessions of the 'India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation' (IRIGC-TEC) and 26th Sessions of the 'India-Russia Business Forum' held in November 2024 in New Delhi and in Moscow in August 2025 respectively. The Russian side expressed happiness over the participation delegates from India in the 'Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum' and the 'Eastern Economic Forum' in June 2025 and September 2025 respectively. Both the sides acknowledged the important role played by the India-Russia Business Dialogue in augmenting bilateral economic ties on the sidelines of these meetings.[12] To deepen and strengthen bilateral trade, as highlighted by India's Foreign Secretary in a press conference, both countries are working jointly to augment bilateral trade in our national currencies. He opined that 'Special Rupee Vostro Accounts[13] have been opened up in large numbers by almost two dozen foreign banks, which helps to lubricate the trade flows between the two countries. Thus, Economic Cooperation is one of the most significant planks of the bilateral strategic partnership. Even though bilateral trade is increasing at good speed, it is highly skewed in favour of Russia at present, and the Leaders at the top have talked over this issue and have taken a few measures to address it. India and Russia are facing a huge amount of pressure from the US and Western Europe not to continue the crude oil trade. Both nations have shown their commitment in the recent past to pursue the bilateral trade at all costs and are committed to warding off Western pressure. In the interest of bilateral relations, they need to negotiate seriously on the issue of trade imbalance further in the near future.

2. Defence, Nuclear Energy, and Space Cooperation

Russia has been India's reliable defence partner since the beginning of the Cold War. That is why both the Leaders discussed in great length about bilateral defence relationships even during the recent trip of Putin. In this backdrop, they expressed satisfaction over the outcomes of the 22nd Session of the 'India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military-Technical Cooperation' (IRIGC-M&MTC) held on 04th December 2025 in New Delhi. They expressed happiness over frequent military engagements, including the meeting between the two Defence Ministers of both nations at the sidelines of the "SCO Member States' Defence Ministers' Meeting" held in June 2025 at Qingdao (China). They appraised the 'Joint Military Exercises of the Armed Forces' known as INDRA and decided to escalate bilateral collaboration in this vital sector. They agreed to enhance joint manufacturing of aggregates, components, spare parts, and various products in India for upkeep of Russian origin defence equipment, ammunition and arms under the 'Make-in-India' programme through transfer of technologies and establishing joint ventures for fulfilling the requirements of the 'Indian Armed Forces' and export to mutually agreed third countries. The BrahMos missile (a joint venture between Russia and India) may be a good example of Indo-Russian bilateral defence relations, which proved highly successful during India's Operation Sindoor in May 2025. Vietnam and Malaysia are at a high stage of negotiation for purchasing Brahmos missile, which is the world's fastest operational cruise missile that can fly at the speed of Mach 2.8 to Mach 3[14] and the Philippines and several other countries have shown interest in the recent past. While launching the first series of Brahmos missiles made at the 'Brahmos Integration and Testing Facility Centre' under 'UP Defence Corridor at Lucknow' on 18 October 2025, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted the contribution of the Brahmos missile system in the Operation Sindoor and proclaimed that now every nooks and corner of territory of Pakistan is within the reach of the BrahMos missile.[15] This should be seen in the background of the unwillingness of Western countries, including the US, to share high-profile technology with India. Though no deals concerning S-400 or S-500 air defence systems and SU-57 fighters were signed, there have been reports that India's

defence executives have visited Moscow in the recent past to discuss joint ventures and deals to purchase S-400 and S-500 air defence systems. Putin's recent visit to India also highlighted constraints in the bilateral defence relationship, such as India's concern about possible Chinese components in Russian equipment, which might compromise India's security in case of conflict with China or Pakistan. India's push for self-reliance and call for diversification in the defence trade basket and delay in delivery of Russian arms and ammunition, especially in the background of the Ukraine war, complicates the bilateral defence partnership between India and Russia. These issues are like reality checks for Indo-Russian bilateral defence cooperation, which need to be addressed at the top political level in the long-term interest of Indo-Russian Friendship.

So far as bilateral collaboration in the nuclear energy sector is concerned, taking into consideration the Government of India's (GoI's) plan to augment the capacity of nuclear energy production of India to 100 GW by the end of 2047, both the Leaders welcomed bilateral collaboration in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and concerned high technologies. They expressed happiness over the achievements acquired made in the implementation of 'Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP),' including the building of the remaining 'Nuclear Power Plants (NPP)' units and consented to adhere to the agreed timeline in this regard.[16] India's Foreign Secretary confirmed that Kudankulam Units 1 and 2 are already connected to the National Grid and are generating electricity. Kudankulam Units 3 to 6 are at various levels of the under-construction process, and various crucial shipments with regard to Units 3 and 4 are underway. Work to conclude agreements for similar things for Units 5 and 6 is in process. The Indian side agreed to try seriously to conclude the official allocation of the second site in conformity with the earlier signed agreements, and the Department of Atomic Energy is working in this regard. In addition to this, the 'Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)' and the 'Russian State Space Corporation (Roscosmos)' are cooperating in the peaceful use of outer space.[17] Thus, Putin's visit has energised Indo-Russian bilateral collaboration in the sector of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Acknowledging the significance of bilateral cooperation in technology, science and innovation, the Leaders agreed to further strengthen cooperation in these vital areas under the "Roadmap for Science, Technology & Innovation Cooperation." Both Parties are in agreement to augment bilateral collaboration in the co-development of technologies and joint R&D (research and development) between Governments, private sectors and academia in processing, exploration, and recycling of critical and rare earth minerals, start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), digital sector, education, etc. Thus, despite a lot of restraints, bilateral cooperation in defence, nuclear energy, science and technology, outer-space sectors is on a strong footing between the two nations and will be further deepened in the near future.

3. Cultural Cooperation and People-to-People Relationships

Recognising the significance of people-to-people contacts and cultural cooperation in Strategic Partnership, both Sides welcomed the participation of delegates in important international festivals, book fairs, cultural forums, competitions, and Cultural Exchange Festivals organised in both countries; increased contacts between think tanks, experts and institutes of both countries and expressed happiness over regular increase in tourist exchanges between both the nations and liberalisation of visa rules besides commencement of e-Visa by both the nations. PM Modi stated that India is going to initiate a free '30-day e-Tourist Visa' and a '30-day Group Tourist Visa' for citizens of Russia very soon.[18] They also agreed to augment bilateral collaboration in the film industry, including joint production of films and shared involvement in international film festivals organised in both countries and to deepen educational ties between universities and educational institutions in India and Russia.[19] The Russian President announced that the Russian RT Channel will start broadcasting in India from today, which would increase understanding about Russia, its culture and people among citizens of India.[20] Thus, in augmenting people-to-people contacts and cultural cooperation between the two nations, Putin's recent visit to India (New Delhi) has been a tremendous success.

4. **Connectivity, Arctic Engagement, and the Far East**

Impacts of Putin's visit to New Delhi cannot be confined to the bilateral relations only. It had significant impacts on global politics in general and Russia's Far East and Arctic region in particular.

That is why both Leaders Putin and Modi welcomed the strengthening of joint work on a 'Free Trade Agreement' (FTA) on goods between India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) that is also aimed at addressing the issue of trade deficit of India against Russia and directed concerned officials to accelerate efforts to finalise a mutually profitable deal for protection and promotion of investments also.[21] Foreign Secretary of India, Shri Vikram Misri, confirmed that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this FTA was already finalised and signed just a few weeks ago during External Affairs Minister of India S. Jaishankar's November 2025 visit to Moscow.

In addition to these initiatives, both the Leaders agreed to strengthen efforts for smoothing bilateral trade along the Northern Sea Route, the International North-South Corridor (connecting Belarus and Russia to the Indian Ocean), and the Chennai – Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor. They expressed happiness over the signing of the 'MoU on the Training of Specialists for Ships Operating in Polar Waters.' They agreed to intensify their efforts to deepen bilateral trade and investment engagements in the 'Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation,' and the 'Russian Far East' and the 'Programme of Russia – India Cooperation in Trade, Economic and Investment Spheres in the Russian Far East' for the period from 2024-2029; which lays down the essential norms for bilateral engagements in the 'Russian Far East Region' especially in sectors of manpower, mining, energy, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, maritime, transport, diamonds, etc; is an important successful initiative in this regard. They stressed the significance of frequent bilateral contacts on Arctic-related issues and expressed satisfaction over the achievements acquired in bilateral engagements along the 'Northern Sea Route.' Russia expressed happiness over the participation of delegates from India in the 6th 'International Arctic Forum' held in March 2025 in Murmansk, Russia. India, being an observer member in the 'Arctic Council,' manifested its willingness to perform an important role in the group.[22] Thus, Russia welcomed a larger India's presence in its backyard as an old and trusted friend. The trip might not be very successful in terms of concrete outcomes, but its message to the world was clear and loud that, despite US and Western sanctions against Russia and huge pressure against India, both the nations are ready to deepen the bilateral relations further, and the future of Indo-Russia relations is bright. Russia and India both have tried to counter and balance the USA in the Western world and China in Asia by aligning with one another. Thus, Russia is ready to welcome India's engagements in the 'Arctic' and the 'Russian Far East' region, which is a very healthy sign for Indo-Russian bilateral relations.

5. Multilateralism and Global Governance

President Putin's visit to New Delhi has not only helped in deepening bilateral economic ties within the boundaries of both countries but also in enhancing India's footprint in Russia's backyard, i.e., the Russian Far East and Arctic region. Besides these, Putin's visit facilitated bilateral cooperation in multilateral and global bodies. Both the Leaders appreciated the high level of bilateral political engagements on the United Nations (UN) and related issues. They demanded comprehensive restructuring of the UN so as to make it more representative of the global realities of the 21st century, and Russia strongly supported the candidature of India for a Permanent Seat in the expanded and reformed 'United Nations Security Council' (UNSC).[23]

They resolved to stand by the principles and purposes of the UN and, in this context, they agreed to further cooperate in G-20, BRICS and SCO and strengthen these multilateral institutions to promote the idea of multilateralism at the global level. The Joint Statement shows full confidence in SCO, BRICS and other multilateral forums, which reflects strong bilateral commitment in a multipolar world.'[24] In this backdrop, they also agreed to further bilateral cooperation within various regional fora, including the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and East Asia Summit (EAS). Both the Leaders expressed happiness over India's G-20 presidency in 2023, in which the African Union gained full membership of the group, and the concerns and issues of the Global South came to the fore, reflecting the strengthening of the status of developing countries in world affairs. Russia offered its full assistance to India's upcoming Presidency of BRICS in 2026. Further, India commended Russia for successfully holding the Meeting of the 'SCO Council of Heads of Government' in Moscow under the Chairmanship of the Russian Prime Minister on 17-18 November 2025. Russia praised the initiative of India to set up the 'SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum,' whose introductory session would be conducted in 2026 in India.

They agreed to focus on the setting up of the 'Counter-Narcotics Centre' in Dushanbe and the 'Universal Centre on Countering Security Challenges and Threats' in Tashkent under the SCO process. Russia expressed its solidarity with India for its entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) as a member.[25]

It is important to note here that the Joint Statement stressed, almost in the end, not only bilateral commitment to a multipolar world but also to the multipolar Asia, which is also very significant for India. It recognises India and Russia as major powers, and in this capacity as major powers, it mentions that both countries "will continue to strive for global peace and stability in a multipolar world as well as in a multipolar Asia." It signals that Moscow and New Delhi will continuously and cautiously resist the idea of any sole power – indicating latently China – hegemonizing the continent, signaling their strong resolve to a balanced, plural and multilateral Asian order. In the backdrop of recent sanctions on Russia, it had to rely heavily on China. By visiting New Delhi and getting an exceptional hot welcome from PM Modi, President Putin reflected that Russia is still not isolated and maintains a good relationship with its time-tested friend India beyond Beijing. Russia has so many options and has a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with New Delhi. Strategic expert Brahma Chellaney confirms the same thing. He argues, "Putin's visit sends an unmistakable message that Moscow continues to value its long-standing partnership with India and will reduce itself to a 'junior partner' to China. At a time of Western sanctions and global pressures, India's warm reception of Putin underscores its commitment to an independent foreign-policy course, one that is based on strategic interests rather than external diktats".

In addition to these, both the Leaders discussed also about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Outer Space, and biological weapons. They agreed to boost bilateral collaboration within the 'UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space' (UN COPUOS), including issues of long-term sustainability of outer space activities. They further agreed to strengthen their dedication to increase global efforts for non-proliferation of WMD. They agreed on the rejuvenating of the 'Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction' (BTWC) and adoption of a legally binding protocol having an efficacious instrument for verification. They opposed the setting up of any mechanism that intends to copy the functions of the BTWC. They agreed on the necessity to commence negotiations on a legally binding Instrument or Mechanism on the prohibition of an arms race in outer space with the prohibition of the installation of weapons in outer space, from or against outer space. They noted that the foundation of such a deed or charter might be the draft of the 'Treaty on the Prohibition of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects,' and also the report of the relevant 'Group of Governmental Experts,' which was adopted in 2024. They welcomed the adoption of the 'Framework Agreement to join the International Big Cat Alliance' (IBCA) by the Russian side. India is willing to welcome early entry of Russia into the 'International Solar Alliance' (ISA) and the 'Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure' (CDRI) as well.

Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally to fight against terrorism in all its manifestations and forms, illegal drug trafficking, terrorist financing, organised transnational crimes, money laundering, etc. They criticised the terrorist incidents at the Crocus City Hall in Russia and at Pahalgam in India in the strongest possible terms. They demanded combined actions against all UN-designated terrorist groups such as Daesh/ISIS, Al Qaeda and their affiliates. They emphasised the requirement for strict execution of relevant resolutions of the UNSC, UNGA and proper execution of the 'United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.' They stressed the need for speedy conclusion and adoption of the 'Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism' under the framework of UN. They recalled the Special Meeting of the 'UNSC Counter Terrorism Committee' (CTC) which was conducted under the Chairship of India in October 2022 in New Delhi and praised the adoption of the 'Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes' unanimously.

Putin's visit was not limited to the Indo-Russian bilateral relationship only. The Leaders talked about regional issues and issues of global peace and security. They expressed satisfaction over close coordinated talks between the two nations on Afghanistan, including through the dialogue

mechanism between the Security Councils of both nations. Both of them stressed the significant role played by the Moscow Format meetings. They emphasised the necessity to secure the urgent and uninterrupted supply of humanitarian aid to the countrymen of Afghanistan. They agreed on the need to resolve Iran's nuclear issue through dialogue. They restated their commitment to the stability and peace in the West Asian region and expressed their concern for humanitarian situation in Gaza and asked all stakeholders not to escalate the conflict and be committed to the agreements and understanding arrived in the past.

The Leaders realised the significance of strengthening efforts to respond to the issues of climate change and attaining the goals of the 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change' (UNFCCC) and the 'Paris Agreement.' In this context, they appreciated the First Meeting of the 'Joint India - Russia Working Group' which was held in New Delhi on 10 September 2025 on the matters of low-carbon development and climate change. They decided to accelerate the speed of bilateral consultations on executing tools of Article 06 of the Paris Agreement, using sustainable finance instruments and developing low-carbon technologies. They decided to pursue dialogue within BRICS, SCO and G20 on this critical issue of climate change. They hailed the outcomes acquired by a collaborated work within the 'BRICS Contact Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development,' including the launch of the 'BRICS Climate Research Platform' and the 'BRICS Laboratory for Trade, Climate and Sustainable Development.' They agreed to enhance cooperation in this area under the banner of BRICS in India's Chairship next year in 2026. President Putin invited PM Modi to visit Russia to attend the 24th 'India-Russia Annual Summit' in 2026.

Conclusion

President Putin's visit to New Delhi in December 2025 underscored the enduring relevance of Indo–Russian relations in a rapidly evolving global order. The visit demonstrated continuity in political trust, defence cooperation, and multilateral engagement, even as economic relations remain asymmetrical and constrained by external geopolitical pressures. Rather than signalling a strategic shift, the visit reaffirmed a pragmatic partnership shaped by mutual necessity and historical trust. For India, engagement with Russia reinforces strategic autonomy and multipolar balancing; for Russia, India represents a reliable partner amid Western isolation. However, the future trajectory of the partnership will depend on economic diversification, trade rebalancing, and institutional follow-through on announced initiatives. Without meaningful expansion of Indian exports and non-energy cooperation, the partnership risks becoming increasingly transactional. In sum, Putin's 2025 visit revealed that Indo–Russian relations are neither in decline nor undergoing transformation, but are instead adapting cautiously to new global realities—anchored in continuity, yet constrained by asymmetry.

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