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(e-Scan 01-15 Dec 2021)

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ENVIRONMENT SCAN: 01-15 DEC 2021

CHINA (Geo-Strat, Geo-Politics & Geo-Economics)

Brig RK Bhutani (Retd)

Blinken Vows More US Military Might in Indo-Pacific

The U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is in Indonesia on the first leg of a week-long, three-nation tour of Southeast Asia that will also take him to Malaysia and Thailand. Countering China's growing aggressiveness in the region, particularly in the South China Sea, in Hong Kong and against Taiwan is prominent on his agenda.

Outlining the administration's Indo-Pacific plans, Blinken said in a speech in Indonesia, "Threats are evolving, our security approach has to evolve with them. To do that, we will lean on our greatest strength: our alliances and partnerships". He said that the United States would expand its military and economic relationships with partners in Asia to push back against China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. He said that the Biden administration would ensure "the U.S. military maintains its competitive edge."

He said, ***"We'll adopt a strategy that more closely weaves together all our instruments of national power — diplomacy, military, intelligence — with those of our allies and partners." That will include linking U.S. and Asian defense industries, integrating supply chains and cooperating on technological innovation, he said.***

Later he signed a series of three agreements with Indonesia's foreign minister, including one that extends until 2026 an existing maritime cooperation pact that among other issues calls for enhanced joint U.S.-Indonesian naval exercises.

Blinken insisted that the U.S. is not trying to force countries to choose between the United States and China, or seeking conflict with China. But he laid out a litany of complaints about "Beijing's aggressive actions" from "Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia and from the Mekong River to the Pacific Islands."

At a daily briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Blinken's latest comments showed the U.S. was contradicting itself by "playing up the so-called China threat on the one hand while claiming that it has no intention to seek conflict with China on the other." He added, "If the U.S. really wants to play a constructive role for the peaceful development of the Asia-Pacific region as it claims, it should earnestly respect the ASEAN-centered regional cooperation structure,"

Blinken said the U.S. "will forge stronger connections" with its five treaty allies in the region — Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand — boost ties between them and cultivate a stronger partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, many of whose members feel threatened by China.

Comments. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had brought out that the core of the Indo-Pacific region would be ASEAN. It was due to the neglect of Southeast Asian region by President Obama's administration that China was able to enlarge its footprint, both economic as well as military, in the Indo-Pacific region. Biden administration is rightly reestablishing the U.S. foothold in the Indo-Pacific by reviving its relationships with countries of Indo-Pacific and enlarging the scope of

alliances. In fact, the QUAD should enhance its engagement with ASEAN, especially on agendas other than security, to include climate change, technologies and vaccines.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/12/14/blinken-vows-more-us-military-might-indo-pacific.html>

China Brands US Democracy 'Weapon of Mass Destruction'

China was left out of the two-day US-organised Summit for Democracy - along with countries including Russia and Hungary - and responded by angrily accusing US President Joe Biden of stoking Cold War-era ideological divides.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said on 11 December in an online statement, "Democracy has long become a weapon of mass destruction used by the US to interfere in other countries," which also accused the United States of having "instigated colour revolutions" overseas.

The ministry also claimed that the summit was organised by the US to "draw lines of ideological prejudice, instrumentalise and weaponise democracy... (and) incite division and confrontation".

Beijing vowed to "resolutely resist and oppose all kinds of pseudo-democracies". It touted its own version of "whole-process people's democracy" in a White Paper released last week that aimed to shore up legitimacy for the ruling Communist Party, which has become increasingly authoritarian under President Xi Jinping.

Taiwan, a democratic self-ruling island that is claimed by China, was invited to the US summit in a clear snub to its larger neighbour.

But Beijing got a boost in the middle of Mr Biden's summit when Nicaragua dropped its previous diplomatic alliance with Taiwan, saying it recognised only China. The announcement leaves Taiwan with only 14 diplomatic allies.

In response, the US State Department called on "all countries that value democratic institutions" to expand engagement with the island.

Comments. Tensions between the world's two largest economies have spiralled in recent years over issues, including trade and technological competition, human rights, Xinjiang and Taiwan. US has organised Summit for Democracy to browbeat China on legal grounds as China can not claim itself to be a democracy and by inviting Taiwan, it is a message to the whole world that the US will honour its commitment to Taiwan. It has also encouraged other democratic countries to expand engagement with Taiwan.

The US did not invite Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bhutan from South Asia and Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam from Southeast Asia but rather invited Pakistan, where the democratic institutions are dominated by Army, has also human rights issues and is an epicentre of terrorist organisations. This clearly shows that it was not a congregation of democratic ideologues but the democratic countries which fit into the US geopolitical calculus were only invited.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-brands-us-democracy-weapon-of-mass-destruction>

UAE Shuts down China Facility after US states 'Military' Use of Site

The United Arab Emirates recently ordered to stop work on a Chinese facility in the country after American officials stated that Beijing intended to use the site for military purposes, according to a top UAE official.

Last month, reports had emerged that the Biden administration managed to halt the construction of a secret development inside of a Chinese shipping port in the UAE, one of the US's closest Mideast allies, after intense pressure from the US.

Emirates ordered work stopped at the site at Washington's behest. This project, near Abu Dhabi, was halted after several rounds of meetings and visits by US officials. After the intelligence agencies in Washington learned that Beijing was secretly building what they suspected was a military facility at a port, the Biden administration warned the Emirati government that a Chinese military presence in its country could threaten ties between the two countries.

Although the project was portrayed as purely commercial, US intelligence has observed ships disguised as commercial vessels that officials recognized as a type typically used by the Chinese military for signals intelligence collection entering the port, the report said.

In a statement, a spokesperson for the UAE Embassy in Washington had said that the UAE "never had an agreement, plan, talks or intention to host a Chinese military base or outpost of any kind."

Comments. Beijing has sought to develop commercial ports in outposts around the world in what experts believe is a clear effort to enhance its military foothold. China has already developed commercial ports in Pakistan and Sri Lanka and its first overseas military base in Djibouti. In the disguise of commercial facility, China makes all the ports dual-purpose so that these can be used by the PLA Navy later in the hour of need. Earlier, the former Trump administration had sought to pressure the UAE to put a stop to the project at the port, which is run by a Chinese shipping conglomerate. Finally, the Biden administration managed to halt the construction of the facility what they suspected was a military facility at a port.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/uae-shuts-down-china-facility-after-us-states-military-use-of-site-11639289301925.html>

IOR (MARITIME)

Cdr Naveen Pandita

Pakistan Commissions PNS Tughlir. As China is trying to emerge as a key defence exporter to certain South Asian and Southeast Asian countries in India's neighbourhood, but its supplies to the Pakistan Navy have raised concerns over the maritime security scenario in the Arabian Sea.

Pakistan's Ambassador to China attended the first Type 054 A/P frigate's commissioning ceremony as the chief guest. The ceremony was also attended by high-level dignitaries from the Chinese defence industry and the PLA Navy. Pakistan signed an initial contract for the delivery of two Type 054 A/P frigates in 2017. An additional contract for two more ships was announced in June 2018. According to the contract, all four ships are built in

China and the first two are expected to be delivered by year end 2021. The Type 054A is a multi-role frigate and is recognized as the backbone of the PLA Navy (PLAN) fleet of surface combatants with 30 vessels in commission. They have a length of 134 meters, a beam of 16 meters for a displacement of 4,000 tons. They have a crew complement of 165 sailors and are fitted with:-

- H/PJ-26 76mm main gun
- 2×4 CM302 anti-ship missiles
- 32x VLS cells for HQ-16 surface to air missiles
- 2x Type 730 30mm CIWS
- 2x Triple Torpedo launchers

In PLAN service, those frigates feature a Type 382 radar which shares a close resemblance with the Russian MR-710 Fregat radar. Unlike the Pakistan Navy variant – whose first ship-in-class is fitted with an SR2410C radar – the Type 054A in Chinese Navy service does not feature a long-range/ metric wave radar. PNS TUGHRIL is the first of four frigates of Type 054 A/P being built for the Pakistan Navy. She was launched in August 2020, and the Chinese shipyard completed the process in just 14 months. The new frigate is named after “Tugrul the First,” one of the founders of the Seljuk Empire, which governed modern-day Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey between the 11th and 14th centuries. The Type 054A/P will be Pakistan Navy’s most capable warship to date.

Steel Cutting Ceremony for Hangor Class Submarine. Commemorating Golden Jubilee the HANGOR Day, steel cutting of the 5th HANGOR-class Submarine, the first to be built indigenously in Pakistan, was held at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KS&EW). HANGOR Class Submarine is capable of undertaking both war and peacetime roles. The Submarine possesses advanced stealth features to operate under a multi-threat environment and its state-of-the-art sensors are integrated with Command & Control system which can simultaneously track engage several targets at standoff ranges. The Submarine would be named PNS TASNIM upon commissioning, in honour of ex-PNS HANGOR crew led by Vice Admiral (Retd) Ahmad Tasnim. The Steel Cutting ceremony was attended by representatives of DA China and other high-ranking officials including distinguished guests from the Embassy of China in Islamabad.

Comments. The Pakistan Navy is currently undertaking an important renewal of its fleet, with the procurement of several modern platforms. In addition to these frigates from China, Pakistan will also commission new corvettes from Turkey and OPV from the Netherlands. The commissioning of PNS TUGHRIL marks the beginning of a new chapter in the Pak-China relationship, Type 054A frigate being the mainstay of the PLA Navy fleet. Commissioning of Type 054A frigates significantly increases both the endurance and range of operations without undertaking refuelling at sea. What merits attention is the reliability of the sensors fitted onboard the frigate. As seen earlier, defects had been detected in the new inductions by the Bangladesh Navy besides basic trainer aircraft, K-8 aircraft for the Bangladesh Air Force and short-range Air Defence System for the Bangladesh military.

The depleting submarine fleet of the Pakistan Navy needed a mammoth modernising boost and significant increase in its numbers. In 2016, Pakistan agreed to pay China \$5

billion for the acquisition of eight Chinese Yuan-class type-041 diesel submarines by 2028 in order to shift the force balance with its arch-rival India. Commencing production of the new fleet of Type-041 submarines would add depth to the ageing AGOSTA 90B fleet.

WEST ASIA

Col Siddhartha Sharma

News/Developments

- Israel's foreign minister arrived in Cairo on a diplomatic visit aimed at strengthening ties Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and the country's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.
- Israel has announced the completion of a sensor-equipped underground wall on its side of Gaza, a countermeasure developed after Hamas used tunnels.

Comments. Israel engagement with the Islamic countries is a positive sign for stability of the region. Despite previous differences, the nations are engaging with each other due to changing dynamics of world youth who understand futility of terrorism better than the previous generation.

UNITED STATES

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

US Officially Ends Combat Operations in Iraq. The responsibility for leading the fight against the Islamic State terror group in Iraq has now shifted from the United States and its coalition allies to Iraqi security forces.

Iraqi officials made the announcement early Thursday, saying U.S. and coalition forces would remain only to provide support as needed.¹

Comments. The American-led coalition forces launched a global counterterrorism campaign in response to the terrorist attacks on world trade Centre in United States on September 11, 2001.

This campaign had almost limitless scope and its military dimension involved major wars in Afghanistan (Op Enduring Freedom) and in Iraq and Syria (Operation Inherent Resolve), Yemen and elsewhere.

The overall assessment of the US performance in campaign against terror has remained contentious. But it is fact that that capability of the Al Qaeda /ISIS as an organized force has been marginalized in both Iraq and Syria and in Afghanistan and it has been reduced to lone wolf attacks.US fully withdrew its forces from Afghanistan on 30 August 21 leaving overall control to the Taliban which had assured that it is against Al Qaeda/ISIS philosophy and would not allow revival of Al Qaeda /ISIS. Whether Taliban sticks to its promise is controversial since, even now sporadic instances of attacks by ISIS still take place in Afghanistan. Secondly, one also suspects the honesty of the Taliban as the group itself has violent past and continues to pursue the hard-line Muslim practices and violence.

¹Global Security.org

In Iraq, though the US war on terror has come to end but, US will still maintain a contingent of 2500 defence personnel to assist and train the Iraqi forces.

US withdrawal from both Iraq and Afghanistan has been disproved by critics who claim that Global war on terror was actually a smokescreen for the pursuit of a larger U.S. geopolitical agenda that included controlling global oil reserves, increasing defense spending, expanding the country's international military presence, and countering the strategic challenge posed by various regional powers.

The withdrawal made sense since US involvement in the operations far away from United States in other countries generated negative sentiments about the operations in the American public besides, it involved incurring astronomical costs. The cumulative costs of military intervention in the Iraq/Syria war zone had risen to \$2.1 trillion since 9/11. While in Afghanistan the estimated cost was more than \$ 2 trillion with estimated cumulative death toll of 897,000 to 929,000 which included U.S. military members, allied fighters, opposition fighters, civilians, journalists and humanitarian aid workers who were killed as a direct result of war, whether by bombs, bullets or fire.²

Implications for India. The American presence in Afghanistan had salutary effect for India so far, it kept Taliban at bay from involving in the neighbourhood politics and being used for proxy war against India by Pakistan. But now with US withdrawal they could fall victim of Pakistan's ISI machinations. It appears that antinational elements are encouraged with Taliban's success in Afghanistan and howsoever ill-conceived, have started believing that it can be replicated in India too.

As it stands, Taliban has stated its policy of seeking good relations with all nations including India and will not allow the inimical forces to use its territory against any of its neighbor. Under the circumstances, it is hard for India to have any engagement with Taliban though, Indian is open to provide the humanitarian assistance as before.

US withdrawal from Iraq and Syria has no direct implication for India but, the return of peace will help India's economic engagement in Iraq and Syria particularly in the reconstruction of the infrastructure.

Biden - Putin Virtual Summit on 07 Dec 21

President Joe Biden warned President Vladimir Putin of Russia on Tuesday that an invasion of Ukraine would result in heavy economic penalties for him and lead NATO to reposition its troops in Europe, measures that he said would go well beyond the West's response to Russia's annexation of Crimea seven years ago.³

Comments. Russia has built up roughly 175,000 troops on its border with Ukraine, prompting fears of an attack on Ukraine. Russia has moved artillery and other supporting equipment leading fears of imminent attack by the Russian forces. As per intelligence estimate Russia could invade in Jan 22. In the virtual summit, President Biden voiced deep concerns of the United States and our European Allies and made it clear that the U.S. and Allies would respond with strong economic and other measures in the event of military escalation. Apart from Ukraine the two presidents also discussed on Cyber-attacks

²<https://www.brown.edu/news/2021-09-01/costsofwar>

³<https://www.firstpost.com/world/greetings-mr-president-joe-biden-and-vladimir-putin-hold-two-hour-virtual-summit-10193791.html>

such as ransom ware attacks on entities in the United States and the issue renewal of JCPOA with Iran.

In response to Russian massing of troops, Ukraine too has moved its forces along Crimea border and carrying out military drill to meet any eventuality of conflict. The world is concerned with the Russian Ukraine development since in 2014, Russia had illegally annexed Crimea by force which is not recognized by the international community and is concerned about repetition of the event.

The root cause of the problem is that Russia considers Ukraine and Russia ethnically and culturally connected hence, considers its separation from Russia in 1991 improper. Though Eastern Ukraine population is of Russian ethnicity, the large part of Ukraine identifies itself with West and its institutions and is desirous of joining the NATO to ward off Russian threat. This development is not to the Russian liking as it believes that if Ukraine joins Western alliance, NATO will move to its eastern borders. He however, assured Biden that he has no intention of Invading Ukraine and the troop movement is in its own area is defensive in nature.

With all-round criticism, Russia may not invade but, in the event, this happens, US and Europe besides economic sanctions are expected to provide only the moral and material support to Ukraine but, direct intervention is not likely especially after recent military withdrawal of US and allies from Afghanistan and Middle east.

JAPAN & MYANMAR

Gp Capt Puneet Bhalla

Japan

Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) conducted a military exercise from 05 Dec to 14 Dec at Japan's northern island of Hokkaido. The drills involved about 1,300 troops.

On 01 Dec, Japan's former Prime Minister Mr. Shinzo Abe, speaking during a virtual address with a think-tank in Taiwan, had warned of the serious security and economic consequences of any Chinese military action against Taiwan and urged Beijing "not to step onto a wrong path". He had said neither his country nor the United States could stand by if China attacked Taiwan.

Comments. While these drills would be part of regular exercises carried out by Japan in its regular training area of Hokkaido, it is being seen as a show of force against the stepped-up Russia-China military cooperation in recent years in an attempt to counter the region's U.S.-led bloc. Japan is worried about increased Chinese assertion in East China Sea, especially its claims on Senkaku islands. China's build up of military capabilities in South China Sea and its increased air activity close to Taiwan have also raised concerns.

Despite having a pacifist constitution, the former PM significantly expanded Japan's military role and budget and the current incumbent, Mr. Fumio Kishida is expected to continue these actions in face of more assertive Russia, North Korea and China. Today, Japan is ranked fifth globally in overall military power after the United States, Russia, China and India, and its defence budget ranked sixth in the 2021 ranking of 140 countries by the Global Firepower rating site.

Reference. <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/japan-holds-drills-in-north-as-it-faces-russia-china-threat.html>

<https://apnews.com/article/business-europe-russia-japan-constitutions-0e89fcb0163b044fc71bc4ae7d87f674>

Myanmar

A Myanmar court sentenced ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four years imprisonment on charges of inciting dissent and breaking Covid rules. She has been in detention at an undisclosed location since a military coup in February toppled her elected civilian government. The military junta chief Min Aung Hlaing later reduced it to two years. Co-defendant Win Myint, the former president and Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party ally, was also jailed for four years under the same charges. The verdict has been condemned by a number of international bodies and states. Although more direct than its past statements, India's response continues to be nuanced. The MEA spokesman Arindam Bagchi said in a statement "We are disturbed at the recent verdicts. As a neighbouring democracy, India has been consistently supportive of the democratic transition in Myanmar,". He further added that, "We believe that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld. Any development that undermines these processes and accentuates differences is a matter of deep concern."

Myanmar Army handed over five cadres of the banned Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) outfit and its armed wing, the PLA, to India. They were airlifted to Imphal. Intelligence sources added that these terrorists were caught a year back during Operation Sunrise, which the Myanmar army had carried out against Northeast Indian rebel groups who have bases in the Sagaing region.

Comment. India continues to walk the tightrope on its relations with Myanmar. It is wary of Beijing's growing influence and the high stakes involved to maintain peace and security along the India-Myanmar land and maritime borders. It also needs the Myanmar military's cooperation in dealing with the insurgent groups of the North East, whose cadres sometimes take shelter in Myanmar, owing to the unfenced border.

IRAN & AFGHANISTAN

Col Siddhartha Sharma

IRAN

News/Developments

- After little progress over the JCPOA talks, Robert Malley, and his delegation moved to Vienna to join the talks indirectly. Talks were suspended earlier due to lack of progress. Iran has submitted two documents and the Western nations have moved back for consultation. Meanwhile US and Israeli defence chiefs are expected to discuss possible military exercises that would prepare for a worst-case scenario to destroy [Iran's nuclear facilities](#) should diplomacy fail. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett urged world powers to take a hard line against Iran in negotiations aimed at reviving an international nuclear deal.
- A loud explosion was heard on 04 Dec 2021 near Iran's main nuclear facilities in Natanz, which have previously been targeted by sabotage attacks, but state media said it was part of a controlled test.

Comments. The talks are now at a critical stage. Both Iran and US are not backing down on their demands. India is watching the developments closely. Engaging with Iran is beneficial for India's energy security and Afghanistan Policy; however, India does not want to antagonize US in any way.

AFGHANISTAN

News/Developments

- International donors have agreed to transfer \$280m from a frozen trust fund to the World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF to support nutrition and health in Afghanistan, the World Bank said as it seeks to help a country facing famine and economic freefall.
- French President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday that several European nations were considering opening a joint diplomatic mission in Afghanistan but stressed it would not mean recognition of the country's Taliban rulers.
- India dispatched its first consignment of 1.6 metric tons of life-saving medicines to Afghanistan. The Taliban responded by thanking New Delhi stating that ties between the two countries are "very vital". Afghan People Afghan airline company Kam Air transported the aid.

Comments.

- Afghanistan is dependent on world support for even the very basic survival items. The current Afghanistan government is finding it difficult to receive aid as no country in the world has yet recognized the government and many in top posts are designated wanted individuals in global list of terrorism. The Afghanistan Taliban Psyche is struggling to accept global requirements of creating a more inclusive environment. Regrettably the Afghan people are the sufferers.
- India and Afghanistan share a close bond and India is keeping its promise to reach out to Afghan populace. Earlier also India engaged in programs aimed to assist common man. The policy gave good dividends. Now too this engagement shall assist India in maintaining closeness to Afghanistan. India is also engaging world community in forcing Pakistan to permit Indian aid to pass via Pakistan unconditionally.

EURASIA

Air Cmde T Chand (Retd)

India – Russia Annual Summit

21st India – Russia Annual summit took place on 06 Dec 2021 between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi. The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the sustained progress in the ‘Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership’ between both countries despite the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic. They welcomed the holding of the first meeting of the 2+2 Dialogue of Foreign and Defence Ministers and the meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military-Technical Cooperation⁴. The role of connectivity through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the proposed Chennai - Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor figured in the discussions. The two leaders looked forward to greater inter-regional cooperation between various regions of Russia, in particular with the Russian Far-East, with the States of India.

The Leaders discussed regional and global developments, including the post-pandemic global economic recovery, and the situation in Afghanistan. They agreed that both countries share common perspectives and concerns on Afghanistan and appreciated the bilateral roadmap charted out at the NSA level for consultation and cooperation on Afghanistan.

Coinciding with the visit, several G2G Agreements and MoUs, as well as those between commercial and other organizations of both countries, were signed in different sectors such as trade, energy, science & technology, intellectual property, outer space, geological exploration, cultural exchange, education, etc. This is a reflection of the multifaceted nature of bilateral partnership between India and Russia. President Putin extended an invitation to Prime Minister Modi to visit Russia for the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit in 2022.

In all, nine government to government MOU were signed. Agreement on Program of the Military-Technical Cooperation from 2021-2031 was one among them. Nineteen commercial and other agreements were also signed during the visit. Cooperation Agreement between Reserve Bank of India and the Bank of Russia in the field of responding to cyber-attacks and Crude Oil Supply agreement between Rosneft and Indian Oil Corporation Limited were among these agreements.

A comprehensive ‘India- Russia Joint Statement’ covering all important subjects was issued after the summit. The summit marked completion of five decades of the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation and two decades of Declaration on Strategic Partnership which is symbolic of the long standing and time-tested India-Russia relations characterized by mutual trust, respect for each other’s core national interests and similarity of positions on various international and regional issues⁵. The Leaders welcomed the holding of back-to-back meetings of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on

⁴ 21st India – Russia Annual Summit, 06 December 2021, MEA Website, <http://www.mea.gov.in/incoming-visit-detail.htm?34608/21st+India++Russia+Annual+Summit>, 14 December 2021.

⁵ India- Russia Joint Statement following the visit of the President of the Russian Federation, December 06, 2021 MEA Website, <http://www.mea.gov.in/incoming-visit-detail.htm?34606/India+Russia+Joint+Statement+following+the+visit+of+the+President+of+the+Russian+Federation>, 14 December 2021.

Military and Military-Technical Cooperation and the first 2+2 Dialogue of Foreign and Defence Ministers of India and Russia in New Delhi on 6 December 2021. They underscored the importance of regular annual 2+2 meetings for exchanging views on global and regional political-security developments. The Leaders reiterated the importance of the security dialogue at the level of NSA and NSCS on bilateral and regional issues and welcomed regular interactions between them. This has served to enhance strategic understanding and coordination between the two countries. The leaders stressed on the need for greater efforts to achieve the trade target of USD 30 billion by 2025. In this regard, they placed strong emphasis on new drivers of growth for long-term cooperation. The Indian Side encouraged participation of Russian companies in the 13 key sectors of Production Linked Incentive scheme of Government of India under the 'Atmanirbhar' and 'Make in India' programme. The Indian Side also invited the Russian Side to continue consideration of setting up manufacturing facilities in Greenfield industrial cities under Industrial Corridor Programme of Government of India.

President Putin welcomed Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's commitment to an Act Far-East Policy under which India could be a reliable partner in the development of the Russian Far-East. He supported Prime Minister Modi's concept of Sangam as a development tool for the region. The Russian side warmly welcomed the successful visit of Prime Minister Modi to Vladivostok to attend the 5th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in 2019 and his virtual participation in the 6th EEF this year. The Indian Side reiterated its commitment to enhanced trade and investment in the Russian Far-East. The Sides agreed to continue discussion on the operationalization of the US\$ 1 billion Line of Credit announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2019 for projects for development of the Russian Far East.

The Leaders emphasized on greater and effective usage of the International North-South Transport Corridor for cargo transport at lesser cost and time to enhance connectivity in the Eurasian Space. In this context, they welcomed the signing of agreement between Russian Railways (RZD) and CONCOR last year to jointly develop multi-modal logistics services along INSTC route. The Russian Side expressed support for India's proposal to include Chabahar port within the framework of INSTC. They stressed that connectivity initiatives should be based on the principles of transparency, broad participation, local priorities, financial sustainability and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

The Indian side informed that the feasibility study of the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor is in advance stage, and the study so far done indicates an array of opportunities for increased traffic upon the successful implementation of its recommendations.

Both Leaders noted successful cooperation in the setting up of the Rooppur NPP in Bangladesh and expressed their readiness to explore similar cooperation in third countries as well.

Both sides welcomed the active work carried out within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the State Space Corporation "Roscosmos" and the Indian Space Research Organization on joint activities in human spaceflight program and noted with satisfaction the training of 4 Indian astronaut candidates from the 'Yu.A.Gagarin Research & Test Cosmonaut Training Center FSBO'.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to upgrade the defence cooperation, including facilitating joint development and production of military equipment, components and spare parts, enhancing the after-sales service system, progress towards mutual recognition of quality control and regular joint exercises of the Armed Forces of the two countries.

Both Leaders forward particularly on increasing the effectiveness of countering terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, cross-border organized crime, and information security threats, in particular by improving the functionality of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. They denounced any use of terrorist proxies and emphasized the importance of denying any logistical, financial, or military support to terrorist groups to launch or plan terror attacks. Both Sides reaffirmed the need to support and strengthen the FATF and the UN Office of Counter Terrorism in their shared fight against terrorism.

The Leaders discussed the evolving situation in Afghanistan, especially the security situation and its implications in the region, the current political situation, issues related to terrorism, radicalisation and drug trafficking. They outlined the priorities which include ensuring formation of a truly inclusive and representative government, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, providing immediate humanitarian assistance and preserving the rights of women, children and minorities.

The leaders emphasised that Afghanistan's territory should not be used for sheltering, training, planning or financing any terrorist groups including ISIS, Al Qaeda, LeT etc. They reaffirmed their firm commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including its financing, the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and countering radicalization, to ensure that Afghanistan would never become a safe haven for global terrorism.

India and Russia have convergence on several important regional and global issues. Russia continues to be a reliable friend and partner of India especially in important areas of space and nuclear technologies and sharing advanced technology weapon systems. Supply of S-400 from Russia to India is progressing smoothly. There were even talks of India likely to become the first oversea country to acquire S-500, the most advanced aerospace defence system in the world, possibility of CAATSA sanctions notwithstanding. Next annual summit is planned to take place in Russia during 2022 to carry forward the 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' between both countries.