



Indian Council of World Affairs  
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road  
New Delhi

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**Press Release**

on

**ICWA-RIAC Roundtable Discussion at Moscow**

on

**“Russia-India: Towards a New Agenda in Bilateral Relations”**

A delegation of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), led by its Director General, Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, participated in a roundtable discussion with the prestigious Russian think tank, the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) on 23 May, 2013 in Moscow. The discussion centred on the RIAC’s latest report “Postulates on Russia-India Relations”, covering a wide range of issues, various aspects of the bilateral strategic partnership and its strengths and frailties amidst contemporary challenges.



*(L-R) Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, Director General, ICWA, Mr. Andrei Kortunov, Director General, RIAC & Ambassador (Retd.) V.I. Trubnikov at the Roundtable*

Regarding a key postulate of the report that “India has undoubtedly entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century alongside the United States and China as a country that can rightfully claim the status of being a center of global influence”, a query was raised whether it signified the replacement of G2 by G3. The candid exchange of views underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation between India and Russia, currently in their 66<sup>th</sup> year of diplomatic relations. India holds a special place in the foreign policy of Russia and *vice-versa*.

The strategic partnership driven by mutuality of interests has immense potential, which needs to be realized fully. The significance of the partnership was in the mutual trust and commonality of views. It was a truly strategic partnership and was different from strategic partnerships that existed between other countries, said Ambassador Vyacheslav Trubnikov. The

government-to-government relations had developed steadily, but the people-to-people ties had become weak over time. The relationship had to be re-crafted in view of the realities of the emerging polycentric global order.

It was also highlighted in the deliberations that India-Russia relations should not be held hostage to each other's relationship with other major players like US and China. There was ample scope for augmenting bilateral cooperation on regional and global issues like Afghanistan, BRICS, G20 and global governance.

The rise of China, having sparked wide regional and global apprehensions, was also discussed in the context of bilateral relations. The idea that multilateral fora like SCO, RIC, G20 and BRICS provided opportunities for enhanced engagement was welcomed. The Af-Pak issue found special mention in the deliberations. Radical Islamic forces gaining predominance in the Middle East was a worrisome development for both India and Russia.

It was opined that candid and regular consultations on civil nuclear issues would help in promoting cooperation in this sector. A consensus view that the BrahMos model of joint venture was an example to be followed unlike the Gorshkov model of cooperation. There was a need for a strong "game changer" in the relationship. The strong ties between the two governments were not adequately reflected in business-to-business relations.

The discussion reflected the urgency to strengthen people-to-people ties. Cooperation in the education sector was pointed out as one of the effective mechanisms in this context. Mr Vitaly Naumkin, Director, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences said that students in the University, in their course on World Politics, currently prefer India, next to EU.

Frequent interaction between the two Sides at Track I and Track II levels would facilitate in deepening mutual understanding. It was agreed that the extensive deliberations held should result in a joint report detailing some tangible recommendations for the policy makers and political leadership in both the countries.



*Director General, RIAC, appreciating the memento, presented by Director General, ICWA*

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