



INSIGHTS REPORT

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INDIA REFUTES US CHARGE OF FUNDING RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE

BY NARENDRA TANEJA, CHAIRMAN, INDEPENDENT ENERGY POLICY INSTITUTE, INDIA
& DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH FELLOW, OXFORD INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY STUDIES

India Buys Oil, Not Wars: Why Energy Pragmatism Isn't Funding Moscow's Guns



NARENDRA TANEJA, CHAIRMAN, INDEPENDENT ENERGY POLICY INSTITUTE, INDIA & DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH FELLOW, OXFORD INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY STUDIES

India's oil trade with Russia has been misrepresented as complicity in the Ukraine conflict, but the reality is one of economics, sovereignty, and global imbalance. The accusation that India is "funding Russia's war" ignores legality, history, and the moral contradictions of those making the charge.

Russian crude is not sanctioned by the United Nations, OECD, or any global body — only by Western powers. Indian refiners, both public and private, purchase it within international law. These decisions are commercial, not political; refiners seek affordable, reliable supplies in a volatile market. When Russia offered discounted barrels, India responded pragmatically — protecting its 1.4 billion citizens from inflation, not propping up Moscow's arsenal.

The West's moral outrage is selective. Europe still buys Russian gas indirectly and imports fertilizers, uranium, and commodities linked to Russia. Meanwhile, India exports diesel to Ukraine — often refined from Russian oil — exposing the absurdity of claims that it is financing Moscow's war effort. This is not ideology; it is market mechanics.

India's relationship with Russia is rooted in decades of mutual trust. From 1971, when Moscow shielded India during war, to today's defense cooperation and technology sharing, the partnership has been

consistent. Yet New Delhi remains firmly multi-aligned — strengthening the Quad with the United States, Japan, and Australia, while maintaining deep trade with over 40 oil suppliers and exporting refined products to 100 nations.

At home, cheap Russian crude has helped India maintain welfare programs feeding 800 million people. Energy security for the world's most populous democracy is not a luxury; it is a moral obligation. To deny India affordable energy on Western moral grounds would impose hunger and instability on millions.

India's stance reflects civilizational self-confidence. A 7,000-year-old culture that endured colonization will not bow to external pressure. "We will starve, but we will not surrender," Taneja declared — a reminder that sovereignty cannot be traded for Western approval.

The world is witnessing a transition from unipolar dominance to multipolar balance. India's energy pragmatism is not defiance but foresight — a sign that nations of the Global South will no longer be shamed for prioritizing survival over symbolism. India buys oil, not wars — and in doing so, asserts its rightful place as a mature, sovereign power in a changing world. ■

TOP 20 INSIGHTS — illustrating India's comprehensive rebuttal to the charge that it is "funding Russia's war in Ukraine" as Moscow's biggest customer for sanctioned oil

1. Russian oil is not under UN or global sanctions

India's purchases of Russian crude are fully legal under international law. No UN, OECD, or multilateral body has sanctioned Russian oil exports. Western sanctions are unilateral, not universal. Thus, Indian refiners operate within lawful global trade frameworks, rejecting any moral or legal accusation that they are bankrolling Russia's military actions.

2. Private refiners, not the Indian government, make buying decisions

Oil imports from Russia are market transactions initiated by commercial refiners — both private and public — acting independently. The government neither directs nor approves these purchases. In fact, initial deals occurred without official awareness, underscoring that India's energy sourcing is shaped by corporate economics and competitive pricing, not by foreign policy.

3. Purchases driven purely by economic logic

Indian refiners source crude based on cost efficiency, factoring in shipping, insurance, and refining margins. When Russia began offering heavy discounts after Western buyers withdrew, India acted pragmatically. It is an economic decision, not a political endorsement, allowing India to secure affordable energy and shield its citizens from inflationary shocks.



4. Russian crude helps stabilize India's energy security

As the world's third-largest energy consumer, India imports nearly 90% of its oil. Access to discounted Russian crude is vital to maintaining price stability, ensuring fuel availability, and sustaining GDP growth. Cutting such supplies would undermine economic resilience and disproportionately harm the livelihoods of millions in India's lower-income households.

5. The West remains a major buyer of Russian commodities

Critics overlook that Western nations themselves continue to import Russian fertilizers, uranium, and other key commodities. In value terms, some European and U.S. imports exceed India's oil trade with Russia. This selective outrage exposes the hypocrisy of accusing India while Western economies quietly sustain trade ties with Moscow.

6. Indian oil trade with Russia predates the Ukraine war

India's energy cooperation with Russia has deep roots going back to the Soviet era of the 1970s. Oil supply partnerships under trilateral arrangements with Iraq, Russia, and India long predate current conflicts. The claim that India opportunistically pivoted toward Moscow after 2022 misrepresents a well-established and enduring relationship.

7. No moral obligation to join a European war

India rejects the idea that it must shoulder moral responsibility for a conflict taking place in Europe. As Taneja stated, "It's a white man's war." India's duty is to safeguard domestic welfare, not absorb Western guilt. Prioritizing self-interest in energy security is a sovereign right, not an ethical failing.

8. India continues exporting fuel to Ukraine itself

Ironically, India exports refined fuels such as diesel to Ukraine — much of it produced from Russian crude. This demonstrates that Indian trade does not strengthen Moscow's war machine. Instead, it reinforces the neutral, transactional nature of India's energy policy, guided by market demand rather than geopolitical favoritism.

9. Russia remains a trusted strategic partner

Russia has been a consistent ally for decades — supporting India militarily, diplomatically, and economically. From defending India during the 1971 war to transferring nuclear submarine technology, Moscow's record of reliability matters. Such trust explains why New Delhi engages pragmatically, while still maintaining distance from Russia's domestic or military policies.

10. India is simultaneously deepening ties with the United States

India's growing strategic partnership with Washington — through the Quad alliance and technology collaboration — proves it is not aligned with Russia. Disagreements with the current U.S. administration are temporary. India seeks American technology, investment, and market access, demonstrating it can trade with Moscow while still strengthening Western ties.

11. India buys from 40 countries and sells to 106

India's diversified energy matrix includes crude imports from more than 40 countries and refined product exports to over 100 markets. This demonstrates flexibility, resilience, and independence. No single country, including Russia, dominates India's energy supply chain. Accusations of dependence or complicity fail to recognize this deliberately balanced sourcing strategy.

12. The rupee-ruble system lessens pressure on global finance

By settling trade with Russia in rupees, India reduces exposure to volatile dollar-denominated sanctions. This mechanism keeps transactions transparent, traceable, and beneficial for both economies while shielding Indian refiners from geopolitical risk. It is financial pragmatism — not defiance — aimed at stability in cross-border trade settlements.

13. Western criticism ignores domestic hypocrisy

Taneja highlights that Western governments moralize about Indian oil purchases even as they themselves continue commercial exchanges with Moscow. The United States still buys Russian-origin goods and energy derivatives. This double standard exposes that moral arguments against India's trade are politically motivated, not rooted in consistent ethical practice.

14. Oil trade supports humanitarian stability at home

Access to cheaper Russian crude enables India to maintain domestic welfare programs like free food distribution to 800 million citizens. Subsidized energy underpins public stability and economic inclusion. To reject affordable oil on Western moral grounds would mean imposing hunger and hardship on India's poorest communities.

15. National sovereignty over external pressure

India will never surrender its economic autonomy to foreign governments or global powers. As Taneja put it, "We will starve, but we will not bow." This sentiment captures India's civilizational confidence — that energy decisions must serve national interests, not be dictated by the moral expectations of others.

16. India's goal is multipolar balance, not alignment

New Delhi's foreign policy embraces "multi-alignment," maintaining constructive relations with the U.S., Russia, Europe, and China simultaneously. This approach prevents dependency and supports global equilibrium. Buying Russian oil fits within this broader strategy to balance competing interests and ensure India's strategic flexibility in a fragmented world order.

17. Oil markets are 90% geopolitics

Energy pricing is driven far more by geopolitics than economics. India, aware of this, works with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the U.S., China, Japan, and South Korea to stabilize oil below \$80 per barrel. This collective diplomacy ensures that supply disruptions or sanctions do not destabilize global markets.

18. Western Europe will ultimately return to Russian energy

Europe cannot sustain its industrial competitiveness while paying 30–40% more for American LNG. Taneja argues Western economies will eventually have to reconcile with Moscow to access affordable energy. India's current strategy simply anticipates this long-term reality rather than clinging to politically motivated embargoes.

19. The accusation ignores India's 7,000-year civilizational self-confidence

India's policy is guided by a civilizational ethos of self-reliance and dignity. Having survived invasions, colonization, and global isolation, it will not sacrifice sovereignty for approval. If forced to choose between moral lectures and national survival, India's 1.4 billion citizens will always side with pragmatic independence.

20. The real shift is from a unipolar to multipolar world

Taneja situates the Russia–India oil trade within a historic power transition. The unipolar Western order is fading as Asia reclaims influence. India's pragmatic energy policy is emblematic of this shift — asserting that emerging nations will define the rules of global trade rather than obey them. ■

