Indo-U.S. Ties: A Sinking Ship

What is the issue?

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- There is now clear signs that relationships between Indian and the U.S. is strained.
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- Steps must be urgently taken to arrest this drift.
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What is the evolving dynamics?

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- The U.S. President Trump had decided to walk out of the multilateral nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) with Iran.
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- This was subsequently followed by the U.S. Congress's **CAATSA law**, which imposed sanctions on Iran, Russia and North Korea.
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- Mr. Trump is also said to be insistent on tough sanctions against all those continuing to engage with Iran and Russia.
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- These developments have direct effects for India, as Iran is a major crude supplier and Russia is a major defence seller to India.
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- Additionally, U.S. has also been harsh on countries like India and China for allegedly having "skewed trade tariffs" and "big trade surpluses" with the U.S.
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What has been India's reaction?

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- On its part, the Modi government has openly asserted a clear change away from the pro-U.S. tilt of India's foreign policy.
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- In the recent "**Shangri-La Dialogue**", Modi asserted 'strategic autonomy' in foreign affairs, indicating India's growing independence from the U.S. block.
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- Defying the U.S. rhetoric demanding reduction in engagements with Russia and Iran, bilateral were held with both of these countries recently.
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- India has also promised to raise oil imports from Iran this year, and has committed to increase engagements on the Chabahar port project.
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- In addition, India has been negotiating a $5.5 billion deal with Russia for the S-400 Triumf missile systems, all of which is likely to attract U.S. ire.
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How does the future look?

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- U.S. has always pressured allies to limit their ties with countries that it considers a threat to the international order.
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- But Trump administration has been going public with its ultimatum and deadlines, which is making it difficult for partners to comply.
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- India's present international engagements are likely to trigger U.S. sanctions unless the two countries reach a compromise soon.
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- But political will to address these issues is clearly not there presently, as both governments are engrossed in their own calculus.
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- Notably, there has been little Indo-U.S. political engagement lately and even the scheduled "Foreign & Defence Minsters" 2+2 dialogue has been postponed.
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Quick Facts

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Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)

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- SLD (or IISS - ‘Asia Security Summit’), is an inter-governmental security forum conducted by “International Institute for Strategic Studies” (IISS).
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- IISS is an independent international think tank that intends to cultivate among policy makers of different countries, a sense of community.
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- SLD is attended by high ranking government and military officials of 28 Asia-Pacific states and is held annually in Singapore’s Shangri-La Hotel since 2002.
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Source: The Hindu

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