



## Philippines deal for BrahMos missiles

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**(Mains GS 2 : Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.)**

### **Context:**

India has formally inked its first major defence system export deal with the Philippines, signing a \$375 million contract for the BrahMos shore-based anti-ship missile system.

### **Elevating ties:**

- The contract includes the delivery of three missile batteries, training for operators and maintainers as well as the necessary Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) package.
- Each battery comprises two missile launchers, a radar and a command-and-control centre, and can fire two missiles within 10 seconds.
- This supersonic missile is an India-Russia joint venture which can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or from land platforms.

### **Expand defence manufacturing:**

- India has been essentially known globally to be among the top five arms importers, according to a March 2021 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- But recently, the Indian government is looking to reduce its arms imports and increase defence exports in order to strengthen its defence manufacturing and production.

- At present, India is the twenty-fourth largest arms exporter in the world, but India's vision is "to expand its defence manufacturing sector and become a bigger arms exporter generating a revenue of \$5 billion by 2025".

#### **Provide deterrence:**

- For the Philippines, the purpose behind the acquisition of the supersonic cruise missile is to improve its coastal defence and will be used by the Coastal Defence Regiment of the Philippine Marines.
- The deal with the Philippines is also significant, as like India, the country has seen its relationship with China sour, as Beijing has been making aggressive moves in the South China Sea.
- The BrahMos missiles will provide deterrence against any attempt to undermine Philippines sovereignty and sovereign rights, especially in the West Philippine Sea.

#### **Countering expansionism:**

- The Philippines has been embroiled in a territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea since the early 1990s.
- From the Chinese occupation of the Mischief Reef in 1992, the clash around the Scarborough Shoal in 2012, the turf has intensified further in recent years with very frequent skirmishes, disagreements, between the Chinese navy, coast guards and their Filipino counterparts.
- The Chinese maritime militia has been constantly engaging in clashes and harassing the Southeast Asian claimant nations, sometimes even in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).
- The legal weapon employed by the Philippines, whereby in 2016 the Permanent Court of Arbitration had rejected China's nine-dashed line claims, had not stopped China from indulging in artificial island reclamation activities in these disputed islands to unilaterally enforce its maritime claims.
- Thus, Countries are now no longer shying away from undertaking strong anti-China policies and joining hands under the purview of 'like-minded partnership' to deal with an expansionist Beijing.

#### **Vulnerability increases:**

- China has rapidly expanded its defence and military capabilities which has made the Southeast Asian claimant countries very vulnerable.
- This has forced them to reach out to like-minded countries like India for further strengthening the bilateral ties especially in the realm of defence.
- There is an attempt by the Philippines to also diversify its major arms suppliers and look for other exporters besides the United States and South Korea.

- The defence relations between India and Philippines have been on an upward trajectory with India extending a \$100 million defence related Line of Credit to Manila.

#### **Reliable defence partner:**

- The sale of Brahmos missiles enables India to ensure its place as a reliable defence partner to its Southeast Asian neighbours.
- This will provide India the much needed headway to export the BrahMos cruise missile to countries like Vietnam, Indonesia who have also made repeated appeals for its purchase as well.
- The Indian government, in order to give a push to its age-old Look East policy, had rechristened it to the Act East policy in 2014, but still there were critical voices pointing that India has a long way to go to establish a strong and meaningful presence in its extended neighbourhood.

#### **Proactive defence diplomacy:**

- India since after the Galwan Valley clash of June 2020 has been deepening its ties with the United States and with the allies of the US as well like Australia and now the Philippines.
- India is engaging in “proactive defence diplomacy” in response to China’s naval incursions in the Indo-Pacific and also China’s encroachments in the disputed land border with India.
- This deal provides the perfect leeway for India to develop a strong defence linkage, partnership with countries of the ASEAN and put in some weight behind its constant mantra of ‘ASEAN centrality’ in its Indo-Pacific vision.

#### **Conclusion:**

Given that countries like the Philippines in the ASEAN have started to push back against China, this deal brings one step closer to elevating ties between the two democracies "to a strategic partnership and our shared objective of a free and peaceful Indo-Pacific.