

S-400 Purchase & Indo-US Relations

Russia has begun delivery of S-400 air defence system to India. What is this system, why is it important for India, and how is this deal with Russia causing tensions in Indo-US relations.

What is S-400?

- one of the most advanced and a potent air defence system in the world, **S-400 Triumf** has the capability to protect against **almost all sorts of aerial attacks**, including *drones, missiles, rockets and even fighter jets*. It is a long-range surface-to-air missile system.

How does it work?

- S-400 detects an aerial threat approaching the air defence bubble (the area it has to protect), calculates the trajectory of the threat, and fires missiles to counter it.
- It has long-range surveillance radars that send information to the command vehicle. On identifying the target, the command vehicle orders a missile launch.

Think of the **Iron Dome**, recently used by Israel to protect against incoming rockets from Gaza May. Only, **S-400 has the capacity to protect a much larger area from threats that are much farther**

Why has India bought them?

- To protect against attacks by missiles, or fighter jets from China or Pakistan.
- As per **Observer Research Foundation**, 'there is no alternative system capable of serving India's long-range air defence requirements, from the standpoint of either capability or cost'. Hence S-400 is very critical to India's air defence system.
- The report compared S-400 with the **American MIM-104 Patriot system**., The Patriot system is primarily oriented toward missile defence with less focus on the pure anti-aircraft role. It said S-400 can be deployed within five minutes, compared to 25 minutes for Patriot (PAC-3). It has a speed of 4.8 km/s compared to 1.38 km/s. It is cheaper too, with a per-battery cost of approximately \$500 million, compared to the Patriot's \$1 billion.

Who all have it?

- Belarus ,Turkey, Egypt have it. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have also shown interest.
- China placed an order in March 2014, and the delivery began in 2018. During the standoff in eastern Ladakh, which began in May 2020 and remains unresolved, **China had reportedly deployed its S-400 along the Line of Actual Control**.

Why is the US upset with it?

- The US wants India to wean off its traditional reliance on Russian defence systems. Russia has been the largest defence partner for India over the decades, a relationship that is changing as India inches closer to the US diplomatically and strategically; imports from the US have gone up, largely at the cost of Russian imports.

- As per Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – while arms imports by India decreased by 33% between 2011–15 and 2016–20, **Russia remained the largest supplier to India in 2011-15** and in the next half decade from 2016 -20.
 - “However, Russia’s deliveries dropped by 53 per cent between the two periods and its share of total Indian arms imports fell from 70 to 49 per cent.
 - 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 per cent** lower than in the previous five-year period, making the USA the **fourth largest supplier to India in 2016–20**.
- But the larger cause of concerns about the deal for Indo-US relationship lies in a 2017 law passed by the US named Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The US imposed sanctions on Turkey, a longstanding NATO ally, in December 2020 over its purchase of the system.
- Recently, a US Congressional report warned that if India goes ahead with the purchase of the S-400 system, it may lead to sanctions under CAATSA.
- **India’s External Affairs Ministry** responded that “**India and the US have a comprehensive global strategic partnership**” and “**India has a special and privileged strategic partnership with Russia**”. India has always pursued an independent foreign policy. This also applies to our defence acquisitions and supplies which are guided by our national security interests.”

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE:

- SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
- **H.Q.**- Stockholm
- Established in 1966 at Stockholm (Sweden).

Th Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA):

- It is a United States federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.
 - Objective is to counter American adversaries Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures
- The Act empowers the US to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons who engage in a “significant transaction” with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

INDO-US DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP RELATION AND WAY AHEAD:

- The ties between India and the United States have witnessed considerable improvement owing to the political will of both the countries which ensured that the India-US ties remain on a growth track and become more profound year on year.
- The current shared interests of India and US encompass humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism cooperation, fighting violent religious extremism, maritime security activities, weapons proliferation monitoring, regional stability maintenance and related aspects.
- With the US designating India as “**Major Defence Partner**,” a status unique to India, India is now at par with its closest allies. This has opened the doors to Indian procurement of sensitive defence technologies, thus, creating a new panorama for elevated **Indo-US cooperation**, like signing of Defence Technologies and Trade Initiative (DTTI), BECA, COMCASA, LEMOA etc.
- India is set to undertake one of the largest equipment procurement cycles in the world with an estimated investment of about USD 130 billion on capital acquisitions in the next five to seven years, which will create massive opportunities for the domestic industry, given the government’s push for indigenisation.



- Besides building local supply chains which will augment manufacturing capabilities, significant opportunity exists in engineering services, outsourcing activities, investments in Defence Industrial corridors, supply chain sourcing and associated maintenance, repair and overhaul related activities.
- The emerging **geopolitical** realisations combined with **sound economic rationale** make collaborations between US and Indian defence industries seem imperative.

How to deal with US pressure:

- It is well known phrase in International relations that “in international relations there are no permanent enemies or friends, only permanent national interests”. So, India should focus on strengthening its national interests by building its capacities & capabilities
- Invest on indigenization of defence and other critical technologies , and reduce its dependence on US.
- Partnering with other technologically advanced US allies like Israel, France, Germany, Canada, etc to diversify defence procurement away from Russia.

As per **Harsh V Pant**- despite the turbulence generated by recent contentions, India has the diplomatic astuteness & the ability to confidently navigate this minor trouble as the Indo-US relationship remain stronger. Thus, he suggests that India should take the lead in shaping the terms of engagement of its partnership with US, rather than being carried out by grand theories & surrounding noises.

ABOUT NATO:

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is an intergovernmental military alliance between 28 European countries and 2 North American countries. The organization implements the **North Atlantic Treaty** that was signed on **4 April 1949**.
- NATO constitutes a system of collective security, whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.
- **headquarters - Brussels, Belgium,**
- **Headquarters of Allied Command Operations** is near **Mons, Belgium.**
- Original 12 countries; current strength- 30.

The combined military spending of all NATO members in 2020 constituted **over 57%** of the global nominal total.

