

Indo-Russian Defence Ties

Why in news?

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Amid increasing Indo-US cooperation across domains, there is a rising concerns that India's historic defence ties with the Russia may take a hit.

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What is the recent controversy?

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- A Russian "Akula-Class nuclear submarine" was leased to India in 2012 for period of 10 years.

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- The lease restricted deploying the vessel for offensive operations and had multiple clauses for ensuring its operational and technical secrecy.

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- Recently, a Russian news website accused the Indian Navy of having opened the vessel to a US technical team for inspection.

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- While the report turned out to be false, the issue raised eyebrows in strategic circles and brought the critical Indo-Russian navel partnership into focus.

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What is the historical evolution of the Indo-Russia defence ties?

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- USSR was India's strategic partner during the Cold War and also its primacy military equipment supplier.

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- Moscow started supplying naval equipment to India from 1964 and by 1987, these supplies made 70% of the Indian Navy's inventory.

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- Subsequently, Moscow loaned the first nuclear submarine to India in 1988, which was commissioned in the Indian navy as INS Chakra.

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- An understanding was also reached for accessing Soviet assistance to India's navy personals and assist the indigenous nuclear submarine programme.
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- The soviet mandate spelt out in clear terms, that no technical parameters were leaked during the period of the lease.
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- In this regard, India established strict protocols for the Vishakapatnam dockyard and even closely monitored various security parameters.
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What is the significance of Russia?

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- From being an exclusive preserve of the Russian defence industry, the Indian Navy is now increasingly looking forward to American hardware.
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- India currently looks to the US for top-of-the-line defence equipment like attack helicopters, artillery guns, and advanced transport aircrafts
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- Notably, Russian Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance aircrafts have been replaced by USA's P-8 I Poseidon aircrafts of the same type.
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- India also intends to establish ties for commencing joint arms production with the US and jointly organises the annual Indo-US-Japan Malabar exercises.
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- But despite this growing Indo-US bonhomie, India continues to buy/lease Russia equipments on a considerable scale.
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- Most importantly, Russia's technological assistance to India's indigenous nuclear submarine programme 'Arihant class' has been immense.
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What is the way forward?

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- Given this history of cooperation and India's need for continued Russian assistance, it is not currently possible for India to abandon this ago old bond.
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- Notably, the reluctance in signing the "Communication and Information

Security Agreement” with the US emanates partly from such concerns.

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- While some vouch for taking US technical assistance in naval nuclear propulsion, it wont be easy for India to extract such co-operation currently.

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- Hence, Russian primacy in Indian Navy’s scheme of thing for indispensible for the foreseeable future.

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Source: Business Line

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