



India-Russia Military Relations

For Prelims: Russia-Ukraine conflict, Operation Ganga, Various Defence Equipments India procure From Russia, Project 75I.

For Mains: Defence Technology, Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, India strategic ties with Russia, Russia-Ukraine conflict,

Why in News?

The evacuation of thousands of **Indian students in Ukraine** ([Operation Ganga](#)) is the most immediate impact of [Russia's war over Ukraine](#) on India. However, the [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#) will have long-term implications too.

- For example, **negotiating its relationships** with the **United States and other Western nations** on one side, and the [historically deep and strategic ties with Russia](#) on the other.
- This will most significantly have an impact on the decades-old **defence trade between India and Russia**.



What is the History of India-Russia Defence Ties?

- India was reliant, **almost solely on the British**, and other Western nations for its arms imports immediately after Independence.
- However, this dependence weaned, and by the **1970s India was importing several weapons systems from the USSR (now Russia)**, making it the country's largest defence importer for decades.
- Russia has provided some of the **most sensitive and important weapons platforms** that India

has required from time to time including **nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, tanks, guns, fighter jets, and missiles.**

- According to one estimate, the share of Russian-origin weapons and platforms across **Indian armed forces is as high as 85%.**
- Russia is the **second-largest arms exporter in the world, following only the United States.**
- For Russia, **India is the largest importer**, and for India, **Russia is the largest exporter when it comes to arms transfer.**
 - Between 2000 and 2020, Russia accounted for **66.5% of India's arms imports.**
- Russia's share in Indian arms imports was down to about **50% between 2016 and 2020, but it still remained the largest single importer.**

What Defence Equipment does India procure From Russia?

- **Submarines:** The **first submarine** India ever **got was also Soviet.**
 - The first **Foxtrot Class** submarine bought from the USSR entered Indian service in 1967 as [INS Kalvari](#).
 - Of the total 16 conventional diesel-electric submarines with the Indian Navy, eight are **Kilo class, of Soviet origins.**
 - India has **one indigenously manufactured nuclear ballistic submarine** ([INS Arihant](#)) commissioned, of the four that are being built. However, a lot of the technology is based on Russian platforms.
- **Frigates & Guided-missile Destroyers:** Four of the Navy's 10 guided-missile destroyers are **Russian Kashin class**, and 6 of its 17 frigates are [Russian Talwar class](#).
- **Aircraft Carrier:** The only aircraft carrier in service with India, [INS Vikramaditya](#) is a **Soviet-made Kiev-class vessel** that came into service for the [Indian Navy](#) in 2013.
- **Missile Program:** India's missile programme has been developed with significant help from Russia or the Soviets earlier.
 - The [BrahMos missile](#), which India will begin exporting soon, has been developed jointly with Russia.
- **Fighter Aircraft:** Russia has also been one of main exporters of fighter aircraft to India, including hundreds of [Sukhoi](#) and [MiG jets](#). All six of the **service's air tankers** are **Russian-made Il-78s.**
- **Arms and Ammunitions:** According to the **International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS)**, India's present military arsenal is heavily stocked with Russian-made or Russian-designed equipment.
- **Tanks:** Indian [Army's main battle tank force](#) is **composed predominantly of Russian T-72M1 (66%) and T-90S (30%).**
- **Favourable Russian Military Exports to India:** Much of Russia's influence in India comes through its willingness to provide weapons systems and technologies that no other country will export to India.
 - The US only provides **non-lethal defence technology** like **C-130j Super Hercules, C-13 Globemaster, P-8i Poseidon** etc.
 - While Russia provides high-end technology like **Brahmos supersonic missile, S-400 anti-missile system.**
 - Russia also continues to offer **advanced weapons platforms at relatively attractive rates.**

What can be the Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Military Supplies?

- At the moment there are **two major defence deals** between India and Russia that might be jeopardised by the current crisis.
- **S-400 Triumph air-defence system Deal:**
 - The deal has been under the threat of American sanctions, even as the US had not decided on it yet.
 - However, the fresh round of sanctions on Russia could jeopardise this deal.
- **Joint Submarine Development:** Russia has also pitched to make **six Air Independent Propulsion (AIP-powered) conventional submarines** for the Navy under the [P75-I project](#), along with four other international bidders.
 - India is also in talks with Russia to lease two nuclear-ballistic submarines, **Chakra 3 and Chakra 4**, the first of which is expected to be delivered by 2025.

What are India's Plans to Diversify Arms Import Diversification?

- Over the last few years, there has been a **conscious effort to expand the weapons** platform bases to not only other countries but also domestically as well.
- [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#) noted in its international arms transfer trends report last year that between 2011-15 and 2016-20 arms imports by **India decreased by 33%**.
- In 2011-15 the USA was the **second-largest arms supplier to India**, but in 2016-20 India's arms imports from the USA were 46% lower than in the previous five-year period, making the USA the fourth-largest supplier to India in 2016-20.
- **France and Israel** were the second and third largest arms suppliers to India in 2016-20.

Way Forward

- As India perceives **increasing threats from Pakistan and China** and as its ambitious plans to produce its **own major arms have been significantly delayed**, it is planning large-scale programmes for arms imports.
- India's outstanding deliveries of combat aircraft, air defence systems, ships and submarines, **India's arms imports are expected to increase** over the coming five years.
- Therefore, it is important for India to diversify its base, **to not become too reliant on any single nation**, as it can become a leverage that can be exploited by that nation.

[Source: IE](#)

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