



BrahMos' Export

This article is based on [“Aligning a missile deal with destination Manila”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 18/03/2021. It talks about the recent India-Philippines deal for the export of BrahMos cruise missiles.

Recently, India and the Philippines have signed the “Implementing Arrangement” for “procurement of defense material and equipment procurement”. This agreement lays the groundwork for the highly anticipated export of the BrahMos cruise missile, through the government-to-government route.

Apart from this, India is in advanced talks with several countries like Vietnam, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Indonesia, and South Africa to sell them the BrahMos missile system.

Exporting the BrahMos missile system will be of great significance, as it would boost the credibility of India as a defense exporter, help it meet the target of \$5 billion in defense exports by 2025, and elevate its stature as a regional superpower. However, there are many challenges that lie ahead.

About BrahMos

- Research and development of the BrahMos cruise missile systems began in the late 1990s.
- Manufactured by BrahMos Aerospace Limited, a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organisation and Russia's Military Industrial Consortium NPO Mashinostroyeniya.
- This is the first supersonic cruise missile to enter service.
- It is capable of attaining a speed of Mach 2.8 (almost three times the speed of sound), it has a range of at least 290 km (a new version can reach up to 400km).
- Traveling with such velocity means that it would be difficult for air defense systems utilizing surface-to-air missiles to intercept the BrahMos.
- Early naval and land variants of the BrahMos were inducted into service by the Indian Navy in 2005 and the Indian Army in 2007.
- Subsequently, an air-launched variant was successfully tested in November 2017 by the Indian Air Force from its Sukhoi-30MKI fighter jet, giving the missile a dominating presence in all three domains.
- Further, efforts to increase the speed and range of the missile in its next iterations are underway, with a goal of achieving hypersonic speeds (at or above Mach 5) and a maximum range of 1,500 km.
- These advanced and powerful capabilities of the BrahMos not only augment the strength of the Indian military but make it a highly desirable product for other countries to procure as well.

Significance of the BrahMos' Export

- **Stronger Indo-Pacific Presence:** The implications of the Philippines becoming the first country to import the BrahMos would be wide-ranging and consequential in the Indo-Pacific.
 - Also, concluding stronger defense relationships with the U.S., Japan, and ASEAN countries actually put India on a stronger footing in its dealings with China.

- **Tackling China's Military Assertiveness:** India's decision to sell the BrahMos missile system to ASEAN countries like the Philippines and Vietnam reflects concerns about China's growing military assertiveness in its neighborhood.
 - Further, India tries to answer China in its own language, as China provides military assistance to India's arch-rival Pakistan and threatens India by docking its submarines in Sri Lanka.
- **Expanding India's Geopolitical Horizons:** The BrahMos export will boost India's economic, soft, and hard power profile in the region and provide the Indo-Pacific with a strong and dependable anchor with which they can protect their sovereignty and territory.
- **Shift from Importer to Exporter:** Selling the supersonic BrahMos missile would mark a shift for India, which is till now one of the world's biggest arms importer, to establishing itself as a major defense exporter.
 - Further, it will help in making the country '**Atmanirbhar**' in the defense manufacturing sector, shore up partners' defenses, and boost revenues.
 - In the present scenario, **India accounts for 0.2% of the share of global arms** exports during 2016-20, making the country the world's 24th largest exporter of major arms.

Challenges Associated With Export of BrahMos

- **CAATSA:** BrahMos export remains hostage to unresolved concerns over the US's Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions or CAATSA.
 - The United States, of which India is a major defense partner, has maintained ambiguity over whether it will introduce sanctions over India's acquisition of the S-400, licensed production of the AK-203 assault rifle, and export of the BrahMos.

Note

- So far, Turkey and China have been penalized under CAATSA for purchasing the S-400 Triumph air defense systems from Russia.
- NPO Mashinostroyeniya is one of the listed Russian entities.
- And since 65% of the components, including the ramjet engine and radar seeker used in the BrahMos, are reportedly provided by NPO Mashinostroyeniya, the export of the missile systems may attract sanctions.
- **Russia-China Defense Cooperation:** Post-Crimea annexation Russia has looked to improve relations with China.
 - Currently, Russia is even helping China develop a missile-attack warning system that only Russia and the US have, among other joint projects of huge strategic significance.
 - Thus, Russia-China strategic relations may come in the way of BrahMos missile export.
- **Financing:** Ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries which are interested in the BrahMos would find it difficult to purchase it.

Way Forward

- **Engaging With US on CAATSA:** Some analysts believe that CAATSA, which otherwise has had little or no impact on Russia, is being 'leveraged' by the US to 'persuade' India to import additional military equipment from the US.
 - Further, BrahMos export to ASEAN countries can help contain a confrontational China. Thus, India should negotiate with the new US administration to receive a waiver from CAATSA.
- **Providing a Line of Credit:** The cost of the systems has been a major hurdle in moving forward to reach a deal with the Philippines. To remedy this, India has offered a \$100 million line of credit.
- **Indigenous Defense Production:** The joint-venture development of BrahMos may pose issues in its exports.

- Therefore, if India wants to become a major defense exporter, it should strive to achieve indigenization of defense technology.

Conclusion

With India determined to develop itself as a hub of defense manufacturing, how it handles the sale of the BrahMos would be an important factor in its potential emergence as a net provider of regional security in the Indo-Pacific.

Drishti Mains Question

BrahMos' export deal to the Philippines will be of great significance. However, there are many challenges that lie ahead. Discuss.

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