

## **Compilation of Convenor NatStrat, Ambassador Pankaj Saran's quotes to foreign media on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bilateral Visit to Russia in June 2024**

### **→ To the BBC on July 9, 2024**

#### **1. Modi's balancing act as he meets Putin in Moscow**

“If you look at the historical trend, it [Moscow] has been one of the constants in Indian foreign policy,” Pankaj Saran, former Indian ambassador to Moscow, told the BBC. “The main pillars of the relationship include defence co-operation, energy and science technology.” “One option currently being exercised by Delhi is to keep the Russia channel open to maintain the friendship and avoid taking any measures which may further aggravate Russia’s drift into Chinese arms that is being caused by US and Western policies,” says Mr Saran.

### **→ To The Financial Times on July 9, 2024**

#### **2. Narendra Modi and Vladimir Putin to boost trade despite Ukraine war**

“India is engaged in a stand-off with China along their disputed Himalayan border, and sees Russia’s neutrality as vital to national security, officials said. “China is the primary challenge,” said Pankaj Saran, a former Indian ambassador to Russia. “We really cannot afford to do anything which converts a friend into an adversary.”

### **→ To The Christian Science Monitor on July 10, 2024**

#### **3. India-Russia Summit: Why the World's Largest Democracy Keeping Putin Close**

“Pankaj Saran, former deputy national security adviser of India, says that over the past 70 years, the India-Russia relationship has powered through difficult times. The U.S. concern over India’s closeness with Russia has only been a challenge for the last two years

“It is not as if there is anything secret about the relationship” between Delhi and Moscow, says Mr. Saran, who was India’s envoy to Russia from 2016 to 2018. “The Americans understand that the Indians are getting the discounted oil,” and that India isn’t Russia’s only potential ally in Asia.

“If you look at Russia and China, then India does not consider Russia in the same adversarial manner as it considers China,” which shares a contentious border with India, he says. “We have to maintain this friendship also to ensure that ... we do not push Russia further into Chinese arms.”

Mr. Saran, the deputy security adviser, says Mr. Modi’s commitment to independent foreign policy could prove valuable to the West. “There is also an element here of trying to engage the Russians and Putin into some kind of a dialogue, in the hope that this dialogue can contribute towards” diplomacy with the West and peace in Ukraine, he says”.