PREFACE

The early 1990s dramatically transformed Russia's bilateral relationship with India. Following the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, Moscow relinquished its policy of competing with the West in the political, ideological, and strategic spheres. Instead it sought an understanding or even a partnership with the West. In the initial period, the Russian policy under President Yeltsin was totally oriented towards the West. With the help of Western aid and assistance, Russia endeavoured to overcome the multi-faceted crisis that had emerged during that period. At the same time, relations with India and other Asian countries were given low priority. India reciprocated in the same manner, as India was also reassessing her foreign and economic relations in the new international situation. It seemed in the early 1990s that the two countries had moved away from each other. India on its part showed a willingness to maintain relations with Russia to get at least a limited supply of military spares to keep its military machine rolling. A desperate Indian defence ministry tried to adopt a calibrated approach to the deferred payment issue in order to normalize defence supplies. The policy of the Russian government however, made the Indian situation precarious. Russian sales of military hardware shifted from an ideological to a market-driven approach. Russia showed less concern of India's economic transition and held up supplies in order to put pressure on India to expedite the thorny issue of rouble-rupee exchange rate. This virtually led to a collapse in trade in 1992 and gave a very tough time to Indian strategists. The above situation posed a question mark on the rationale of successive previous governments' policy of overdependence on a single source.

President Boris Yeltsin's visit to India in January 1993, however, cleared some uncertainties. Expectations developed in both sides that the traditional ties with India would be revitalized. But the promises and commitments made by the Russian President during the visit proved to be just platitudinal in nature. The manner in which the Indo-Russian cryogenic deal was scuttled made it apparent to the Indian leaders that the USA had the final say in the Indo-Russian relationship. Thus it became difficult for India to regard Russia even as a reliable partner in new world order.
By the mid-1990s, however, the recovery of the Indian economy and the financial needs of Russia’s military-industrial complex quickly mended the temporary “hiccup” in Indo-Russian military cooperation. It has given an opportunity to the two “neo-reformers” to build up their relationship based on financial needs (Russia) and a requirement for strategic muscle (India). Thus from the mid 1990s onwards the above area has emerged as the mainstay of cooperation. It however, creates the possibility of collaboration in other areas as well. Both sides have started talking about an Indo-Russian strategic partnership and are referring to each other as a priority partner in the field of military and defence.

Moreover, Moscow’s disenchantment with the west and the development of nationalistic feelings at home forced it, to reassess its foreign policy approach. It gave the chance to India to renew its relations with a more positive outlook. Primakov’s appointment first as Foreign Minister of Russia and later as Premier further enhanced the prospects of better ties. During his tenure Russia emphasized on the need to correct the imbalance in the country’s ties with both the west and the east, particularly with India. Russia started referring to India as a global partner with coincidental strategic interests. A number of treaties and summit meetings have taken since then and we get the impression that the old essence of the partnership is returning. Besides, all problematic areas such as the Rupee-Rouble exchange rate, spare parts supply and cryogenic engine issues have been resolved. Controversial issues such as the CTBT have been put on the back burner. Furthermore, in 1997 both sides agreed that the bilateral agreement of 1994 on defense cooperation should be extended to 2010, long before the official expiration date of 2000. The idea behind this initiative was to provide as much latitude for future arms deals as possible.

This thesis therefore repeatedly emphasizes that the Indo Russian defence relationship is essentially a continuum of the old Indo-Soviet friendship barring the phase of benign neglect in the early 1990’s. Of course the motivations for both players may have altered given the changed global scenario.

In this endeavor, the thesis has been divided into four chapters and a conclusion.

First chapter of the thesis presents the historical perspective of the Indo-Soviet military and strategic cooperation as well as an historical overview of India’s
cold war military procurement decision. The chapter tries to understand the evolution of India's military and strategic policy vis-a-vis the world in a cold war perspective. It starts with establishing the historical linkages that India and Russia have had since the 15th century. It also deals with the second world war era relations with India, especially the Stalin era when ties between India and the Soviet Union were distant. The subsequent emergence of friendly cooperation and frequent visits of top leadership is highlighted to get the understanding of factors for closer relations. In this part a brief detail of the Indo-China war, 1965 war and 1969 Soviet-China border clash has been discussed. The closer military partnership fostered by India and Russia in form of 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty has been analysed in perspective of the changing international scenario after 1969, and the growing alliance of Washington, Peking and Islamabad. Conclusively it gives an overall assessment of India and Soviet Union's relationship from 1950 to 1991 and its benefit and losses along with questioning the rationality of over-reliance over one source and failure of the diversification policy.

Second chapter starts with the consequences of Soviet Union's disintegration and India's problem in forging relationship with fifteen successor states. It also analyses India's difficult task to reorient its foreign and defence policy with most important successor state Russia. In this background, the chapter moves to analyses Indo-Russian strategic and defence cooperation in different phases in 1990s. The chapter broadly divided in two parts, first part deals strategic cooperation and second deals defence relationship of two sides. Within these two parts there are number of section and subsections, dealing with specific treaties, agreements, visits of leaders, problem areas, and transaction of arms and ammunitions. The first part aims at discovering the contours, relations took, between both countries by sequentially analyzing the chronological events in context of the shaky situation of early 1990's finally culminating in a stable phase. Before going to second part this part finally elucidates the changing pattern of relationship.

Second part of the chapter has dealt compressively with military cooperation of both sides after disintegration and looks at how both countries despite initial hiccups reformulate its defence relationship in new situation. This is the area where India felt greatest impact of disintegration. Finally the chapter concludes with overall assessment of Indo-Russian relations in 1990s where it raises doubts over the rationality of Indian planners for doing the same mistake, they did in early. Moreover,
it also points out the flaws of new strategic partnership where from outer glass everything looks perfect, but in reality relations which looked very solid in late 1990s had a very superficial base, reaching an end within four to five years. Further, the economic relations between two states are still in very nascent stage and in military field Russia is not in position to offer new weapons in near future.

The third chapter exclusively assesses the state of Russian economy in 1990s and its impact on its military industrial complex. The chapter has a special importance for India and Russia because their future relationship is very much based on the potentiality of this sectors competency and technological advancement vis-a-vis international market. India and Russia have a long bilateral history of strategic and military cooperation with Russia, India being heavily dependent on Russian arms and ammunitions since 1960. Moreover, in the post cold war era, MIC appears to be the only solid pillar of the strategic partnership, because track record of bilateral cooperation in Non-defence sector has not been so commendable. The concluding part the chapter makes an effort to explore Russia’s potential in the technological field and the prospect of Indian collaboration, to its advantage, in it, thereby.

The fourth chapter deals with growing strategic and defence ties between China and Russia and its implications for India. Relations with China has always been area of concern to India. The chapter starts with the identification of problem areas between India and China and its impact on overall relationship between India-China and Russia. It also gives the details of historical and current background of Russia-China strategic relations from 1950 to 2002 and its overall effect on their bilateral relations. Further, it describes the key military areas of defence agreements where Russia and China have struck a deal and how it has strengthen the Chinese position from past. The chapter also gives the brief details of transfer of Russian military and technology to China’s three services. The concluding section once again focuses on the irritants of Indo- China relations and concludes that the development of Russia-China relations in 1990s is not at all helpful for India’s national security.

Finally, conclusion of the thesis tries to test the hypotheses on the basis of overall study and proposes, in some alternatives which India can pursue in juxtaposition with the already firmly established relation with Russia.