

Why the Russia-West equation matters to India

What is the issue?

In the past, Delhi's strategic enthusiasm for Moscow was shaped by India's difficulties with the West but today, reconciliation between Russia and the West will make help India manage its own security challenges.

How important is Russia for modern India's evolution?

- The Russian geopolitics has deeply influenced India's national choices. It includes
 - The 1917 Revolution
 - The Soviet model of economic development
 - The Great Game of the 19th century between the British Raj and imperial Russia
 - The Soviet support for revolutionary movements in Asia
 - The Russian role in World War II
 - Moscow's extended Cold War with the West
 - Post-Soviet Russia's turbulent ties with the US and Europe
- The rise of China and the consequent geopolitical churn in Asia have raised India's stakes in US-Russia relations.

What happened aftermath the collapse of Soviet Union?

- **India- Russia closeness**- The loss of the long-standing Soviet ally left Delhi in fears of a unipolar world dominated by the US.
- The relations between Russia and the West had begun to sour which drew India closer to Russia.
- Moscow roped in Beijing to build a new coalition — the RIC (Russia-India-China) to promote a multipolar world that would limit the dangers of American hyperpower.
- **India-US closeness**- Delhi's ties with Washington began to see rapid improvement since 2000.
- The upswing in India's ties with America coincided with a steady downturn in the relations between Russia and the US which began to complicate India's great power politics.

What is the recent status of the relations?

- **Ukraine issue**- The continuous escalation of tensions between Russia and the West culminated in the last few weeks in Ukraine.
- It has raised alarms of a new war between the forces of Russia and the US-led European military alliance, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).
- Russia and the West are now expected to launch a new dialogue on European security in the coming days.
- Russia presented several proposals for a new European security architecture such as an end to NATO's further eastward expansion, revoke its earlier promise to make Ukraine and Georgia as members of the military alliance, etc.

- Russia is also proposing an agreement on reducing provocative military activity on its borders by working out new arms control and military confidence-building measures in Europe.
- In Europe, France and Germany support a reset in relations with Russia but most of the countries oppose any deal that promotes Russian sphere of influence in Central Europe.
- The US which is now focused on the China challenge is interested in easing the conflict with Russia, despite its extraordinary military resources.
- At present, there is a prospect for US sanctions on India triggered by the purchase of advanced Russian weapons like the S-400 missiles.

How can the relations be improved?

- Russia should recognise the costs of a prolonged confrontation with the US and Europe and the dangers of relying solely on China to secure its geopolitical interests.
- Delhi's thinking on Russia has too often been coloured by ideological sentiment but Moscow's international policies have been driven more by national interest and geopolitics.
- Delhi can welcome and support the new effort to build a mutually acceptable security order in Europe as the pressure for this attempted reset in Russia's relations with the West is coming from Asian geopolitics.
- A reconciliation between Russia and the West will make it a lot easier for India to manage its own security challenges.
- Delhi should realise that stabilising the Asian balance of power will be difficult without a measure of US-Russian cooperation in Europe.

Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/why-the-russia-west-equation-matters-to-india-7682639/>