



Indian Military Dependence on Russian Equipments

Why in News

According to the **Military Balance 2021**, India's present military arsenal is heavily stocked with **Russian-made or Russian-designed equipment**.

- The Military Balance is the **International Institute for Strategic Studies'** (global think tank) **annual assessment** of the military capabilities and defence economics of 171 countries worldwide.

Key Points

▪ About the Report:

- There has been a considerable drop in India's dependence on arms and equipment from Russia.
 - However, the **Indian military cannot operate effectively without Russian-supplied equipment** and will continue to rely on its weapons systems in the near and middle terms.
- The report is crucial in the pretext of the **US administration's review of [Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act \(CAATSA\)](#)**.
 - The CAATSA seeks to impose sanctions against the country buying military arms from Russia.
 - India's plan to purchase **[Russian-made S-400 air defense systems](#)**, which could trigger **US sanctions under Section 231 of CAATSA**.

▪ India-Russia's Military Relations:

- **Indian Dependence:** According to **[Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#)**, since 2010, Russia has been the source of nearly two-thirds (62%) of all Indian arms imports.
 - Further, India has been the largest Russian arms importer, accounting for nearly one-third (32%) of all Russian arms exports.
- **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**.
- **Army Cooperation:** Around 10,000 pieces of military hardware are procured from Russia.
 - The **[Indian Army's main battle tank](#)** force is composed predominantly of Russian

T-72M1 (66%) and T-90S (30%).

- India is negotiating on the price of **AK103 rifles** for **Make in India**.
- **Naval Cooperation:** Indian Navy's sole operational aircraft carrier is a refurbished Soviet-era ship (**INS Vikramaditya**). The Navy's fighter fleet comprises **43 MiG-29K**.
 - Four of the Navy's 10 **guided-missile destroyers** are **Russian Kashin class**, and six of its 17 frigates are **Russian Talwar class**.
 - The Navy's sole nuclear-powered submarine is on lease from Russia, and eight of the service's 14 other submarines are **Russian-origin Kilo class**.
- **Air Force Cooperation:** The Indian Air Force's 667-plane FGA (Fighter Ground Attack) fleet is 71% Russian-origin (39% Su-30s (**Sukhoi**), 22% MiG-21s, 9% MiG-29s).
 - All six of the service's air tankers are **Russian-made Il-78s**.
- **Missile Cooperation:** The country's only nuclear-capable supersonic cruise missile, **BrahMos**, is produced by a joint venture with Russia.
 - The S-400 Air Defence Missile Systems is expected to be delivered by 2021.
- **Military Exercises:** India and Russia conduct the **INDRA series** of military exercises, which began in 2003. However, the first joint Tri-Services Exercise was conducted in 2017.

The Russian Front

Russia still remains India's top weapons supplier and this complicates the relationship with the US

INKED DEALS

- \$5.4 bn** contract for **S-400** missile system
- \$3 bn** pact to lease another **nuclear attack submarine**
- \$2 bn** contract to buy **4 frigates**

IN THE PIPELINE

- \$1 bn+** deal for **AK-203** assault rifles to be made in partnership with the Ordnance Factory Board
- \$1 bn** for **Kamov Ka-226** choppers to be made in partnership with Hindustan Aeronautics
- \$1 bn** worth of emergency supplies, including **ammunition, missiles, assault rifles and anti-tank systems**

Way Forward

- **Russia's closeness with China and Pakistan** has raised concerns for India. However, this closeness is tactical, mainly induced due to western sanctions, whereas Russia-India partnership is strategic.
 - This is because Russia always saw **India as a balancer** against growing Chinese assertiveness.

- India can widen its **procurement basket and can remain close to Russia** for its strategic programmes and joint development of weapon systems.
 - Thus, **decoupling India's choice of arms suppliers** from the strategic relationship it has forged with the US is the way ahead.

Source: IE

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