

Dialogue

Russian Ambassador to India Mr Denis Alipov
in conversation with Dr Jaimini Bhagwati on
**India's Economic-Classified Ties with Russia and
Prognosis About the Conflict in Ukraine**

Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

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Watch the event video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1feZdbfuZIO>

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PROCEEDINGS

Jaimini Bhagwati:

A warm welcome to you Ambassador Denis Alipov to the centre for social and economic progress. Today is Thursday, the 8th of September, 2022. That is for the record. We had a statement from our Prime Minister yesterday referring to India's relations with Russia in very positive terms. I want to go back, as far back as the 1950s, shortly after India's independence, when Mr Bulganin and Mr Khrushchev came to Delhi in 1955. They also went to a few other places. Shortly thereafter Russia supported India in production of steel. I think the two plants came up in 59 and 64 in Bhilai and Bokaro respectively. I would like you to give us your reaction about cooperation between India and Russia in the civilian sectors first and then we will move on to other areas, defence and high technology and so on.

Denis Alipov:

Thank you very much Dr Bhagwati Jaimini. Our acquaintance goes back for years and I am happy to re-establish it and I am thankful for the invitation. It is great to be today with you. We can go back even further than 1950s and recall that along with the celebration of the 75th independence and the anniversary this year, we also celebrate the 75 years of diplomatic relations between our countries. The first diplomatic presence of Russia goes back to 1900 when it was a Russian empire and the British India, the first consular agent of the Russian empire was established in Bombay. At that time the British were quite reluctant to allow that. But still we have a long history of relations which as you correctly put reached its golden age, began to flourish in the mid last century when the Soviet Union at that time began a massive technical, financial or technological assistance and cooperation with India. You mentioned the steel plants Bhilai and Bokaro, that's correct. We also participated in construction of hydro projects in various areas like the Teri dam in Uttarakhand. Of course we initiated a very close and comprehensive cooperation in space sector, the first Indian space (satellite) flew on a Russian spacecraft together with Russian cosmonauts in 1984. The first Indian satellite was sent to the orbit with the soviet assistance. So there are so many examples we can count them on and on and we are very proud of this legacy and the strategic partnership which we established in 2000 rests on this heritage. And builds the accumulated baggage of that very massive and diversified cooperation that the Soviet Union had with India.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Thank you Denis. That was very useful. Particularly I am sure for younger audiences who don't have a memory about this long association that India has had with the Soviet Union after its independence and more recently with Russia. Well when the Soviet Union was still Soviet Union, I am moving on to another area of cooperation in the field of atomic energy. You might ask why atomic energy? It is high tech and it requires a great deal of specialisation. So 1988 the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed an agreement with the then head of state of Russia Mr Mikhail Gorbachev for collaborating in the area of nuclear power. But then as we all know the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991. Nothing much happened about that agreement till 1998. Curiously and those who are keen followers of strategic matters and foreign policy will note that the question of collaboration on nuclear power came up in June 1998, just a month after India had tested its own nuclear weapons and then as we all know in Kalpakkam six nuclear power reactors have been envisaged which I believe two are already fully functional. Maybe one more. Ambassador, if you could tell us a little more about collaboration in the field of nuclear energy. I am not getting into anything confidential here. We are only talking about

power and as we know in today's time fuel has become a major issue. We will talk about that later on. But nuclear power and its importance as France has I think maybe 70 to 75% of its power comes from nuclear power reactors. So if you could give us a sense of where Russia is as far as nuclear power and energy is concerned and any other details you would like to share.

Denis Alipov:

Indeed the construction of the Kudankulam power station is one of our landmark projects, bilateral projects. There is a host of agreements to this effect, later after 1988. We signed several more in addition including the road map for the construction of nuclear power plants in India of Russian design. We envisage a continuation of cooperation in the civil nuclear energy beyond Kudankulam. But this power station in the south of India is going very well, more or less according to the schedule. There are six reactors at this site. Two are fully functional already. Four are under construction at various stages. We divide them into three stages. The first, second and third stages of the station. Each reactor is at 1000 kilowatt capacity. So all together it would be a massive power station providing huge amount of power to the south of India and to the whole country. We consider nuclear energy as one of the indispensable assets in today's world, in today's energy resources in the context of the energy security. We consider it a clean energy which on the safeguards necessary conditions. It is absolutely safe and clean in terms of the environment. As I say, we are looking beyond the Kudankulam. We are hopeful that we would reach an agreement for the allotment of the second site for a nuclear power plant construction. We are in negotiations with the Indian side on this issue for quite some time. But of course this is up to the Indians to decide whether it is ready to go forward. But we are very proud of this part of our cooperation and you put it very correctly, it is a landmark and one of the drivers, one of the locomotives of our economic cooperation from the technological point of view, from the high tech point of view of protecting the environment and generally in our economic cooperation.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Thank you ambassador. For those who follow the issue of safeguards from the point of view of the IAEA, you would be interested to know that once the nuclear suppliers group of which Russia is a member and India is not was set up in 1992, the United States objected to this project taking off in Kudankulam and Russia to our positive surprise said that – sorry but this agreement is 1988 which predates 1992, so therefore Russia can collaborate with India in building these power plants in Tamil Nadu. Moving on Ambassador, you were recently in Cochin for the inaugural ceremony of INS Vikrant. We are proud in India to have built an aircraft carrier. And there again I think there has been much technical collaboration with Russia. I believe, please correct me if I am wrong, that this aircraft carrier will have MIG 29s on board. Can you tell us a little bit about your visit to Cochin, the launching of this aircraft carrier and the Russian involvement both in terms of providing fighter aircraft and also collaboration in the production of this carrier?

Denis Alipov:

Indeed I was there on the 2nd of September, it was a very impressive and a very proud moment for India. We are happy to be part of this achievement. This is the first indigenously built aircraft carrier. India has become one of the few countries who is capable now of constructing by its own such sophisticated vessels and systems and military equipment products. We participated in it in some smaller parts. I mean in the construction but you are correct. At the moment it looks like MIG 29K, K stands for ship in Russia, maybe the only option for the time being. But after that as far as I know Tejas fighter is going to be used on that ship. The Americans and French are running around with their products. But yes, at the moment it looks like the MIG 29s are the only readily available option. Besides

the fighters India is also going to use Russian made helicopters to be based on that ship. So from this angle we not only from construction but from the use of this ship, we are also participating in this success story of the Indian ship building

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Thank you. At a lower level of technology but equally important, assault rifles, I believe last year in December 2021 India and Russia signed an agreement and the two defence ministers were present for the production of some very large amount of 600 000 AK 203 assault rifles. Very frankly I am a little embarrassed that we still need help or support technical or otherwise to produce assault rifles. That is probably because I know very little about assault rifle. Can you fill us in on what is so special and why this agreement was reached and what exactly is the progress since December last year in implementing this agreement?

Denis Alipov:

Frankly I don't know much more than you about assault rifle. But if I am correct the number is slightly bigger, the number of items to be manufactured. Even more than 600 000. We have established a joint venture to this effect. The production is going to start very soon in Uttar Pradesh, Korwa, which falls into the defence production corridor in Uttar Pradesh. This is again one of the landmark projects under the 'Make in India' and 'Self-reliant India' programs and initiatives. We are very proud that we have been very actively involved in those initiatives for quite some time already. We have been probably the first who have been participating in those schemes. Not only the rifles, the SU-30s aircraft, T-90, which have been produced in India for quite some time already. They also fall under the idea of a 'Make in India'. There are other examples. But as far as rifles are concerned, yes we are moving on schedule. Hopefully I will also participate in the launch of the production when it is announced. We are looking forward to this cooperation with India, India has become at the moment the major Russian defence partner and defence cooperation and defence production or joint production. The Brahmos cruise missiles is the exemplary success in this context. So we are very hopeful and very optimistic about the prospects.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

For the benefit of the audience the Brahmos missile is a supersonic missile which is jointly produced by Russia and India and I think it can strike up to 300 kilometre. Again I might be not particularly accurate about that. I remember that at one stage Vietnam was asking for this missile. Of course we have to jointly decide. I think those are the terms of our agreement whether India can sell it to a third party. Sell it, gift it or transfer it, whatever it is. All this Ambassador is very, should we say, at a simple level for you and for many. But I think information is lacking at the general level of the extent of collaboration, cooperation both in the civil side and on the military side between India and Russia. Now if I may move on to the mundane subject of trade. As we both know trade is very important. Unfortunately trade compared to other areas of collaboration has not shown the same kind of buoyancy. I think last year, by last year I mean for us the fiscal year starts on the 1st of April. So first April 2021 to end March 2022, we imported about 9.8 billion U S dollar worth of goods from Russia. I am only talking about goods trade. That is what we imported and what we exported was about 3 point something billion. Given the nature of our relationship that is relatively low. To what do you... because we have been talking about diamonds, we have been talking about rare earths, we have been talking about pharmaceuticals, but somehow the trade in goods has not moved up as much as I would have expected. What are the reasons according to you, Ambassador?

Denis Alipov:

I agree with you. We have been pondering about the answer to this million dollar question. What prevented us from expanding our trade for quite some time? There are various answers possibly to this question. But I think that when the erstwhile former system of our trade during Soviet times collapsed. Both, India launched economic reforms, Russia plunged into turmoil in 1990s and a free reign capitalism was overnight introduced in my country. And we obviously started to look where that capitalist system flourished. To the west. And looked for the established markets, for the established ways and supply chains to cooperate and probably India also looked westwards and we somewhat forget about the bilateral relations in this sphere. Later we started to revive it but still we are in the process. Last year we reached the record level of trade by the Indian statistics that is about 9.8 or around 10 billion. We count as 11.6 billion USD of trade volumes. This year we can say that for sure it already would be much larger thanks to import of oil. But we are naturally looking at the increased exports of India to Russia. Besides diamonds there are super prospects of pharmaceutical exports to Russia. But not only pharmaceuticals, we also look at traditional Indian commodities like food products, tea...

Jaimini Bhagwati:

I think in Russia they use the word Chai,

Denis Alipov:

Yes. Chai is same in Russian.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

In Russia when they want tea they say they want chai. That is the influence of exports of tea to Russia.

Denis Alipov:

I believe that is the influence of Sanskrit history.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Yes. Makes sense. Please go ahead. You were saying our trade is burgeoning now. You have referred to the fact that this year trade will be much higher in terms of India's imports of oil. So it naturally leads me to the question of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. I don't want to ask you a question on this. I would rather you tell us why this conflict? What is the genesis? What is the situation right now? Then maybe I will ask a question or two about the conflict. So if you can tell us why this happened? Because I think no one in the world including Russia wants loss of life or people getting hurt or destruction of property. So we'd like to hear Russia's point of view as to why this conflict is taking place in Ukraine.

Denis Alipov:

There has been a lot said on this subject of the conflict. I will point out the very gist of our approach and viewpoint. You know, we have been accused of the unjustified and unprovoked aggression and that is wrong on both accounts. We don't intend to occupy or subjugate or enslave as we are being accused of. To enslave Ukraine. We are trying to preserve our security. We wanted to do that by peaceful diplomatic means. We have been trying and stressed that problem at least since 2007. Saying to our partners in NATO, to the US in the first place because they are playing the tune that we feel insecure because of the NATO enlargement. All our concerns have been ignored till the very end, till February this year when we found ourselves in the corner literally with no space to retreat and with the only option to respond with a military one. That is the story in the gist. We have seen that Ukraine to our utmost regret to the large part of Ukrainian people. The government of Ukraine as a whole has

become and has made an explicit anti Russia project. The nationalist issue has been mentioned very often. We mentioned that of course ultra-nationalists Nazi elements are there in many countries. In Ukraine, in Russia. But in Ukraine they've been playing the major influence on the government decisions. They are in the government and they have set on a course to become a very hostile outpost towards our country. The territory of Ukraine had been exploited by NATO very extensively. We objected to the Ukraine joining NATO and we are not promised anything in this regard. In fact it was explicitly said to us that it is up to Ukraine to join NATO. But in the meantime the territory of Ukraine was exploited and used to put all the NATO infrastructure in the territory on our immediate borders. So without joining NATO, de facto Ukraine has become, in the military sense has become a territory of the expanded NATO. This is very rarely put forward in the western narrative if at all. But it is one of the aspects why we reacted so angrily and so forcefully to the rejection of all our suggestions and proposals, the latest of those regard to the enlargement of NATO specifically and to the conclusion of new agreements with the US. We are in this context are very disappointed with the position of Europe as at large with the position of the major European countries. I am not talking about minor ones. Because they have always been insignificant. But even major European countries opted to trail behind the US politics towards Russia towards NATO enlargement. And effectively, especially now when Ukraine has been supplied at such pace with weapons, now it has very evidently become a conflict between us and NATO with Ukraine being a tool. They don't... I mean the western leaders don't even conceal the fact that they are prepared to fight with Russia on the Ukrainian battlefield till the last Ukrainian and that is outrageous. The **admins** of the foreign policy chief of the European union Mr Borrell are absolutely unacceptable. We sometimes don't even or can't understand how major countries like France, like Germany, could ignore the very core national interests of their own countries and the leaders of those countries ignore the interests of their countries and the interests of their people. Playing into the US hands. And the US are very consistently pursuing their agenda. We are of the opinion and this opinion I believe is shared quite widely, the US is pursuing the agenda of securing its major influence, its major voice in the global politics. They may... like it always happens, honey is sweet but the bee stings. Sometimes they do it by persuasion, sometimes by twisting hands. But softly or hardly they push and continue to work for their complete dominance in world affairs. Some maybe happy with that, but Russia is not. Russia wants to be an independent power in world politics to have a say in world politics and not be in a position when if it contradicts, not be in a position to be made to toe and to agree to the narrative that the US promotes and pursues. So this is the perception that we have towards the kind of current tensions and the tensions between US and Russia, between NATO and Russia, are the basis of the current Ukrainian conflict. But I would like to again stress that that was not our choice. We wanted to agree and to find a compromise and a solution to the European security architecture peacefully. You cannot be... one part of you cannot be secure with the other part insecure or at the expense of security of the other part. The other part being Russia. This is exactly what happened. This is exactly what led to the current aggravation and the military conflict to our complete regret and disappointment. Of course you are correct and we have been saying that all along, it is a tragedy for the Ukraine, for Russia, for the whole of Europe, for the world at large. We are ready to start the negotiations whenever Ukrainians are ready. But we have to sit and have a picture on what we can agree. At present there is none. The last round we had in Turkey in March, at that round Ukrainians proposed in the written form, gave us some proposals and after that they reneged on them and opted possibly at the advice of somebody to continue fighting. And it continues till date. But we are hopeful for the best and eventually there will be a diplomatic solution, there cannot be any other. But it would better be sooner than later.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Thank you. That was useful. I am going to ask a lay person question. I have heard various US academics and think tankers detail the ways in which the NATO countries principally the US have as you said reneged on understandings post the dissolution of the Soviet Union in terms of expansion of NATO. But we spoke a little while ago about defence collaboration between India and Russia. I see Russia as a super power as far as defence is concerned. And we can have a hypothetical construct in which Ukraine is a NATO member and you don't have to comment or react to this, I am just thinking aloud here. I see no scenario in which Ukraine as a NATO member can attack Russia. And Russia is not just a sophisticated military power, it is a nuclear weapon power and so on. So there could be very little chance of anyone ever dreaming of attacking Russia. That is just my observation. So while I agree that there has been a systematic dilution and then reversal of the commitments made by the US and the other NATO countries in terms of what they had said as far as enlargement of NATO is concerned. So that is true. That is a recorded fact from various sources including from the US. But I also do not conceive of a situation where Ukraine can be a military threat to what I consider a mighty Russia. That is just my observation. If you wish you may comment on it. But if you feel that you have said enough that is fine too. But your last bit, you said that we need to move forward and look for a diplomatic solution, that means a negotiated settlement of this dispute I remember that from history books about the rivalry particularly at that time the United Kingdom, England to be even more specific, to control Crimea. And as of now Crimea is very much with Russia. And Russia also has I think, correct me if I am wrong, land access to a port called Mario Paul. Given this kind of situation what would be the contours of what Russia would agree to in your... if it is already a stated official position I might have missed it... what would be the kind of settlement negotiated agreement that Russia would feel comfortable about to bring this conflict to an end? What are the ... you mentioned in the discussions in Turkey and how Ukraine reneged on them? But if you could give us a sense of what are Russia's conditions under which assuming that these are public and roughly what would make Russia comfortable and the conflict would come to an end? You can see I am pressing this point because for me any kind of conflict which involves loss of life is regrettable.

Denis Alipov:

Of course. As I say we want to end the conflict as soon as possible. The situation is very fluid. The military actions are going on. What would be the ultimate compromise, the ultimate solution? I don't think anybody at the moment can answer that. But our goals have not changed. Those that we outlined from the very start. The protection of the eastern parts of the country where with the majority of the Russian population. In fact that was one of the reasons why we were forced to interfere militarily. Since 2014 the Ukrainians themselves have been in a military conflict with each other. I mean the government in Kiev with the eastern parts of the country Donetsk. Zelenskyy even called those people species which should vacate those territories. Why should they? They have always lived there. But those people are the Russian speaking majority in those territories. So the protection of those people is one of the goals. And again the creation and the agreement on Ukraine which is neutral, which is a non-NATO member, which is not a hostile territory towards Russia, these are also the goals. As president Putin has repeatedly stated and at the latest during the eastern economic forum that is going on in Vladivostok, we are set to achieve those goals. But going back to your point about an unimaginable situation when Ukraine can attack Russia or NATO can be a threat militarily, to Russia. It is not like that. It is a question of our power protection. We are not talking about attacking. NATO attacking Russia or Ukraine invading Russia, it is not about that. It is about the power protection and hypothetical upper hand of NATO to the detriment of Russia. There should be a parity if we look at the... if we don't have the **unanimity** between NATO, if there is a controversy between NATO and Russia, we need to have a parity like it was during the cold war. If Ukraine is NATO member or is not, but NATO is there in the Ukrainian territory. They will have a favorable... they will be in a favorable

position. To which we will be in no position to counter anything. They will have the upper hand in power projection and on the basis of that pressure us on various political decisions. So it is not about possible future military actions. It is about the lack of parity between us when we are unable to hypothetically respond to a hypothetical military aggression.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

That was useful. Let us move on to something that is going to happen next week. There is going to be summit level meeting in Samarkand in Uzbekistan. It is the Shanghai cooperation organization. I don't know if everybody in this room knows the Shanghai cooperation organization has amongst its members Russia, China, India, all the central Asian republics except Turkmenistan I think. And it is going to meet in Samarkand and we are familiar with Samarkand and India because that is the place from where the Mughal, subsequent emperor in Delhi Babur came from. So is President Putin likely to attend the summit in Samarkand? Do we know anything concrete about that?

Denis Alipov:

That is correct. As far as I know he is going and this will be the summit at which the presidency of the organization will go to India upon the next year. Next year India is going to preside in the organization. We are looking at a very active year next. So president Putin is going to be there as far as we go by the news. The Chinese president is going and probably the Indian Prime Minister is also going to attend. But you correctly mentioned it is an organization of the majority of or absolute majority of the central Asia states. We are participating in India China Pakistan is there. Iran last year was decided that is going to be a full member and the process has started for its full accession to the organization. There is a number of observers to the organization and also the dialogue partners. This is one of the major formats in that region. A consensus based format to promote trade and the economic relations, humanitarian ties, certainly we discuss the security issues in that format and threats projected primarily from Afghanistan, connectivity issues are being discussed and are being promoted. There are hundreds of various mechanisms and projects in implementation. This is a very successful example of closed cooperation in the land-lock central Asian region. There are new aspirants to join. So it also indicates that the reputation and the benefits that the organization provides, it is being favorably regarded in a wider area of Eurasia.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Three major countries within the Shanghai cooperation organization, the RIC, some in the audience today may not know what RIC is. That is Russia, India and China which meets not at the summit level but at the level of foreign ministers and then we have a wider group called Brics which includes Brazil, and South Africa as well. Now given the border issues between India and China in Ladakh, that has been a little bit of a dampener should we say. How do you see the situation evolving in these organizations, SCO, Brics, and RIC given this border situation in Ladakh where there are conflicting claims as to where exactly... of course border is not delineated? So in that context my question to you would be – Russia and China have demarcated the border. Are there any lessons that you can give to us, suggest to India how to work out the border with China amicably so we don't continue to have this situation at the border and then by implication not be able to collaborate and cooperate. I am just saying this from the top of my head. I don't know how things will evolve. But my sense is that it is a little difficult to cooperate wholeheartedly when you have difficulties at the border and there are conflicting territorial claims. But Russia and before that Soviet Union have sorted out the border with China. Any lessons for us or any tips for us.

Denis Alipov:

Frankly I didn't study that subject thoroughly. And don't know much about our negotiations whether with China on the border issues that we had and which we resolved. But I know that we have been in the process of resolving those issues we had for about forty years. And it did not always go smoothly.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

40 years. It took 40 years?

Denis Alipov:

Around 40 years to my knowledge and there were ups and downs at various stages. Even military clashes on the border if I am not mistaken during the negotiation process. But eventually we proved successful, I mean we and the Chinese. I believe that a clue to the success is the readiness to compromise. It is a give and take and both sides, in our case we and the Chinese should be prepared and we were prepared and eventually it happened. That way, we were prepared to compromise and found a compromise when we gave some and Chinese gave some. So generally speaking holistically this maybe one of the ways to the solution of a very complex and very sensitive issue like the border one. Please understand me correctly, I am not making any suggestions towards the tensions between India and China on the border. This is none of my business, it is none of Russia's business. We have been very consistent in saying that this is a bilateral matter between India and China. And don't want to interfere or be part of it in any way. And don't want others to directly or indirectly influence anyone. We think that India as a super power has, if I may put it like that, has its own head on its shoulders. Like the Chinese have and are perfectly capable of resolving the problems with its neighbor bilaterally or on its own. So this is our approach and we are hopeful that a resolution is found as soon as possible and as like the external affairs Minister Sri Jaishankerji said and this was said before him, the 21st century belongs to Asia and its first place belongs to India and China. So if we want progress and prosperity in Asia as a locomotive of progress in 21st century we certainly would welcome and would need India and China working together rather than to working against each other. This is our aspiration and hope.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

Thank you. I have just two more questions. One is about the SCO summit and the G20 summits that will take place in India. Do we have any confirmation or is it too early whether President Putin will be coming to India for one or both summits?

Denis Alipov:

We are in constant touch through the foreign ministries and through other agencies on bilateral contracts and arrangements. I am not in a position at the moment to confirm or deny. This is a work in progress and the leaders have spoken since last December when President Putin came to India with the visit. They have spoken several times. At least four times over the phone. They are participating in various formats, various summits. The SCO maybe the one occasion, the G20 summit it could be another one. So this is a thing in progress. Yes, we try to maintain the mechanism that we have of annual exchange of summits which we established in 2000. Last year it was the 24th meeting of the highest level between our countries.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

I would like to end with just one question about Mr Gorbachev. He passed away if I remember right at the end of August. I think the last year August. Please correct me if I am wrong. For many in India and for me also, he was a visionary. But I think within first Soviet Union and later on Russia, there are mixed

feelings about him because there was a lot of suffering for the average Russian person in terms of suddenly prices are decontrolled and bread costs several thousand percent more than what it used to cost and so on. And his personal popularity within Russia plummeted and if I remember right in 1996 he just got 0.5% of the vote. So what are your thoughts about Mr Gorbachev who was for me at least a transformational leader at the global level but there might be other aspects of his leadership which may be viewed differently within Russia.

Denis Alipov:

Correct. Yes it is no secret that in Russia it is more a controversial figure rather than an outstanding one. But he was certainly a leader of world dimension, a visionary and his significance cannot be denied in the introduction of changes to the Soviet system. Now there is of course another point of view that Gorbachev has nothing to do with the collapse of the Soviet Union rather than you know the Soviet Union collapsed under the weight of the internal problems and whether Gorbachev would not have met them, but his role was certainly instrumental so to say in introduction of the freedom of press, freedom of expression of opinion in my country. The Soviet system of course was very rigid and didn't allow to the diversity of political views. And from this sense yes he was and he should be regarded as a visionary and as a leader of global significance. But then those reforms that he initiated led to the wild capitalism of the 1990s in Russia when probably the will for changes and the lack of clear program led to the total collapse of economy. The 1990s were the golden age of organized crime in Russia. And Gorbachev is blamed for in the first place and is still regarded as the one who allowed the collapse of the economy and the one who ultimately was instrumental.... One who wanted the best and didn't know how to get it done. And didn't have a clear program to be implemented. There cannot be freedom as such in my opinion. It should be a controlled process. Otherwise we get what we got in the 1990s in Russia. The victory of President Putin in 2000s was possible because people got fed up and completely tired of that unbridled freedom that we were faced with in the 1990s because of those reforms Gorbachev initiated. It is a very complex issue and naturally he wanted the best but we had what we had ultimately.

Jaimini Bhagwati:

As they say in English, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Let's not end on that note. Thank you so much Ambassador for having come to this center for social and economic progress. We are delighted to have you here with us and share your opinions on a variety of subjects, some very tricky and difficult ones too. I wish you the best for the next year. Because your president might be here for one or both summits. SCO and G20. So all the best of luck to you and more part to your elbow. Thank you once again.

Denis Alipov:

Thank you very much.