

GUEST EDITOR NOTE

Beyond Borders: India–Russia Engagements in Innovation, Learning, and Commerce

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Indo-Russian Collaboration History: India and Russia's combined population accounts for approximately 19.8 per cent of the world's population, while the BRICS countries' population is around 45 per cent of the world's population, covering approximately 30 per cent of the world's land surface and 20 per cent of the world's trade. India and Russia have had a long-standing strategic partnership spanning decades in defence, energy, science, AI, education, and international politics. Both countries have stood with each other in global politics when situations have been hostile for them, and have proven to be great allies in international politics.

At the world level, the BRICS is having a significant impact on education, trade, commerce, science, and other areas. The BRICS alliance is also moving in the direction of ending the dominance of the USD.¹ India and Russia's bilateral trade has surged in recent years, with India exporting around \$4.26 billion and importing around \$61.4 billion worth of goods. We can see a significant increase in this trajectory, since India exported around \$4.88 billion in products and imported around \$63.84 billion in products.

¹ Upadhyay, N. (2024). BRICS expansion: A comprehensive analysis of global power shifts and economic integration. *BRICS Law Journal*, 11(3), 5–8.

India primarily imports Russian crude oil. So, I doubt that the world superpowers have attempted to impose tariffs on India to halt its trade with Russia. Still, strong cultural and economic ties have continued to sustain the trade even after the threat of tariffs was made. This is a beacon of hope for strong friendship between India and Russia, which has not been shaken even after the threat of economic sanctions.

India and Russia are aiming for a US\$100-billion trade by the end of 2030 after implementing various key measures, which include a rupee-rouble settlement mechanism and exploring a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). This proposed FTA aims to boost exports, support business, and diversify market access for India and Russia.

India and Russia are also developing various naval trade routes through Iran and Central Asia, which will further enhance trade and commerce between the two nations. Both countries have been performing mock drills and naval defence exercises together for many years, which is very essential for naval forces. So, for trade and security, both countries are working together on the naval front also. Naval routes, such as the Chennai–Vladivostok Maritime Corridor, have reduced the travel time from 40 hours to 24 hours between the two countries, significantly reducing the cost of transport and duration. This has revitalised the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which is central to enhancing India–Russia relations. These corridors cut logistics cost, time, deepen integration and support trade in diversified areas across various industries.

India and Russia are not only working on naval defence and trade, but also on AI-based weapons and aerial defence systems, such as the S-400 Triumf air defence system from Russia, which played a crucial role in operation Sindoor against terrorist outfits in Pakistan. There has been a great reliance of the Indian defence sector on Russian technology and weapons for decades. India itself is moving quite rapidly in the domain of weapon development, but support from Russia will still be needed in this journey to make India a self-reliant defence sector.

India and Russia are also exploring collaborations in the digital economy, including cybersecurity, and recently India exported AI-capable servers, Dell PowerEdge XE9680 units with NVIDIA processors, to Russia, worth 434 million dollars. This move clearly reflects the cooperation between the two countries in AI and digital technology.

Not just in science and technology, India and Russia work very closely in the education sector as well, and millions of Indian students have studied medical and allied sciences in Russia in the past few decades. Russia and India have also established the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), the Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP), and the Basic Science Cooperation Programme. Indo-Russian ties are also powerful in inter-academia exchanges, which foster researcher-to-researcher linkages, sharing the best practices followed in research by both nations.

Recent initiatives between India and Russia have an expanded agenda to work on bridging innovation programs, start-ups, telemedicine partnerships, healthcare innovations, traditional knowledge databases, and the Russian-Indian Network (RIN) of universities for higher education, focusing on joint research and innovations.

Strategic Prospects and Policy Pathways: India and Russia need to work on trade diversification and cannot rely mainly on the energy sector. Both countries must identify new focus areas where significant trade can occur, such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, engineering goods, and electronics, to narrow the trade imbalance. The Chennai–Vladivostok corridor is still not working at its full capacity, and neither country is utilising the resources to their full capacity—impetus to be given to operationalise this corridor for better trade and commerce. In the field of education, more scholarship initiatives need to be created, making India and Russia an educational gateway for student mobility. A focus needs to be deepened on internships and jobs that focus on AI, cybersecurity, and related technologies.

Needless to say, all the above-mentioned aspects compel an efficient and profound legal research and justification. The strategic trajectories require the new generation of lawyers and legal researchers who are capable, to legally navigate changes and uncertainties effectively.

The Indo-Russian Student Forum is a great move to let the young generation of both countries understand the cultural and educational value system of the other nation and make a strong future of Indo-Russian relations. The Indo-Russian forum was organised by the BRICS Law Journal and Knowledge Steez Eduhub LLP from India. This has given students, the opportunity to share their scientific research work with everyone and learn from other presenters. This forum is proposed to be an annual event, which will deepen the ties of Indian students and academicians with Russia and vice versa. These small efforts have a long journey ahead, but we are confident that they will bring a new ray of hope to BRICS+ nations, showing how bilateral arrangements can work, and India and Russia can serve as an example for this. Last but not least, I would like to thank all Indian and Russian contributors to this Special Issue for their excellent scientific research and scholarly discourse.

In this realm, the Special Issue on Indo-Russian legal trends and perspectives encompasses articles of the law scientists from two countries who suggest their vision and professional opinion on aspects of very important issues, including reproductive rights, which comes majorly from the realm of health laws, which are very often violated in India even after various laws and judicial pronouncements. The laws in terms of reproductive rights in India and Russia share a broad similarity but are quite distinct in a lot of instances, for example, abortion in India is permitted up to 20–24 weeks, with exceptions, whereas in Russia, it is 12 weeks, and in rape cases, up to 20 weeks, and unlimited in severe cases. India is attempting to control its pollution, whereas Russia is seeking to promote pollution growth.

Author Siddharth Kanojia discusses in his article “Biomedical Waste Governance in BRICS: Comparative Policy Perspectives and SDG Integration” a serious concern about

biomedical waste that the whole world is facing. However, due to a considerable population and disparity in health facility standards, BRICS countries face this problem at an acute level. Biomedical waste management is very important for sustainable development goals, and BRICS nations enact various law and policies related to it. For example, in South Africa, National Environmental Management Waste Act 59 of 2008, along with related standards like SANS 10248-1 for segregation and packaging, SANS 452 for sharps containers, and provincial regulations, is present. Whereas there are no specific laws in China, Brazil has Law No. 10,099, which regulates solid waste originating from healthcare services. This law governs waste originating from health facilities, detailing the storage, collection, transport, treatment, and disposal of medical waste. In India, the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016 control the storage, disposal, and transport of bio-medical waste. Whereas the Federal Law No. 52-FZ of Russia, provides a framework for the sanitary and epidemiological welfare of Russian citizens, including regulations on medical waste. For the protection of public health in Russia, Federal Law No. 323-FZ is in place. This article focuses on developing a standard model for biomedical waste management in BRICS nations.

This Special Issue also features research work by Violetta Belousova, Dmitry Zaytsev, Sergey Zubarev on “Public Legal Ensuring of State Sovereignty: Experience of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of India.” This Special Issue also focuses on articles by many other prominent Indian and Russian scholars and discusses important issues like corporate social responsibility (Arti Aneja), territories with a special regime in BRICS countries (Sergey Vasiliev, Yulia Motsnaya, Lyubov Potapova), smart cities in BRICS (Alexander Larichev, Larisa Soldatova), victim compensation in India (Elisha Kanungo, Paromita Chattoraj). Bringing together scholarly perspectives from India and Russia, the Issue addresses a diverse range of contemporary issues, including artificial intelligence, victim compensation, corporate social responsibility, smart city development, health law, and the achievement of sustainable development goals. By integrating these themes, the volume highlights the growing significance of interdisciplinary and cross-national research, while also underscoring the role of Indo-Russian academic cooperation in shaping responses to complex legal, technological, and societal challenges.

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