Report on Visit of USI Delegation to Russia

Brigadier Arun Sahgal (Retd)

A four member delegation from the United Service Institution of India (USI) visited Russia from 27 November to 1 December 2005 at the invitation of the Centre for Military Studies and Research (CMSR), the General Staff Department of the Armed Forces of Russian Federation (Moscow). The delegation comprised Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, PVSM, AVSM, VrC (Retd), Director USI, Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, PVSM, AVSM (Retd); Vice Admiral I J S Khurana, PVSM, AVSM (Retd); Brigadier Arun Sahgal (Retd), Deputy Director (Research). The visit was in response to an earlier visit by the CMSR delegation to the USI from 16 to 21 May 2004.

The USI delegation and members of the CMSR held extensive bilateral dialogues on 28 and 29 November 2005. This was followed by a visit, on 30 November, to the Military Chief's Club – an ex-servicemen's enterprise aimed at strengthening and developing the Russian state using ex-servicemen's expertise and experience. For bilateral talks the USI delegation was led by Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, and the Russian side by Lieutenant General Ostankov Ivanovich. The agenda of the bilateral dialogue focused on contemporary issues including situation in Iraq and the Middle East, Indo-Russian bilateral relations, the future of the UN, and the future challenges to peace and security in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The Indian Ambassador's Address

The bilateral dialogue was initiated with the opening remarks of the Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Mr Kanwal Sibal. He welcomed the dialogue between the two institutions and declared it to be an important track II process to promote common understanding on issues of common security concerns. He hailed the discussions as yet another instance of the broadening of Indo-Russian Defence dialogue.

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In keeping with the agenda for the dialogue, the Ambassador raised critical issues pertaining to four broad themes of the dialogue. He asserted that the deteriorating security scenario in Iraq and the Middle East, was a matter of deep concern for India and Russia. The Ambassador raised issues dealing with the overall security and stability in the Middle Eastern region in general and Iraq in particular. Concerns that the war in Iraq instead of containing the problem of international terrorism was likely to worsen it were highlighted. In addition, there was the added danger of increasing Shia-Sunni divide. He set forth the question as to whether a Shia dominated Iraq backed by Shia Iran would alter the balance of power in the Arab world? He also stressed upon the need to consider the stage at which India and Russia should get involved in the reconstruction of Iraq and the level of support to be provided to the present Iraqi government.

The Ambassador further reiterated the importance of Central Asia and Afghanistan for both India and Russia. Raising concerns about growing religious extremism, drug trafficking and international terrorism, he argued that both countries had vested interests in the stability of the region. He voiced concerns on the rise of Taliban and what it portends for the future. Other issues that were raised included :-

(a) How far the US policies in Afghanistan were facilitating the reassertion of Pakistani interests in Afghanistan.

(b) The possibility of Pakistan and Afghanistan becoming bases for the US to pursue long-term goals to gain a foothold in Central Asia.

(c) The degree to which the US regional policies are being conditioned by efforts to contain China.

(d) The nature of American, Chinese and Russian competing interests to control Central Asian gas and oil resources.

(e) The security role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

(f) The role other economic and security organisations, promoted by Russia would play in stabilising the Region.

(g) Why Russia wants Central Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to cooperate with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Speaking on the United Nations (UN) Reforms, the Ambassador attributed the crisis in the international collective security mechanisms as well as the UN to the unilateralist thrust of the current US administration. He raised the issue of how to reform the UN Security Council? He pondered on whether India and Russia could work together especially when Russia's definition of consensus was closer to the Chinese position? On the role of regional security organisations, he questioned the extent to which the UN would be undermined in case of enlargement of the role of the organisations like the NATO, which are seeking a much larger geo-political role through "out-of-area" operations.

On Indo-Russian relations, the Ambassador mentioned a convergence of the long-term geo-political interests of the two countries, of which Defence remains the key pillar. The Ambassador allayed concerns over the impact of India's growing bilateral relations with countries like the US and Israel by pointing out that Indo-Russian relations in the defence field were time-tested and will not be diluted. He stressed on assurances given in this regard by the Defence Minister during his recent visit to Russia. In terms of growing defence cooperation between the two countries, he mentioned agreement in principle on joint development of multi-role transport aircraft and discussions on the fifth generation aircraft together with acquisitions of almost US $10 billion from Russia.

He, however, brought out the serious concerns that persist on product and after sales support for Russian equipment in the Indian Armed Forces inventory, which need to be addressed. The move away from buyer-seller relationship, towards joint research and development, production and marketing should be the model for the future. He concluded by mentioning that both sides were holding joint exercises, which was a welcome development.

Director CMSR thanked the Indian Ambassador, both, for his enlightening remarks and defining the direction of the bilateral dialogue for mutual benefit. He assured that the joint deliberations will endeavour to find solutions and commonalities of interests.

The Sessions

There were a total of four sessions spread over two days. The first session pertained to *Impact of War in Iraq: Emerging Security Challenges in the Middle East.* Papers in this session

were presented by Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar and Captain Kravanchko Vadim.

Session two pertained to *Indo-Russian Bilateral Equations Including Military.* The speakers were Vice Admiral I J S Khurana and Lieutenant General K Anatoly Filippovic (Retd).

Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar and Captain Kucerib presented their papers on *The Current Crisis in the International Collective Security Mechanisms and the Future of the United Nations,* in the third session.

Challenges to Peace and Stability in Central Asia – Afghanistan Region in the Coming Decade was the subject of assessment by Brigadier Arun Sahgal and Lieutenant General Grigoriev, in the concluding session.

Session I : Impact of War in Iraq: Emerging Security Challenges in the Middle East

This session was devoted to understanding major lessons emerging out of the Iraq conflict and their impact on Middle East regional dynamics. Essential aspects highlighted in this session included the overall American strategy adopted in this one sided war fought in multiple dimensions i.e. political, diplomatic, economic and military leading to the rapid capitulation of the Iraqi forces. The combat phase lasted 42 days including a 100 hours ground war. The operational environment witnessed excellent co-ordination of multinational assets by the coalition. Some of the important lessons highlighted included :-

(a) **Air Space Management.** The campaign was hallmarked by extraordinary coordination of all air and ground assets spread over long distances from continental US, Europe and the Middle East. It was mentioned that it was not only the control of various platforms in the air, but also the tremendous clutter of communication transmission that would call for strict control and management. In spite of effective management in the first weeks of war, a dozen opportunities to strike time-critical and high-value targets were missed due to the wide sensor-shooter gap. This was markedly reduced to just 12 minutes as the operation progressed, displaying substantive strides in improved joint operations, inter-operability and seamless data linking.

(b) **Civil Affairs.** This is described as facilitating military operations and consolidating operational activities by assisting commanders in establishing, maintaining, influencing or exploiting relations between military forces and civil authorities, both governmental and non-governmental, and the civilian population in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operation. Language and culture training of target countries is essential. Cross-cultural proclivities and sophistication can be developed by study of a target country and by living there for some time and unless this is done, civil affairs will not succeed. This is a Special Forces mission and selected Units have to train for it. The American forces did not plan this aspect well in Iraq. They firstly antagonised the local population unlike the British forces who were friendlier and polite. Secondly, rather than be the liberator of the oppressed people, the behaviour of the American forces at times was oppressive and brutal. Thirdly, coalition forces in the first flush of victory disbanded all the law enforcement agencies including the Army and the Police, thereby removing a vital interface between local population and the troops. Strong arm methods used by the security forces have antagonised the local population, which persists to date. A selective screening process to weed out hardcore and regime loyalists while retaining the core infrastructure could have been a useful approach. The impact of this has been that the Iraqi society has been divided on sectarian and ethnic lines.

(c) **Use of high technology.** All weather continuous surveillance by 'Global Hawk' Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and aerial platforms, satellite digital communication, Precision Guided Munitions (PGM) strikes, use of tank busters (40 bomblets), and use of smart bombs, both from air and warships achieved total degradatin of Iraqi war machine. Iraqi equipment was mostly of pre 1991 vintage Soviet origin, which could not be upgraded or even maintained due to lack of spares as a consequence of the imposition of the UN sanctions. It had few "Scud" missiles and Air Defence (AD) guns, which were no match for the allied Air might. The Gulf War provided a testing ground for new space based technologies. There was a constellation of over 50 US satellites providing space support to the US Armed Forces. There were great strides exhibited in all the areas of C^4ISR capabilities.

(d) **Post Conflict Issues:** Western media had created an impression of the American forces being seen as the liberators by the Iraqi people. The obsession with the conquest was so paramount that the coalition forces did not take the necessary steps for preventing the administrative collapse of Iraq or closing the porous borders with Jordan, Syria and Iran to prevent escape of Saddam loyalists. Similarly, the damage to infrastructure was so total that even the basic amenities like water and electricity supply became a major problem. This alienated local population. The American political leadership believed that new technologies had transformed the US forces and a smaller component of the ground forces was adequate for victory. Consequently, it did not cater for the continuing insurgency conditions, which are manpower-intensive. Some of the important aspects highlighted included :-

(i) Re-establishing security in Iraq would become the prime concern of the international community. According to the Russian presenter, the US is caught up in a terrible situation in Iraq. Withdrawal poses serious problems and, if it were to quit Iraq, the space will be occupied by the *Jihadis* and fundamentalists leading to further instability.

(ii) Another interesting point made was that large scale insurgency operations were not possible due to lack of favourable terrain and population. Current wave of terrorism is a consequence of sectarian divide and mishandling by the US forces by use of heavy weapons, air strikes etc., which appear to have infuriated even the majority Shia population.

(iii) Five tactics adopted by resistance fighters were highlighted. These included capture of hostages, killing of political leaders, security forces, and civil officials, destruction of infrastructure making governance difficult. It was indicated that joint operations by local and trans-national organisations were being undertaken who, after hit and run raids, escape through porous borders.

(iv) Given the enormity of task involved in controlling the post-conflict scenario, it was brought out that in Iraq, dispersed deployment has resulted in small band of

terrorists or insurgents provoking local garrisons into using extraordinary force, increasing collateral damage, thereby further alienating local populace. Lack of adequate interpreters was another problem highlighted.

(v) Difficulties faced by the US forces in stabilising the situation were attributed to lack of planning, inexperience in fighting urban warfare, over dependence on shock and awe tactics, and inability to handle two local conflicts (Iraq and Afghanistan) simultaneously.

(e) **Future Trends in Urban Warfare.** "The need for sufficient ground forces and the power of the boot" in urban warfare in Iraq was not appreciated by the American forces. According to analysts, future battlefield is likely to include the whole of enemy's society and warfare will be widely dispersed where the distinction between war and peace may vanish. The difference between civilian and military may disappear, as there would be no definable battlefields or fronts. Major military and civil facilities will become targets. The characteristics of this type of warfare combined with new technology would possibly be the outline of the fourth generation of warfare. However, urban warfare involves people, and unless deliberate attempts are made to win them over, nothing else will succeed.

(f) **Security Scenario in the Iraqi Neighbourhood.**

(i) Although Iran was not an immediate threat to the US in Iraq, it was acknowledged that, in the long term, Iran may pose a threat to US interests in the region primarily on account of sectarian Shia-Sunni divide and continued instability and its impact on Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

(ii) The US intrusion into the traditional Russian turf of Central Asian Republics (CAR) worries Moscow. What began as temporary American military presence in Central Asia to facilitate the anti-terror war in Afghanistan, far from winding up, is expanding. In addition to Air bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the US is helping Kazakhstan to set up a naval base on the Caspian Sea close to the Russian border, besides seeking to lease three military bases in Tajikistan.

(iii) Lastly, unstable conditions in Iraq impact India in many ways. Firstly, such conditions in the strategic neighbourhood of India could become a rallying point for *jihadis* and fundamentalists which could adversely affect India's security environment. Secondly, India's energy security is also impacted upon by the continued instability in Iraq and the Middle East. Thirdly, Middle East has a large migrant Indian population and any spillover of instability in Iraq would affect Indian interests

Session II: Indo-Russian Bilateral Equations Including Military

This session examined the current and prospective dimensions of bilateral defence and security relationship. An interesting facet of the session was the contrasting perspective underscoring different national concerns and perceptions. Tracing the history of Indo–Russian bilateral cooperation Vice Admiral Khurana highlighted the following :-

(a) For a brief period, after the Cold War, India did not find a place in Russia's strategic perception. The visit to Russia by the then Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, in June 1994, culminated in the Moscow Declaration on "Protection of Interests of Pluralist States". It became the cornerstone of Indo-Russian relations. The strategic partnership was also spurred by the mutually shared interest in Central Asian Region (CAR).

(b) Russia's unequivocal support on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and its critical support during crisis periods underlined the long standing friendship between the two countries. In the changed geo-strategic environment both countries share common perceptions on most international security issues including total commitment to fighting religious extremism and terrorism.

(c) The area of Defence cooperation also reflected the growing relationship. This relationship, in fact, has moved beyond buyer-seller relationship to that of wider concept of transfer of technology. The term used by the Russians in this context is – Equipment and Defence Technology (EDT). Military technical cooperation was gaining ground. *Brahmos* was a shining example of this joint venture in Defence technology. Another example was of Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS).

These included continuing struggle against terrorism; revival of Afghanistan's economy; and the exploitation of hydrocarbon sources in the Caspian and Central Asian basins.

On the issue of strategic partnership, Russians provided an interesting perspective. The term "strategic partnership" signifies a form of mutual activity of countries that is considered to be long-ranged, based on the legal recognition of their mutual interests, equal rights, advantages as well as commitment and mutual responsibility directed to achieve certain strategic goals. Strategic partnership in the military sphere relates to the high level of cooperation. This partnership unlike the military-coalition vision does not bear any military threat to other countries. Its main task is to find an alternative to force oriented solutions. The main method of solving problems is finding concerned partners and mutually working out appropriate measures in a wide range of political, diplomatic and economic assets, short of military action. The main aspect of the practical policy of strategic partnership is to analyse upcoming situations and act pre-emptively against destabilising factors. Within the above construct the main spheres of strategic partnership include:-

(a) Pre-emptive approach to solving security problems, which can influence a situation before the negative consequences appear.

(b) Priority of political and other peaceful measures in solving emergent problems and conflict situations.

(c) Coordination of security policy, not causing damage to one another and other partners.

(d) Refusal to enter into a military coalition without approval of all partners and refusal to take part in any actions against an ally that can impair its interests.

(e) Transparency of activities in the military sphere.

He gave an example of step-by-step preparation for multilateral cooperation within the framework of the SCO to highlight the above principles. In this regard, the following aspects were highlighted :-

(a) Russians laid stress on the multilateral cooperation frame work of the SCO and advocated India's case for full

(e) Another aspect highlighted was multinational joint collaborative efforts, which incorporated latest technological achievements of other countries such as France and Israel. Some of these technologies have already been dovetailed and integrated into Russian systems. SU–30MK1 is an example of such cooperation between Sukhoi Design Office and French SNECM.

(f) It was reiterated that the problems of maintenance of equipment and inadequate supply of spare parts with suitable clauses being incorporated into the new contracts, would be addressed. The creation of Rosoboron Services (India) Ltd, consequent to a decree by the Russian President, was a welcome step. The creation of a bonded warehouse to stock Russian equipment and the nucleus of Russian and Indian specialists to provide technical back up are some of the other confidence enhancing steps.

In his presentation, Lieutenant General Khlimenko A F (Retd) indicated the strong bilateral relations enshrined in mutuality of interests signified by the Treaty on "Friendship and Cooperation between India and Russian Federation", signed in 1994, "Declaration on Strategic Partnership" signed in 2000, and strong Indo–Russian defence relationship in terms of "Long-term programme of military and technical cooperation upto the year 2000". As a consequence, by the end 2000, export of Russian arms and equipment to India totalled nearly US $ 3.7 billion (about 30 per cent of all export supplies from Russia).

Lieutenant General Khlimenko also highlighted some problems in Indo – Russian relations such as maintenance of the arms and equipment delivered by Russia to India and the delivery of spare parts. Furthermore, Russia is unable to cover some Indian needs and does not have certain technologies that meet the world standards. In the case of delivery of arms, delay was attributed to the absence of the treaty on the protection of intellectual property. He acknowledged that the time schedule of delivery of arms and equipment from Russia to India was slower in relation to world standards.

Given these limitations, concern was expressed over growing Indo-US military cooperation. To buttress Indo-Russian cooperation in the new environment, three perspective spheres were mentioned.

membership of the SCO. They suggested that India join the Regional Counter Terrorism Structure (RCTS) of the SCO.

(b) Russia, India and China could move towards a multipolar world.

(c) SCO mechanism could be used to solve the Indo-Pakistan problem, which *inter alia* would reduce terrorist threats all around including from Pakistan's territories.

(d) It advocated India and China working together with Russia, Kazhakstan and Iran to ensure energy security. The Ministerial Round Table organised by India on 25 November 2005, on cooperation between North and Central Asian producers and principal Asian consumers for stability, security and sustained availability in Asian hydrocarbon economy, was welcomed. This meeting was attended by CAR, China, Japan, South Korea and Turkey.

(e) An interesting suggestion related to consolidation of Chinese military technologies and productive capacities, which had a great potential for exchange on trilateral basis.

Observations on Session II

This was an interesting session which highlighted the Russian military perceptions of the direction in which Indo-Russian security and defence ties were shaping, their particular concern related to the military dimension of the Indo-US relations, in particular US emerging as the main armament supplier to India. It was clarified that India will take an independent decision on arms procurement in relation to its technological and strategic requirements. Other issues included the following :-

(a) SCO appears to be the vehicle through which Russia wants to keep an economically strong China engaged. Russia has a huge border with China but does not have the capacity and capability to defend it.

(b) Russia's own economic might rests only on three pillars namely energy reserves, natural and raw materials and military hardware itself. It does not have any industry and infrastructure to boast of. Its transition from Soviet days to market economy and globalisation has ensured that most of its consumer goods

requirements have to be met through imports. China did not shed its communistic hold while opening its markets and got into a massive manufacturing potential and creation of infrastructure in industrial belts along the eastern seaboard. Russia is yet to gain direction and be in a position to boast of any fresh infrastructure or manufacturing capacity.

(c) Exploration of oil and natural gas particularly in Western Siberia is very capital intensive and it needs investment which the Chinese are very eager to provide. Going whole hog with China would, however, be foolhardy. It finds that equal investment from India will provide a safeguard against loosing major control to the Chinese.

(d) Russia perceives numerous pressures from China in the not too distant future, be it population influx or Chinese influence in CAR.

(e) On the issue of arms supply and joint design and development, Russia was keen to maintain existing relationships but continued to harp on Intellectual Property Rights (IPP) related constraints.

Session III: The Current Crisis in the International Collective Security Mechanisms and the Future of the United Nations

The session discussed the current crisis in the international security mechanisms of a unipoiar world as well as the role of the United Nations and regional organisations. Important aspects emerging out of this session included:-

(a) The very premise of creating a collective international system, it was argued had been violated, for example principle of sovereign equality, settlement of disputes peacefully, no authority to intervene in domestic affairs of any state etc. Interestingly while the UN was excluded from many conflict situations it can claim justifiable credit for assisting in decolonisation and dismantling of apartheid, promoting some degree of democracy, and efforts at control and reduction of nuclear arms and production of chemical weapons. This has been possible on account of agencies like UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, etc, as also on account of peace keeping operations in many parts of the globe despite the Cold War constraints.

(b) In the post Cold War world, the UN has been reduced to being a tool to serve the interests of major players, often to the detriment of developing or less developed countries. The tendency of unilateral action has considerably undermined the authority and sanctity of the UN. Even the quality and content of UN Peace Keeping (UNPK) operations has changed for the worse.

(c) Following were some of the major reasons for international crisis :-

(i) First, the term security relating to sovereignty of state has gradually been replaced by other self serving terms beyond traditional international law, exemplified by shift of emphasis from protection of ***"collective security"*** to ***"collective interests".***

(ii) Second, the creation of new structures parallel to the UN by a small circle of powerful international players, who are extremely influential in security matters. By working outside the system and pressurising the UN on issues like funding, they were attempting to marginalise the UN and reduce it to a performa role.

(d) Regional multinational and regional operations were welcomed, especially given the growing constraints of the UNPK operations, provided they had the endorsement of the UN Security Council.

(e) American unilateralism in Iraq was severely criticised, especially in the face of devastation within that country. While the tragedy that had befallen Iraq could not be undone, the key issue remains as to how long will the international community allow this tragedy to perpetuate.

(f) For the UN this is a defining moment. Recent events have shaken the foundations of collective security and undermined confidence in possibility of collective responses to our common problems and challenges. It has also brought to fore deep differences of opinion on the range and nature of challenges we face and are likely to face in future.

(g) The principles of containment and deterrence are increasingly being replaced with pre-emption. This threatens

to challenge the very fundamental core on which the collective security paradigm rests. It is crucial to go beyond denouncing unilateralism, by recognising these concerns and showing that these can be addressed effectively through collective action.

(h) The fundamental issue is to decide whether we can continue on the basis of our past beliefs and agreed principles or introduce radical changes. It is in this context that we need to examine the composition of the Security Council to make it more representative; strengthen the General Assembly and examine the role of the UN as a whole on economic and social issues, including its relationship with Breton Wood's institutions. It is also important to review and strengthen international regimes on issues like proliferation of NBC weapons and counter terrorism.

(j) Based on the Report of the high level panel and the UN Secretary General's report to the 2005 World Summit, an *Outcome Document* was prepared and adopted, which lays down the overarching framework of structural reform process for the United Nations more attuned to emerging global realities. While some important steps have been taken like creation of a Human Rights Council and a Peace Building Commission, there is little consensus either on implementation of these proposals or on critical issues like definition of terrorism.

(k) Recognising that regional organisations are part of the UN Charter, stress was laid on their constructive role in complementing the UN activities particularly peacemaking, provided they have Security Council's endorsement. Nevertheless, the expanding charter and role of military blocs such as NATO was viewed with concern.

(l) During discussion, the role of regional organisations such as SCO and CSTO for maintenance of regional security was discussed. This was particularly so as in some countries there was reluctance on the part of the UN to get involved on account of larger geopolitical considerations. General consensus was that such roles were acceptable if mandated by the Security Council.

Session IV: "Challenges to Peace and Stability in Central Asia-Afghanistan Region in the Coming Decade

This session was devoted to dealing with regional security issues of common concern. The Russians laid great stress on the SCO as a model for multilateral cooperation particularly from the point of view of maintaining military and political stability in Central Asia. Some of the important perspectives emerging out of this session are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

First and foremost there was a three way power play underway in Central Asia. The American foothold in Central Asia has helped accentuate Western soft power through colour revolutions, friendship for peace programmes etc. Russia, on the other hand has always seen the region as a strategic buffer against outside threats. Consequently, many strategic interests compel Russia to retain Central Asia within its sphere of influence. Further, Russia was attempting to regain its leverages through both bilateral and multilateral instrumentalities such as CSTO and the SCO, apart from a plethora of economic cooperative arrangements. There are four major strategic interests driving Russian interests in CAR. One, transform Central Asia into a politically and economically viable entity that is friendly towards Russia. Second, secure Russian economic interest in the region particularly the regional energy resources including transportation corridors. Third, to counter the threat of religious extremism while encouraging the prevention of drug trafficking and arms smuggling. Fourth, secure the rights of the large Russian diaspora living in the region. China believes that the region holds the key to maintaining momentum of its economic growth as also security of its troubled periphery. Development of economic, political and security relations remain an important construct of its "Look West" policy, for which SCO remains its principal instrument.

Second, there was a growing strategic convergence between China and Russia and increasing isolation of the US – made imminent in the withdrawal of troops from bases in CAR. Nonetheless, the consequence of unease was being felt, both, by political elites of CAR as also Russia and China over the inroads and democratisation drive being made by the US and NATO. Interestingly, despite the utility of the US forces being limited in local political conflicts, the US was in no mood to downgrade its engagement. It was in fact impervious to such involvement.

In contrast, the growing Russian engagement promised investment and creation of a collective security force to deal with internal security issues. This was seen in the attempts at resurrection of CSTO and creation of a standing force to deal with regional conflicts.

China is clearly attempting to enhance its strategic influence, through military cooperation, and infrastructural and trade linkages. It is the leading force in pushing the SCO agenda, transcending to full fledged security outfit with military connotations. It was also seeking bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The Russian and Indian Perspectives

From the Russian perspective, CAR was gradually moving towards being a significant geopolitical and yet vulnerable region. It was emerging as much a geopolitical centre as being a part of "instability arc" comprising the Balkans-Caucasus-South Asia-South East Asia.

The geo-strategic and political picture in CAR was likely to be significantly different in 2015 from what is perceived today. The region could face a range of security threats, both conventional and unconventional, including extremism, terrorism, and other transnational and global threats. It was likely to remain mired in big power jockeying for influence and control over hydrocarbon resources.

Russians felt that the objective need was for a systems approach to address regional concerns through collective efforts - aimed at both political integration and economic development for regional stability. There is a need to evolve a consensual approach for inter regional cooperation and multilateral engagement defined by SCO, the CSTO etc. They stressed that owing to its geopolitical location, Russia alone was best suited to provide desired level of security guarantees.

Given the evolving regional political dynamics and developing economies, comprehensive cooperation and resolution of issues through peaceful means provided the best guarantee for peace and stability. And, to ensure peace and stability, it was important to validate existing mechanisms in relation to emerging challenges – growing external influences, intra-regional problems and nontraditional threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking and small

arms-smuggling etc. For future conflict prevention and stability, it was imperative to safeguard territorial integrity and preserve national interests of all states in the region. The Russians suggested that new security architecture could be created only through gradual process of integration brought about by bilateral and multilateral engagement based on regional institutions. The main directions of Russian security policy were defined as:-

(a) Choice for multilateral world order, based on respect for international law.

(b) Equal opportunities for all states without political or military coercion (forced democracy).

(c) Policy of mutual understanding, conflict prevention and resolution, based on collective security that supports decreasing use of force.

(d) Central Asia should not degenerate into an area of big power competition. It is important that all regional states are brought on board to ensure peaceful regional development and to address multifaceted security challenges.

(e) Recommended a multilateral approach, wherein CAR, China, Russia and important countries on the periphery to include India, Pakistan and Iran, worked in tandem. This was the rationale behind Russia pushing for India's inclusion as an observer in SCO and in future for its membership.

India's interests in CAR on the other hand including the SCO observer status was based on its need to diversify energy requirements; create strong economic and political linkages by extending trade networks; prevent hostile combination or strategic repositioning in CAR inimical to Indian interests; and to deal with the challenge of terrorism and their transregional linkages e.g. IMU.

The Likely Scenarios

Three possible scenarios were postulated – the Near Term (2005-2010), Medium Term (2010-2020) and the Long Term (2020 and beyond. In the near term, it is estimated that the Sino-Russian cooperation would go a long way to balance US influence. The US and NATO policy would be one of engagement and containment of CAR, Russia and China. CAR meanwhile would try and balance policies between the two competing interests to maximise advantage

for itself. However, there were certain critical uncertainties in the form of developments in Afghanistan and West Asia, the extent of revival of fundamentalism in Central Asia and the level of competition between China and Russia. Another contentious issue will be dynamics of energy politics.

In the medium term, the rise of China could induce greater Russian-American accommodation. The Russian influence if leveraged properly could grow. There could also be an increase in NATO's influence as part of overall eastern engagement strategy. Two wild cards in this scenario are reaction of China towards growing Russo-Chinese and possible Indian convergence over Central Asia as also possible emergence of a Russia-China-Iran axis, exacerbated by American intervention in Iran. On the other hand, depending upon developments in Afghanistan and fructification of AP pipeline, salience of Pakistan could enhance, aided by growing Sino-Pak relations.

The long term scenario fashions a growth of Chinese economic and military power, Russian economic revival and India's economic growth and power potential. In addition, the scenario could be impacted by the consequences of the success or failure of the US, West and Central Asian policies.

Areas of Future Cooperation

In the concluding session both delegations agreed that deliberations over the last two days were of great interest and helped in greater understanding of issues of common concern. It was also decided to take the dialogue forward. The following areas of joint interaction were suggested by the USI delegation:-

(a) Identify joint projects including simulation exercises that can be taken up by two Institutions on cooperative basis.

(b) Consider multilateral dialogue to include China and Japan.

(c) To give fillip to peace keeping efforts joint seminars under the auspices of USI Centre for United Nations Peace Keeping (CUNPK) should be held.

(d) Special forces joint training and exercises on reciprocal basis was suggested which USI could help taking forward through both Service Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence.

The Russian side while appreciating the suggestions, promised to take up these suggestions with their Ministry of Defence.

The Military Chief's Club

The Indian delegation paid a visit to Military Chiefs Club founded by the veterans from the Military, Diplomatic and Civil Services as also Intelligence agencies. However the prime motivators remain retired senior military officials. The founder President of this club is the Marshal of Russian Federation and Hero of Russia, ID Sergeev. In the words of VP Ivonov, Assistant to the Russian President Vladimir Putin, "the task of the Military club is to combine intellectual, official, and professional potential of senior military officials in strengthening and developing the Russian society and state". The Club is a nascent organisation established as an independent NGO, which is still in the process of establishing itself. Broad areas of its activities include :-

(a) Promotion of steady development of Russia in political, economic and social fields, international relations, education, culture, science, and so on.

(b) Development of cooperation with international organisations involved in similar tasks.

(c) Mobilisation of country's social potential, for raising national prestige by highlighting courage, resilience and heroism of the Armed Forces.

(d) Improving social protection and guarantees of Armed Forces personnel, by laying down conditions for their social integration.

Meeting with the USI delegation was at best exploratory in nature to find common areas of interest. Mutual dialogue helped in providing understanding of each other's activities and opening up number of areas which could be considered for future cooperation. Marshal Sergeev summed up the interaction by suggesting "there are a lot of possibilities of cooperation with the Indian Institute to resist global challenges".

Concluding Observations

Some interesting facets of our interaction are discussed below:-

(a) There appeared to be an apprehension in the mind of Russians that growing Indo-US bilateral relations could in the

long run impact bilateral arms sale relationship. This correlation is looked upon as the major plank of overall defence relationship. For the Russian military, sustenance of strong buyer and seller relationship appeared important even if these were subsumed within joint production or design and development like the fifth generation transport plane programmes.

(b) Strengthening of bilateral trade and economic relationship was something that was not discussed. They remain Eurocentric in their thinking on trade and related issues. However, in private interaction our Ambassador remained upbeat about the inevitable growth of Indo-Russian trade relations from its present level of close to just over two billion dollars.

(c) On joint exercises and greater military to military interaction, certain amount of reticence was noticed. They appear to be quite impressed by Chinese technological and force modernisation strategies. In private, they acknowledged that while major wars were unlikely, border and regional conflicts are a distinct possibility. Therefore, the current military transformation effort is linked to developing capabilities to fight such wars.

(d) In private conversation they acknowledged the declining edge of their conventional capabilities, which is something they are looking forward to address through structured modernisation programme. Interestingly, great emphasis was placed on nuclear deterrence which was being maintained at relatively advanced levels, inspite of financial constraints.

(e) Prominance was accorded to the SCO as a model of regional cooperation, where the interests of all the three major Asian powers coincide. It appeared that Russia was keen on India coming on board in the regional framework essentially to contain growing Chinese influence.

(f) On the issue of joint Indo-Russian-Chinese interaction, often speculated by media, Russians were categorical that these were unlikely in the near future. However, they were keen to promote such interaction within the framework of the SCO.

Overall, the visit was marked by a great degree of conviviality and forthrightness resulting in free and frank exchange of ideas and understanding of each other's perspectives. The Russian hosts were extremely hospitable and went out of the way to make the delegation comfortable. It is also important to put on record the extremely supportive and caring role played by the Indian Embassy in Moscow and the personal interest shown by the Ambassador in making the visit of the USI Delegation a great success. Our sincere thanks to the Military Wing of the Indian Embassy including the Military attaché who provided complete administrative support. On the whole, it was a useful interaction, which the USI would certainly like to sustain.

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