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Issue Brief

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India- Japan Maritime Cooperation: Implications for Pakistan

September 26, 2017

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Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan paid an official visit to India from September 13-14, 2017 at the invitation of Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. The visit was an effort to further broaden the strategic partnership between India and Japan who agreed to strengthen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Joint Statement issued after the visit reveals that a series of privileges are being extended to India by Japan. Keeping in line with the theme of the visit, India and Japan have also decided to cooperate in the field of maritime security.

An excerpt from the joint statement states that the aim is to:

“align Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy with India’s Act East Policy, including through enhancing maritime security cooperation, improving connectivity in the wider Indo-Pacific region, strengthening cooperation with ASEAN, and promoting discussions between strategists and experts of the two countries; enhance defence and security cooperation and dialogues, including the MALABAR and other joint exercises, defence equipment and technology cooperation in such areas as surveillance and unmanned system technologies, and defence industry cooperation.”¹

Apart from the 15 MoU’s signed on Disaster Risk Management, Skills Development, Connectivity, Economic and Commercial ties, Investment, Civil Aviation, Science and Technology, Sports and Academics/Think Tank², India is also in negotiations for 30 Japanese made U2 amphibious planes. The plane is used for deep sea rescue missions. According to the deal, Japan would sell 12 planes that are made in Japan, and the rest of the 18 planes would be built in India under the 'make in India' initiative.³ These planes are used for air sea rescue missions and provide the naval forces an option to carry out

¹ Ministry of External Affairs, India 14 September, 2017. <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28946/IndiaJapan+Joint+Statement+during+visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Japan+to+India+September+14+2017>

² “From investment to sports: A list of 15 MoUs signed between India and Japan” *Hindustan Times*, September 14, 2017. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/from-investment-to-sports-a-list-of-15-mous-signed-between-india-and-japan/story-xk4O3non234jLTcscSAIrl.html>

³ Ankit Panda “Will India and Japan Finally Conclude a Long-Pending US-2 Amphibious Aircraft Defense Deal?” *The Diplomat*, September 13, 2017. <http://thediplomat.com/2017/09/will-india-and-japan-finally-conclude-a-long-pending-us-2-amphibious-aircraft-defense-deal/>

operations in deep waters. If materialized, the deal would also mark an end to the self imposed ban on the defence exports by Japan.

India, Japan and United States have already carried out a round of joint naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal titled the MALABAR 17.⁴ The two prime ministers have also indicated to increase the magnitude of these exercises as indicated in the joint statement.⁵

India has been trying to flex its naval muscle for almost a decade now, and this is an indication of the Indian desire for a hold on the Indian Ocean. This latest strategic partnership with Japan is a sign that India is moving closer to creating a blue water navy. It is becoming clear that India is ready to serve as an ally of the US rather than a swing power that honors independent, non-aligned diplomacy.



These latest development should be of concern for Pakistan. Pakistan is engulfed in its own set of problems right now. It has three volatile borders to attend too and a strong Indian blue water navy that conducts large annual exercises like MALABAR would pose serious threats to Pakistan and its maritime abilities. The exercises would enable India to develop both sea and harbor capabilities which can result in a more experienced and trained navy resulting in an imbalance of strategic stability.

Although no incidents regarding maritime security have taken place in the waters monitored by Pakistan navy, still there is much more that needs to be done by the Pakistani authorities. The Indian Ocean is the world's busiest maritime superhighway, underlining its indisputable strategic importance. Pakistan must not simply ignore to invest in strengthening its naval power in this region.

Pakistan, however, is taking steps for the modernization of its navy. Recently it has test fired an anti-ship missile from helicopter.⁶ Earlier this year, Pakistan also carried out its own naval exercise called Aman 17

⁴ "US, India and Japan send largest warships to joint naval exercise", *Today Online*, July 11, 2017 <http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/us-india-and-japan-send-largest-warships-joint-naval-exercise>

⁵ *Ministry of External Affairs, India* 14 September, 2017 <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28933/Visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Japan+to+India+September+1314+2017>

in the Arabian Sea.⁷ However, Pakistan navy also needs to explore its options and equip itself with the latest weapons system to ensure that no events relating to its maritime security occur in future..

⁶ Naveed Siddiqui, "Pakistan Navy successfully fires anti-ship missile from helicopter" *Dawn* 23 September 2017
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359538>

⁷ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Pakistan Kicks off Large Multinational Naval Exercise" *The Diplomat* 11 February 2017
<http://thediplomat.com/2017/02/pakistan-kicks-off-large-multinational-naval-exercise/>