

PAKISTAN'S AMAN EXERCISE

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



Pakistan held its ninth multinational naval Exercise from February 10-14, 2023, with 50 countries participating. 'Aman' is a multinational naval Exercise, conducted by Pakistan Navy, held in the Arabian Sea every two years. The Exercise includes operations related to anti-piracy, joint maneuvering, rescue operations, naval drills, etc. The Exercise helps participating navies to exchange their experience and knowledge and provides a platform to the participants to nurture their maritime capabilities. It is of immense importance not only for reinforcing regional peace and stability but also for promoting Pakistan's soft power.

The Aman Exercise has two phases: the Harbour phase; and the Sea phase. The Harbour phase includes activities such as discussions related to operations, sessions and seminars, pre-sail ideas and planning, get-together, international cultural display, and demonstrations at professional level.¹ While the Sea phase comprises activities at the tactical level. It includes operational exercises such as anti-piracy, rescue operations, air defense operations, and counter-terrorism.²

The Exercise aims to foster peace and stability in the region, build up interoperability among the participants, and helps to improve their capabilities in maritime security domain.³ The Exercise

1 Damiya Saghir, "Pakistan Navy Returns with Aman-23," *Paradigm Shift*, February 10, 2023, <https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/pakistan-navy-aman-23/>.

2 Ibid.

3 Sumair Saeed Malik, "Together for Peace: Pakistan Navy Conducts 7th Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-2021," *Hilal*, <https://www.hilal.gov.pk/eng-article/detail/NDkzNQ==.html>.

encourages amity, peace and harmony among the regional navies, and seeks to spread goodwill and orderliness in order to maintain balance in strategic capabilities. It also propagates good diplomatic relations among the participating actors. Generally, 'Aman' provides an important opportunity to the participating navies to forge enhanced mutual understanding and pave the way for increased collaboration to address shared maritime security challenges.

Over the years, Pakistan's Aman Exercise evolved in terms of objectives and scope. The first Exercise was held in 2007. It was attended by twenty-eight countries.⁴ It focused on counter-terrorism measures and anti-piracy operations. The second Aman Exercise was held in 2009 with the participation of 24 countries. The focus was same but with the additional objectives of maritime security operations as well as humanitarian and disaster relief exercises. With the gap of two years, the third exercise was held in 2011; the objectives included anti-terrorism, anti-piracy, humanitarian assistance operations, and rescue missions. The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh exercises were conducted in the year 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019, respectively. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi stated during Aman 2019 Exercise that Pakistan Navy has been a forerunner in the pursuit for collaborative security.⁵ It demonstrates that Pakistan has been playing its crucial part.

At the seventh Aman Exercise, conducted in 2021, CNS Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi proposed that Aman-21 paved a pathway to frame doctrinal synergy to counter maritime security challenges. Aman-21 involved the participation of 45 countries.⁶ It was held from 11th to 16th February 2021. Notably, it provided a platform for Russia and NATO forces to work together, to practice maritime exercises together after a decade. The latest 8th Exercise involved the participation of 50 countries.⁷ A special operation forces team from Saudi Arabia also participated. The United States, Turkiye, China, Saudia Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia and several African countries took part. During Aman-23, a maritime Conference was also held, at Karachi Expo center. Its focus was development of Pakistan maritime sector and spurring Blue Economy. Table 1 demonstrates the simple data regarding Aman-23.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Abu Afnan , "Together for Peace: Multinational Maritime Exercise Aman-2019," Hilal Publications, <https://www.hilal.gov.pk/eng-article/detail/MzA1MQ==.html>.

⁶ Sumair Saeed Malik , "Together for Peace: Pakistan Navy Conducts 7th Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-2021," Hilal Publications, <https://www.hilal.gov.pk/eng-article/detail/NDkzNQ==.html>.

⁷ "AMAN-23 Exercise to Pave Way for More Peaceful, Secure Region: PM," *The Express Tribune*, February 14, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2401115/aman-23-exercise-to-pave-way-for-more-peaceful-secure-region-pm>.

Table 1: Aman Exercise 2023

Exercise Name	Aman
Year	2023
Host Country	Pakistan
Purpose	To enhance regional as well as international cooperation, promote interoperability among participating actors in maritime security domain
Activities	Rescue operations, gunnery exercises, anti-piracy exercises, counter terrorism operations
Notable Participants	USA, Turkiye, China, Saudia Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Iran, several African Countries
Location	Arabian Sea
Duration	10 – 14 February
Outcomes	Enhanced Interoperability among the participated navies, built an environment of cooperation and experience learning

Table 2: Year conducted and the Number of Participants

Year Conducted	Number of Participant Countries
2007 Aman-7	28
2009 Aman-9	24
2011 Aman-11	28
2013 Aman-13	29
2015 Aman-15	34
2017 Aman-17	34
2019 Aman-19	46
2021 Aman-21	45
2023 Aman-23	50

Source: Data collected by the author through multiple sources

Pakistan's Aman Exercise has the overall thematic focus of "Together for Peace"⁸ which demonstrates the commitment to promotion of peace and stability through mutual cooperation. Ideas are exchanged and a peaceful environment is maintained that can prevent conflicts and play a major role in the stability of the region.

The Aman Exercise contributes to building regional peace and stability in important ways. The Pakistan Navy has been involved with passion in contributing its share in maritime realm. It has been a part of many UN peace keeping missions. Also, it has been playing its role in UN Combined Maritime Task Forces. The main purpose of these Task Forces has been counter terrorism and

⁸ Sana Jamal , "Pakistan Navy Hosts 50 Countries for Multinational Exercise Aman 2023," *Gulf News*, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-navy-hosts-50-countries-for-multinational-exercise-aman-2023-1.93803073>.

piracy.⁹ Piracy incidents reached a peak from 2009-2011.¹⁰ The piracy incidents were witnessed in the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Somalia, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Pakistan Navy started Aman Exercise in 2007 to contribute its role in enhancing maritime security.¹¹ Under initiative 'Aman' Exercises, Pakistan Navy highlighted that the word itself defines its purpose. "Aman" is an Urdu term, meaning "Peace". Piracy and terrorism are the global threats being faced by different countries. Pakistan's share in building regional peace through naval exercises played a significant role in combating piracy and terrorists, enhancing maritime security and rescue operations. It continues to strengthen maritime security and help protect international and domestic trade.

Although Pakistan Navy has been successful in advancing its objectives via the multinational naval exercise, it has been facing some challenges as well. These include political tensions among participating countries, infrastructure and technological limitations and financial constraints. The political tensions among participating states can have an effect on the smooth conduct of Aman Exercise. Infrastructure limitations also pose a serious challenge. Pakistan has limited resources and it needs resources for hosting such a large scale multinational naval exercise. Pakistan has limited modern naval assets and limited port facilities. Also, Pakistan is not as technologically advanced as some other participating countries. Technological constraints can limit the scope of Aman Exercise. Financial limitations can also impact its scope and the smooth conduct of the exercise. Furthermore, ensuring security to all the participating navies is a significant undertaking.

Here are some recommendations for improving the scope and influence of Aman Exercises. Pakistan may broaden the scope of the Exercises and invite countries that haven't traditionally participated. This would help in building trust among all the stakeholders. Pakistan should focus on improvements in technological domain because it may enhance Aman Exercise. In many ways technology could be used to develop training programs. These simulation programs would help them to counter complex security challenges. Technology may also help in remote sensing.¹² After the end of Cold War, non-traditional threats gained a lot of attention - cyber security is one such threat. Due to the increased threat of cyber attacks on naval system, technology would help in advanced encryption in order to

⁹ Nimra Javed, "Pakistan Navy An Anchor of Peace?," *Modern Diplomacy*, February 10, 2023, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/02/11/pakistan-navy-an-anchor-of-peace/>

¹⁰ Aaliya Naseer, "Aman Exercise: Developing Naval Cooperation for Maritime Peace," *Daily Times*, November 6, 2022, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1023223/aman-exercise-developing-naval-cooperation-for-maritime-peace/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Karl Lautenschlager, *Technology and the Evolution of Naval Warfare 1851-2001* (Washington: National Academies, 1984), p.p 3-51.

protect sensitive data.¹³ Advancement in technology would help Pakistan in fostering the effectiveness of the Aman Exercise.

Conclusion

Aman Exercise is a significant biennial multinational naval exercise that plays a huge role in promoting inter-operability among the participating actors and building cooperation among them. It emphasizes improving the capabilities to counter terrorism and piracy, addressing maritime security challenges, and improving search and rescue operations. The Exercises are a significant platform to improve Pakistan's clout as a harbinger of regional peace and stability. They also contribute to projecting Pakistan's soft power, something we need to further build upon. This is vital in view of India's maritime buildup and increasing influence in the Indian Ocean Region.

¹³ Ibid.