



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 9, 2024

India and Russia Hold Talks on Bilateral Relations

On January 8, foreign-policy specialists from Russia and India, namely from the Valdai Discussion Club and India's Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), respectively, conducted the first bilateral Russia-India conference in New Delhi discussing the aftermath of Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's recent visit to Moscow and primary trends in bilateral ties.

Talks were held both publicly and in closed-door format, focusing on various aspects of the relationship between the two countries, including trade, security, defense, space, and technology.



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Addressing the conference, Denis Alipov, Russia's ambassador to India, declared that both countries maintain robust bilateral relations and intensified dialogue.

"We stand like-minded in preserving the unbiased character of multilateral institutions based on genuine democracy in international relations," he said, pointing out their cooperation in areas such as IT and digitalization to agriculture, logistics, and finance.

Moreover, Valdai Club Chairman Andrey Bystritskiy claimed that since India gained independence from the British Empire in 1947, Moscow has been a reliable and predictable partner. Bilateral ties have accumulated "a large reserve of trust" which has become a useful resource in present-day geopolitical circumstances.

At the moment, New Delhi and Moscow are keen on diversifying international financial transactions, with the BRICS alliance of countries possibly becoming one of the most important tools advancing common global goals. Russia's presidency of BRICS this year will be a chance to "take stock of the organization's capabilities to advance the shared agenda," he said.

Fyodor Lukyanov, research director of the Valdai Discussion Club and a columnist for news outlet Russia Today (RT), posited that Russia and India are two countries that are "best prepared to operate in the new world order" as they have demonstrated a high level of resilience in the face of geopolitical challenges, which mainly stems from an understanding of the need to be self-sufficient.

"Russia and India are now in the process of reinventing themselves. We need to reinvent our mutual cooperation for better functioning in turbulent international relations," he asserted.

The West's politicization of international commerce compels other nations, including Russia and India, to accelerate their transition to alternative financial mechanisms that are not dominated by the United States and its allies, political specialist Ivan Timofeev and program director of the Valdai Discussion Club told RT.

Since 2022, Russia's trade with India has escalated, when Western nations tried to further penalize Moscow for the Ukraine conflict with an unprecedented series of new economic restrictions. According to Timofeev, such Western policies are expediting the transition to other financial mechanisms.



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“Sanctions definitely stimulated the Russian search for alternative ways of life in the international order, in this world of competition and rivalry,” he told RT on the fringes of the bilateral Russia-India conference on January 8.

“We have no other choice than to promote a new mechanism of financial transactions secured from politicization, from sanctions and other hostile actions,” he continued.

Experience gleaned in protecting Russian trade with India from Western sanctions may, in the future, serve as a benchmark for diversifying international commerce, the specialist added.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar — who recently returned from a five-day visit to Moscow — said on January 3 that his country’s close ties with Russia was as essential for New Delhi as ties with Washington, as both serve the national interest of India.

Speaking at an event to launch his latest book, *Why Bharat Matters*, Jaishankar highlighted India’s rising status as a global player. Part of being “Bharat” (the name of India in various local languages) means being “clear about your own interest” and not being influenced by external forces, Jaishankar said. “You want to look nice in front of other people to a point where it is not necessarily against your own interests.”

Regarding India’s relationship with Russia and the former Soviet Union, which has thrived since the 1950s, as well as India’s ties with the United States, Jaishankar said, “Look at the map of this big landmass. And remember [the basics of] statecraft. Which is: your neighbor’s neighbor is your friend. It’s a no brainer.”

Also, Russia’s ambassador to India voiced hopes that China and India will normalize relations, which have been tested by unresolved border disputes.

Alipov maintained Moscow’s position on the need for India and China to “come to terms with each other.”

“We are fully supportive of normalization of the relationship between India and China. This is something we are not involved in, and do not want to be involved in. But better relations between ... India and China ... is something the world will benefit from,” Alipov said. “I am confident that India and China, as major civilizations possessing unique political wisdom, will find ways to make progress on the border issue and normalize relations based on mutual respect.”

As both China and India are separated by the Line of Actual Control in the Himalayas, bilateral ties have been undermined by border disputes leading to violent clashes in 2020 that killed soldiers on both sides. In 2022, the two parties disengaged in the Gogra-Hot Springs border area in the western Himalayas, after widespread diplomatic and military talks, but frosty relations remained.

Based on reports by ANI news agency quoting another [report](#) on bilateral relations published by the Chinese Embassy in India, both China and India expressed their desires to manage their differences and sensitive issues. The report stated that during the 28th Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on China-India Border Affairs held in November last year, both sides reinforced the necessity of addressing disputes.

Ma Jia, the chargé d’affaires of the Chinese Embassy in India, declared last year that China and India “shoulder increasingly important responsibilities in maintaining global stability and promoting common development.”

She added that the two governments should abide by “the important consensus reached by the two



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leaders” and “translate it into concerted actions” to bring relations back to normal, alluding to a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, as well as Chinese Premier Li Qiang’s visit to the G20 summit in New Delhi.

For its part, New Delhi asserted that resolving India’s border disputes with China is crucial to normalizing relations with Beijing. In an interview with ANI, Jaishankar underscored the importance of three “mutual understandings” between both countries: “respect, sensitivity, and interest.”

“We have tried to construct a relationship which is based on three mutuals.... Unless that mutuality is recognized, this relationship will find it difficult to progress,” Jaishankar said, adding that India’s approach to engaging with China should be premised on “realism.”



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