Indo - Russian Friendship

What is the issue?

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- India and Russia have enjoyed a historically strong relationship based on mutual trust and cooperation but there has been a detoriation in recent years.
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- Considering the rise of an expansivist China in Asia, it is very important for India to revitalise its time tested partnership with Russia.
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What has Russia’s geopolitical outlook been realigning?

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- **Anti U.S. attitude -** Moscow’s policies are driven largely by relentless hostility towards the US and containing the western alliance led by US.
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- This has literally driven Moscow into the arms of Beijing, and has resulting in a virtual Moscow-Beijing alliance to counter American hegemony.
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- While this trend would clearly pit Russia into an orbit that is hostile to India, there have nevertheless been efforts by Delhi to strengthen ties with Moscow.
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- Internationally, India and Russia work together in forums like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
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- Also, Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral is another forum of cooperation that was initially promoted by Russia.
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- **Taliban Factor -** Russian has joined with China and Pakistan calling for negotiations with Afghan Taliban, which will give legitimacy to the Taliban.
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- This is ironic, given that approximately 14,000 Soviet soldiers were killed in

action between 1979 and 1989 against the ISI-backed radical Afghan groups.
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- While this will cement Russia into what is an anti-India pole, it will also weaken India’s international rhetoric against terrorism.
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How has Indo-Russian defense cooperation fared?

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- The approximately 270 Russian Sukhoi-30 fighters are the main element of the IAF’s strike and air defence potential.
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- An aircraft carrier with MiG-29 aircrafts, a leased nuclear submarine, guided missile frigates and over 900 T-90 tanks are other important equipments.
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- Multi-barrelled launchers, and the Indo-Russia collaborative development Brahmos missiles are currently vital defence arsenal.
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- Light helicopters and S-400 Triumph air defence systems are recent additions to the vast amount of Russian equipment in our military.
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- Russian defence exports to India in recent years account for 39% of its total exports and there are clear mutual interdependence in the trade.
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- While there are some concerns about Russian recent defence sales to Pakistan, there isn’t much market there due to Pakistan’s financial limitations.
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How has the Indo-Russian trade relations fared?

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- While limited connectivity has constrained merchandise trade greatly, mutual cooperation in investments in the petrochemical sector has been significant.
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- The recent $12.9-billion deal for the acquisition of Essar Oil refinery by Russia’s Rosneft, is one of the single biggest foreign investments in India.
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- India’s investments in Russia’s oil and gas set is currently $8 billion and is

set to reach $15 billion by 2020, as India is planning investments in Siberian Oil.
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- Moreover, there are substantial prospects for increasing Russian supplies of coal, diamonds, LNG and fertilisers to India.
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- There is also considerable potential for Russia and India to cooperate in executing projects in other countries such as Afghanistan and Vietnam.
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- Significantly, Russia and India are presently cooperating in the construction of the first nuclear power plant in Bangladesh.
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How significant is the China factor?

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- **Rise of China -** Beijing is clearly rising as the sole dominant power centre in Asia, and is also fast narrowing its gap with the US on the global stage.
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- This presents a serious challenge to India as increasing Chinese assertiveness in the Indian Ocean region has been ambitious and univocal.
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- While the US and Japan acknowledge the vitality of India for the geo-political stability of Asia, Russia hasn't showed the same warmth.
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- This could possibly be due to Moscow apprehensions about India's membership in alliances like Quad (US, Australia, Japan, India).
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- **Historic Factors -** China's superior economic prowess gives it an advantage in negotiating with Russia, but there are historical distates between the two.
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- Russia has a long border with China, and the latter's meteoric rise is perceived as a threat to Russia's Siberian region and Vladivostok.
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- The former Soviet Union (Now Russia) had a rickety relationship with China

and there were even significant border skirmishes in 1968-70s.
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- Nonetheless, Moscow will continue to play second fiddle to China whenever it suits its interests and India needs to show dexterity to handle situations.
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Source: Business Line

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