China-Solomon Islands Pact

Why in news?

China's government announced that it had signed a landmark security pact with the Solomon Islands, evoking concern from Australia and the U.S.

What is the agreement about?

- The agreement is the first of its kind that China has agreed with any country which is basically an inter-governmental framework agreement on security cooperation.
- Under the agreement, the two sides will conduct cooperation in areas such as maintenance of social order, protection of the safety of people's lives and property, humanitarian assistance and natural disaster response.
- It is unclear how China plans to support the Solomon Islands in maintaining social order and whether Chinese security forces will be deployed.
- But, according to a draft that was leaked last month, the Solomon Islands can request police and military personnel to assist in maintaining social order
- China can also make ship visits and use its ports for logistics.

What is the response of the Indo-Pacific countries?

- **Australia**- Australia is just 2000km south of the Solomon Islands and has seen years of escalating tensions with China.
- Australia was deeply disappointed and concerned about the lack of transparency with which this agreement has been developed, noting its potential to undermine stability in the region.
- **New Zealand**- New Zealand said the country was saddened that the Solomon Islands had made the pact.
- **The U**.S. - The US National Security Council official is due to arrive in the Solomon Islands for high-level talks.
- The US has said it will re-open its embassy in the Solomon Islands, which has been closed since 1993.

Why is this pact a cause of concern?

- **Regional security**- The significance of the pact extends beyond the immediate regional security concerns in the Pacific.
- **Military bases**- For decades, China insisted it would never open a military base abroad, but, in 2017, the PLA put into use its first foreign base in Djibouti.
- The Solomon Islands government said the agreement does not imply China will build a base there.
- **Interference**- Chinese media have mentioned China-Pakistan patrols in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

- Reports have suggested the deployment of security forces in Tajikistan near the Wakhan corridor that links Afghanistan and Xinjiang.
- **Neglection of doctrines**- Key pillar of China's peaceful rise doctrine was popularised by Panchsheel — the "non-interference" in the internal affairs of other countries.
- China's past commitments on military bases and non-interference were intended to show the world Beijing would not seek to become a global supreme leader but its intention does not square with that idea.

References

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