



On India-US global strategic partnership

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(MainsGS2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests & Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.)

Context:

Russia has started supplying the S-400 Triumf air defence system to India which has also thrown down the gauntlet to the U.S. that threatened sanctions against India.

About the S-400 Triumf system:

- S-400 Triumf is considered one of the world's most advanced air defence systems that can simultaneously track and neutralise a range of incoming objects spanning aircraft, missiles and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) over very long ranges.
- The S-400 is fully mobile and each system has a 3D phased array acquisition radar that can track around 300 targets up to 600 km, command and control centre, automatic tracking and targeting systems, launchers and support vehicles.
- Each system has four different types of missiles for up to 40 km, 120 km, 250 km and maximum range of 400 km and up to 30 km altitude and the different ranges and varying altitudes create a layered air defence net.
- An S-400 battalion has eight missile launchers, typically with four missiles each.

- The 30K6E Command and Control elements include the 55K6E combat control post.

Importance for india:

- The S-400 fills important gaps in India's national air defence network and would complement India's indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation and create a multi-tier air defence over the country.
- Given its long range, if deployed towards the Western borders, the system can track movements of Pakistan Air Force aircraft as soon as they take off from their bases.
- For the Indian Air Force (IAF), the high-end technology S-400 would give a fillip and make up for its falling fighter aircraft squadrons in the medium term.
- Former IAF chief ACM B.S. Dhanoa had on several occasions termed the S-400 air defence systems and Rafale fighter jets as "game-changers" for the IAF and said they were like a "booster dose" to the force.

The US sanctions:

- In 2017, the U.S. had passed its Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) that provided for economic and travel sanctions against countries and officials that transacted significant military and intelligence contracts with Russia, North Korea and Iran.
- The CAATSA is designed to ensure that no country is able to increase military engagement with Iran, North Korea and Russia without facing deterrent punitive action from the U.S.
- The sanctions are unilateral, and not part of any United Nations decision, and therefore no country is bound to accept them.
- However, the law empowers the US President to waive sanctions or delay them if he/she certifies that the deal is not a threat to the U.S. and allies, that waiver of sanctions is in the U.S.'s "vital national security interests" or that the country being sanctioned promises to reduce its future dependence on the "adversary country".

India's position:

- India has not backed down in the face of U.S. opposition and is scheduled to receive the first S-400 deliveries in December.
- According to the external affairs ministry "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 and this also applies to India's defence acquisitions and supplies which are guided by its national security interests.

Conclusion:

- For India, acceding to such sanctions amounts to becoming a party to a bilateral dispute, and challenges the nation's principles of sovereignty and strategic autonomy.
- Thus, India is trying to reason with the U.S. for an exceptional waiver to its domestic law, as it negates the very "rules-based international order" that is the foundation of the India-U.S. global strategic partnership.