

New Delhi's Man in Moscow Is Right, Russia and India Are Global Partners

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The Indian Ambassador to Russia was right when he said that his host nation increasingly views his homeland as a global player, an observation that's becoming all the more significant after Moscow has shown that it's willing to contradict China on key international issues and possibly even "balance" it abroad.

The Indian Ambassador to Russia said in a [recent interview](#) that "Russia increasingly looks at India as a partner not just in regional context but also as a global player", and he's certainly right. Moscow has been making every effort possible to take relations with New Delhi to the next level, which involves diversifying their existing dependence in the military-technical & nuclear spheres and expanding their ties across the world.

This can only happen through real-sector economic cooperation, which is sorely lacking and has been for decades since the end of the Old Cold War, but which might receive a tangible boost after Modi's trip to Vladivostok next week to attend the [Eastern Economic Forum](#) as President Putin's guest of honor. Reliable access to Russian resources is crucial for India's continued economic growth, but Moscow must do more than just play the role of a raw materials supplier to New Delhi if it aspires to gain anything of tangible strategic significance out of this relationship.

The author gave a speech at a Duma roundtable discussion last year about how "[Russia Must Bring The 'Asia-Africa Growth Corridor' To The Far East](#)", with this policy recommendation now appearing to enter into practice given the high expectations surrounding Modi's upcoming visit to the region. Russia's 21st-century grand strategy is to become the [supreme "balancing" force](#) in Afro-Eurasia, which naturally implies that it will have to "balance" between the hemisphere's new Chinese hegemon and its rising one of India. All three countries are BRICS and SCO members, but this Great Power triangle is becoming increasingly complex after [Russia openly contradicted the Chinese position on Kashmir](#) earlier this month and proved that it's at the very least interested in diplomatically "balancing" the People's Republic on this significant international issue. That development caught both critics and supporters alike off guard because the Mainstream and [Alternative Media](#) narrative had hitherto been that Russia and China didn't have any serious disagreements whatsoever.

Moscow therefore sent an unprecedented signal that it's serious about "balancing" hemispheric affairs, especially between Beijing and New Delhi, a role that might only take on more prominence in the coming future if Russia clinches a "[New Detente](#)" with the West and is encouraged by its new partners to become the leader of a new Non-Aligned Movement ([Neo-NAM](#)) for managing Afro-Eurasian affairs per the vision suggested by Valдай

Club programme director Oleg Barabanov in his policy paper a few months ago titled [“China’s Road to Global Leadership: Prospects and Challenges for Russia”](#). Russia cannot pioneer a “third way” between the West and China without cooperating real closely with India in spite of the latter essentially being a [Western proxy](#) in this sense for “containing” China, which is why Moscow is working so hard to diversify its relations with New Delhi into the real-sector economic sphere via the country’s possible incorporation into the [“Asia-Africa Growth Corridor”](#) (AAGC) and its consequent “co-opting” of the [“Indo-Pacific”](#) strategy.

Russian-Indian relations therefore are about a lot more than just the European part of the first-mentioned where the majority of the population lives and the subcontinent where the second is located but are now about to expand to the Russian Far East along the Chinese border, not in any aggressive military-like sense (though they might sign a [LEMOA-like agreement](#)), but in an economically and symbolically significant one that will send an unmistakable message to Beijing about Moscow’s “balancing” intentions. The goal to is to make India a stakeholder in this far-flung but resource-rich corner of the Eurasian Great Power so that the South Asian state expands its influence in Northeast Asia, thus geographically diversifying their bilateral relations and improving the likelihood that Russia’s [“Asian Sea Arc”](#) from Vladivostok to Vietnam (and naturally now to India as well) that the author proposed four years ago will enter into practice as the first “proof of concept” of Moscow’s successful integration into the AAGC (especially if it links Russia with the project’s Japanese co-founder too).

It should also be pointed out that Russia will assume the rotating presidency of the UNSC next month and [promised to focus](#) on African issues during the next year, a continent where both it [and India](#) have a lot of interests lately. Importantly, the Black Sea city of Sochi will host the first-ever [Russia-Africa Summit](#) in October, which will formalize [Russia’s return to Africa](#) and likely be accompanied by many economic deals as well. Bearing in mind the increasingly global nature of the Russian-Indian Strategic Partnership, especially if Modi’s upcoming trip to Vladivostok results in Moscow formally or informally joining the AAGC, it can be expected that Russia will then seek to expand its partnership with India to Africa too. Remembering that the two are also cooperating on the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) through Iran and Azerbaijan, these three strategic vectors — Northeast Asia, Mideast, Africa — would complement each Great Power’s respective host region of Europe and South Asia to truly make their partnership global just like the Indian Ambassador said it’s becoming.

Although there isn’t any military component to this grand strategic plan, China can’t help but feel concerned at Russia facilitating its Indian rival’s access to new regions in a manner that perfectly pairs with the West’s attempts to use the South Asian state to “contain” the People’s Republic, albeit in different ways of course.

Russia is driven by financial and strategic motivations related to profitable dealmaking and its “balancing” vision, respectively, both of which come together to improve the prospects of Moscow becoming the leader of a Neo-NAM. None of this implies that Russia is “against” China or that another “Sino-Russo Split” is imminent, but just that the [emerging Multipolar World Order](#) is becoming much more complex than it was at its onset as it progressively matures and returns the world to the “19th-Century Great Power Chessboard” after a prolonged period of bipolarity and a brief moment of unipolarity. Instead of “The End Of History”, the world is now experiencing “The Return Of History”, which will make International Relations much more unpredictable but which is also why Russia’s envisioned

“balancing” role of leading the Neo-NAM is all the more indispensable.

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