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Q8(a)

Relations between India and Russia are rooted in history, mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation. Discuss

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 20 marks · India and South Asia

India and South Asia: Regional Co-operation; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; South Asian Economic cooperation; Impediments to regional co-operation; India and the Look East / Act East policy.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the history of India-Russia relations as a story of trust and cooperation
- Write at 20-mark length

Revision summary

Soviet aid and UN positions created early trust inside non-alignment.

The 1971 treaty and Bangladesh war are the political peak.

Defence and dual-use science made cooperation sticky.

1991 preserved the pipeline under a weaker Russia.

Diversification toward the United States and Russia's China tie are the current tests.

Introduction

India and Russia, and earlier the Soviet Union, built an unusually thick partnership for two States that were not formal allies until 1971. Trust grew from arms, industry, and a diplomatic veto when the West tilted the other way. Cooperation outlived the USSR, with more caveats.

Body

Early decades

- **Nehru's non-alignment still found Moscow willing to industrialise the public sector:** steel, energy, and defence licences.
- The UN and Kashmir debates often saw Soviet positions closer to India's than Western ones.
- **Trust was strategic, not sentimental:** each used the other inside bipolarity.

The 1971 hinge

- The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was the legal peak of trust.
- In the Bangladesh war the Soviet Union backed India diplomatically, including at the Security Council, against a US-China-Pakistan alignment.
- That episode is the historical capital both sides still spend.

Defence and technology

- MiGs, later Sukhois, a nuclear submarine lease, and BrahMos as a joint venture made Russia the staple of Indian inventories.

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• Space and nuclear civil cooperation added scientific trust when Western regimes denied dual-use goods after Pokhran.

After 1991

• The Russian Federation kept the defence pipeline. India paid bills and sought spare parts through a collapsed industry.

• A strategic partnership was declared. Annual summits became habit.

• The relationship had to live with India's United States opening and Russia's China opening.

Trust under strain, cooperation still real

• Delayed platforms, price renegotiations, and CAATSA-type US pressure test the old monopoly.

• On Afghanistan and some UN votes, interests still often rhyme.

• Energy, including later discounted oil, shows commercial cooperation adapting to a harsher order.

• **Trust is path-dependent:** militaries that train on Russian kits cannot switch in a five-year plan.

How to judge the history

• It is one of the few great-power ties India did not have to reset after a war with that power.

• It is cooperation with a declining then returning Russia, not an equal concert forever.

Flow diagram

Soviet industry UN -> Trust

1971 treaty Bangladesh -> Trust

Defence space nuclear -> Cooperation

Trust -> Partnership after 1991

Cooperation -> Partnership after 1991

India-India-US and Russia-China and Russia-China -.strains. -> Partnership after 1991

Conclusion

India-Russia history is trust built on Soviet industrial and 1971 diplomatic backing, then cooperation in defence and space that survived 1991. The bond is real and thinning at the edges as both diversify. The 1971 treaty remains the emblem, not the whole inventory.

Facts & figures

1971 treaty
India-USSR Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, the legal high point of the partnership.

Bangladesh 1971
Soviet diplomatic backing of India in the war that created Bangladesh.

BrahMos
India-Russia joint cruise-missile venture, a symbol of defence-industrial trust.

Strategic partnership

Post-Soviet label for continued summits, arms, and diplomatic coordination.

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