S-400 deal - US Sanctions on Turkey

Why in news?

The United States has recently imposed sanctions on Turkey over Ankara's acquisition of Russian S-400 air defence systems.

What is the significance?

- Ankara acquired the Russian S-400 ground-to-air defenses in mid-2019 and says they pose no threat to NATO allies.
- Washington has long been threatening sanctions on Turkey and had removed the country from an F-35 jet program in 2019.
- Turkey has now condemned the sanctions as a "grave mistake" and urged Washington to revise its "unjust decision".
- It said sanctions would inevitably harm mutual relations and threatened unspecified retaliatory steps.
- The sanctions have come near the end of Trump's presidency.
- This is likely to weigh on Turkey's ties with Democrat Joe Biden's administration when he takes over as president in a month.
- **India** is set to get the consignment of the S-400 air defence system in early 2021.
- With this, New Delhi is watching Washington's moves closely.
- India has got a waiver under CAATSA from the outgoing Trump administration.
- It hopes that the incoming Biden administration in the U.S. would not work towards reversing the decision.

What is the S-400 air defence missile system?

- The S-400 Triumf, (NATO calls it SA-21 Growler), is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.
- It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world.
- It represents the fourth generation of long-range Russian SAMs, and the successor to the S-200 and S-300.
- The system can engage all types of aerial targets within the range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km.
- These include aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and ballistic and

cruise missiles.
- The system can track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously.
- The S-400 Triumf air defence system integrates a multifunction radar, autonomous detection and targeting systems, anti-aircraft missile systems, launchers, and command and control centre.
- It is capable of firing three types of missiles to create a layered defence.
- It can be integrated into the existing and future air defence units of the Air Force, Army, and the Navy.
- It is considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).

Why does India need it?

- From India's point of view, China is also buying the system.
- In 2015, Beijing signed an agreement with Russia to purchase six battalions of the system. Its delivery began in January 2018.
- China's acquisition of the S-400 system has been viewed as a "game changer" in the region.
- However, its effectiveness against India is limited.
- Nevertheless, India's S-400 acquisition is crucial to counter attacks in a two-front war, including even high-end F-35 US fighter aircraft.
- The Defence Acquisition Council of India is on a plan to buy five units of S-400 for its defence needs.
- The deal is worth about USD 5 billion and is near fruition, and negotiations are at an "advanced stage".
- It is expected to be signed before a summit meeting between Indian PM Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin soon.

What is CAATSA, and how does it affect S-400 deal?

- Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) was passed unanimously by the US Congress and signed reluctantly by US President Donald Trump.
- Enacted on August 2, 2017, its core objective is to counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures.
- Title II of the Act primarily deals with sanctions on Russian interests such as its oil and gas industry, defence and security sector, and financial institutions.
    - This came in the backdrop of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US Presidential elections.
- Section 231 of the Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions enumerated in Section 235 of the Act.

- It is imposed on persons engaged in a “significant transaction” with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.
- As part of Section 231, the US State Department has notified 39 Russian entities, dealings with which could make third parties liable to sanctions.
- These include almost all of the major Russian companies/entities which are active in manufacturing defence items and/or their exports.
- However, mere naming of 39 Russian entities does not automatically lead to the imposition of sanctions.
- The key determinant for imposing sanctions is “significant transaction” between the entity and an outside agency.

How does this affect India?

- CAATSA, if implemented in its stringent form, would have affected India’s defence procurement from Russia.
- Russian maker of S-400s — Almaz-Antey Air and Space Defense Corporation JSC — is on the list of 39 Russian entities.
- Apart from the S-400, Project 1135.6 frigates and Ka226T helicopters will also be affected.
- Also, it will impact joint ventures, like Indo Russian Aviation Ltd, Multi-Role Transport Aircraft Ltd and Brahmos Aerospace.
- It will also affect India’s purchase of spare parts, components, raw materials and other assistance.
- Notably, most of India’s weapons are of Soviet/Russian origin –
    - nuclear submarine INS Chakra, the Kilo-class conventional submarine,
    - the supersonic Brahmos cruise missile,
    - the MiG 21/27/29 and Su-30 MKI fighters, IL-76/78 transport planes, T-72 and T-90 tanks, Mi-series of helicopters, and Vikramaditya aircraft carrier
- To note, during the period 2010-17, Russia was the top arms supplier to India.
- But the Russian share in India’s arms imports during this period has declined to 68%, from an all-time high of 74% during the 2000s.
- On the other hand, the combined share of the US and Israel has increased from 9% to 19% in the reference period.
- Also, between 2000-2009 and 2010-17, US arms deliveries to India have increased by a whopping 1470%.

What about India-U.S. ties and the waiver offered?

- CAATSA impacts Indo-US ties and dents the image of the US as a reliable partner.
- The US sees India as a major market for the US defence industry.

- In the last one decade, it has grown from near zero to USD 15 billion worth of arms deals.
- In this backdrop, the portion of a new bill in the U.S. - National Defense Authorisation Act 2019 - is to be passed.
    - The provision that amends CAATSA does not mention any country.
    - But the intended beneficiaries of the amended waiver are India, Vietnam and Indonesia.
- India’s exemption under CAATSA makes a point on principles that, as a sovereign country, India cannot be dictated about its strategic interests by a third country.
- Under Biden’s presidency, India hopes that Washington would understand New Delhi’s security imperatives, especially with a hostile China along the border.

Source: The Indian Express

