

EURASIA DIGEST

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21st India-Russia Annual Summit

The [21st annual summit](#) between Indian and Russian heads of government took place on 6 December 2021. The visit was marked by the first 2+2 Dialogue of Foreign and Defence Ministers of the two countries as well as the meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Technical Cooperation. The two leaders underscored the need for greater economic cooperation and agreed upon the common perspectives and concerns regarding Afghanistan. A Joint Statement titled “India-Russia: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity” covering the state and prospects of bilateral ties was released. Several agreements and MoUs were signed in diverse sectors.

India-Russia Sign Non Paper Agreement on Central Asia

India and Russia, following their [2+2 ministerial](#) meet of foreign and Defence ministers on December 6, have exchanged a non-paper agreement on how to increase engagement that could include joint defence projects in Central Asia through existing Soviet-era defence factories in some of the republics of the region. The non-paper agreement explores several areas of engagement, one of which is defence as India aims to become a defence exporter. This will help India create its own space in Central Asia through Russian assistance.

Russian and US Presidents Hold Virtual Summit

President Vladimir Putin and his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden held a [virtual summit on 7 December 2021](#) amidst ongoing tensions arising over Russian troop build-up on the Russia-Ukraine border. The

Kremlin readout said that Putin blamed NATO for tensions in Ukraine and insisted on “[legal guarantees](#)” against NATO expanding its forces eastwards. It also warned against any move by Ukraine to join NATO or host NATO missiles. The two leaders discussed bilateral strategic stability plans set in place at their June summit in Geneva, efforts to fight ransomware and cybercrime, regional issues such as Iran, and possibility of restoring their diplomatic missions.

CSTO to Improve Tajikistan’s Military Infrastructure

A [video conference session](#) of the Military Committee of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) took place on 8 December, 2021. Chiefs of the General Staff of the armed forces of CSTO members and CSTO Deputy Secretary took part in the session. The military infrastructure on the territory of Tajikistan will be improved in the interests of coalition groups of collective forces of the CSTO. Further development of the collective air force and aerial defense of coalition forces during their initial deployment and operation in collective security regions were discussed.

Central Asian Leaders Invited as R-Day Chief Guests

India is [awaiting responses](#) from leaders of five Central Asian nations to an invitation, to attend as chief guests of Republic Day 2022. Officials confirmed that the Ministry of External Affairs has reached out to governments of Central Asian nations to confirm their attendance, as is the protocol for Republic Day guests before a formal invite is handed out.

Diplomats said the invitation was part of India's reach-out to the former Soviet States, which has intensified since 2015 following PM Modi's visit to all five capitals. This could be India's next big step in the Connect Central Asia policy.

Russia Rolls Out First Stealth Drone Model

Russia has rolled out the [first flight prototype of its Okhotnik](#) ("Hunter") stealth drone ahead of trials and future serial production. The Okhotnik's latest configuration features a 3D-printed "flat jet nozzle" for reduced radar visibility. Deputy Defense Minister Alexei Krivoruchko said that the Okhotnik's rollout "signifies the end of the item's assembly" and the "switchover to comprehensive ground tests to prepare for its debut flight." The combat drone can fly at speeds of up to 1,000 kilometres per hour and is equipped with a jet engine and anti-radar skin coating. Serial deliveries of the Okhotnik are expected to begin in 2024.

Frictions in German-Russian Relations

Germany on 15 December 2021 announced expulsion of two Russian diplomats after a German court concluded that Russian government was behind the [Berlin Park Assassination](#) of 2019. Foreign minister Annalena Baerbock unabashedly called the State-ordered killing a "grave breach of German law and the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany." Russia's ambassador in Berlin was summoned to discuss the court's finding and was informed of the diplomats' expulsion. In a tit for tat move, Russia expelled two German diplomats two days later. This has further exacerbated frictions between the

two countries and is likely to aggravate the ongoing [Nord Stream 2](#) issue.

President Putin Hails Russia-China Ties as '21st Century Example'

President Putin has [hailed Moscow's ties with Beijing](#) as an "example for the 21st century" during virtual talks with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping on 15 December 2021. He emphasised that "non-interference in internal affairs and respect for each other's interests and good-neighbourliness" was the foundation of robust Russia-China partnership. President Putin's foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov observed that President Xi "supported Russia's demands" for NATO to stop expanding eastwards. President Putin has accepted China's invitation to attend the Beijing Winter Olympics scheduled to be held in February 2022.

3rd Annual India-France Defence Dialogue

France's Minister for Armed Forces, Florence Parly visited India on 17 December 2021 for the [3rd Annual Defence Dialogue between India and France](#). She met PM Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and NSA Ajit Doval. The agenda included military-to-military cooperation, defence industrial cooperation and exchanges on regional environment, especially to uphold maritime law in the Indo-Pacific region. With France taking over the EU council presidency starting 1 January 2021, she said that France has "great ambition for EU" in the defence sector and its very first defence white paper is being worked on, where Indo Pacific has considerable attention. This visit comes in the wake of several bilateral exercises held this year.

3rd India-Central Asia Dialogue

The 3rd meeting of the [India-Central Asia Dialogue](#) was held in New Delhi on 19 December 2021 under the chairmanship of India. Foreign Ministers of Central Asian countries took part in it. Each underlined civilizational, cultural, trade and people-to-people linkages between India and Central Asia and reaffirmed their commitment to an enduring India-Central Asia partnership. The Dialogue focused on interaction in the fields of defence and security. This meeting highlights the growing linkages between India and Central Asia on various fronts.

Tajikistan Leader Meets President Putin

President Putin voiced his concern regarding the [Afghan-Tajik border](#) situation in a meeting with his Tajik counterpart, Emomali Rahmon on 27 December at St. Petersburg. Calling Tajikistan a close and reliable ally, Putin said the two nations were developing cooperation on security issues. He added that some weapons and equipment had been provided to help Tajikistan's armed forces to efficiently counter threats emanating from outside. Moscow has been reportedly fortifying its military base in Tajikistan with weapons and other equipment.

On his part, Rahmon said that the two countries closely cooperate in the matters of security and that he was ready to discuss regional and international issues with Putin, including Afghanistan. This took place on the sidelines of annual CIS heads of the states meet, organised by Putin on 28 December, 2021.

Baltic Gas Pipeline to be launched in 2022

This is a [gas pipeline](#) that runs from North Sea to Poland, via Denmark and will be launched by October 2022. Polish official Piotr Naimski said, "We are following the strategy of differentiating gas supply sources for the Polish economy. The Baltic Pipe's flow efficiency will be 10 bcm a year, and this will be relatively comparable to the volume we are currently procuring from Gazprom..." The Pipeline will supply additional gas of 3 bcm to Denmark and Sweden to improve the flexibility of their gas markets. It will further diversify Poland's gas sources and reduce its reliance on Russian energy imports.

Undecided fate of Northern Ireland Protocol (NIP)

Boris Johnson's government tried hard to settle issues around the [NIP](#) in 2021 but despite the efforts of David Frost, the UK government's senior negotiator, the issue of NIP could not be resolved. With David Foster's 'shock' resignation and the failure to reach any consensus on the matter, UK could now invoke [Article 16](#) of the NIP which would allow London to suspend its NIP-related commitments temporarily and further allow either side to take unilateral action. In retaliation, the EU could hit British imports into the EU with tariffs, a part-suspension of the broader EU-UK free-trade deal, affecting the economy of both sides.