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**Russia’s ‘Turn to East’: Opportunities and Challenges**

The 21st century is witnessing tectonic shifts in the geopolitical landscape in the international arena. Russia believes that the current shift of global power and developmental potential is in the East, primarily to the Asia-Pacific region (APR) and the Indian Ocean region, and in the Arctic region. Russia, after the collapse of USSR and the end of Cold War had lost its geostrategic, economic, military, political and ideological edge. It was forced to accept a ‘second class status’ in the international system . However, Russia was unable to reconcile to this new position and tried to find a footing by investing in upgrading its international standing. The government through the adoption of a ‘multi-vector’ foreign policy since the 1990s is becoming an important player in the changing geopolitical realties. Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Putin has been projecting its might through hard and soft power. It has expressed its ambition to regain its position as a powerful nation in the global order.

Russia, since focusing on its Eurasian identity, has taken up its policy of ‘turn to East’ seriously. The nudge to turn to East was strengthened by the US led sanctions imposed on Moscow since 2014. Russia had its bilateral relationship with the Asian countries since the Soviet Union time. However, the urgency to solidify its role in Asia has been recent. The reasons for it are the following:

* Russia wants to not only regain but consolidate its power as a Eurasian power. It seems it no longer wants to be seen as a European but a Eurasian power. To accomplish this goal, its role in Asia is important. More so, with the opening of the Arctic region which will connect Indo-Pacific that could be further linked to Antarctica and beyond, Russia’s position in Asia would be important.
* Russia’s relationship with the West especially since the Ukrainian and Syrian crises has thrust the Kremlin to focus on building and implementing its foreign policy objectives towards Asia. Russia’s policies since post-Cold War were to align with the West and take up its position once again as a super power in the international community on an equal platform. However, the outcome of this desire did not happen. The tensed and complicated relationship with the West and Russia’s understanding of defending its position in the world order against the West as an equal and independent power might have led to the objectives of attaining a multipolar world order and strengthening of its Eurasian identity, leading to the ‘turn to East’ policy. Russia, in future, would not want to face a situation of this sort where the West was able to impose sanctions on it and isolate it from an institution like the G7. It was fortunate that the rising powers such as India and China and other important countries such as Turkey, Iran and Brazil etc. have been focused on a multipolar world order and reject the unilateral hegemony of a country that led to continuous cooperation amongst Russia and these countries along with the others.