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JAPAN SHOULD STRENGTHEN NAVAL COOPERATION WITH INDIA

Hideaki Kaneda

India and the Indian Navy

India has the world's second largest population of more than 1.2 billion, comprising multiple ethnic groups, religions, languages and cultures, and is the world's largest democratic country with an administration elected through free and fair elections under a multi-party system. It shares a great deal with major developed countries such as Japan in terms of fundamental values and systems, including liberalism, democracy and a market economy, and it has significant influence in the South Asian region.

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India enjoys a geographic position that is significant for maritime traffic, connecting the Asia-Pacific region with the Middle East and Europe, and it is expected to play an important role in maritime security.

Given the uncertain regional security environment, India has pursued military modernization. China and Pakistan present direct security concerns for India. Specifically, the continuing enhancement of China's military capabilities remains the primary influence on India's military build-up. China's newly-commissioned first aircraft carrier *Liaoning* and other broader modernization programs spur on Indian naval development. The potential for friction between India and China is shown by recent developments concerning maritime resources in the South China Sea. Moreover, India is significantly concerned by Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean.

The Indian navy is the largest and strongest in terms of quality and quantity in the Indian Ocean region with two fleets of about 160 warships, including one aircraft carrier, 20 destroyers and frigates, one attack nuclear submarine and 14 conventional submarines totaling approximately 420,000 tons, as well as about 80 tactical naval aircraft and helicopters, all operated by well-trained personnel with good seamanship and high morale. It is expanding procurement of equipment from foreign countries as well as undertaking joint development with them to modernize its weaponry, and has emerged as the world's largest arms importer. India plans to add one aircraft carrier (INS *Vicramaditya*: ex-Russian *Admiral Gorshkov*), while it also plans to deploy one domestic aircraft carrier in 2014. In July 2009, India's first domestic nuclear submarine (*Arihant*) was launched. The Indian navy has introduced USN P-8 ASW patrol aircraft and wishes to introduce some JMSDF US-2 rescue flying boats.

Importance of the SLOCs

Needless to say, "the security of SLOCs (Sea Lines of Communications)" is important to the security and economy of the Indo-Pacific region. The regional economy has developed with, and is largely dependent on, maritime transportation using secured vital SLOCs. In particular, shipments of oil

resources indispensable for the existence and prosperity of regional countries are largely dependent on the security of the wide-area SLOCs connecting the Indian Ocean, the Malacca-Singapore Strait, the South China Sea and the East China Sea. Hence these SLOCs are literally the lifelines of the region.

The Malacca-Singapore Strait is in fact the “lifeline of Indo-Pacific countries”, making it in a way the “Achilles’ tendon” of the world economy. Annually about 50,000 ships, more than a quarter of the world’s maritime cargo shipping, and about one-half of the entire trade volume of the countries of Northeast Asia pass through this Strait. Looking just at tanker shipments, about 50% of the world’s tankers and about 85% of the oil tankers that sail from the Middle East to Northeast Asia pass through the Indian Ocean, the Malacca-Singapore Strait, the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

To ensure the security of the SLOCs through the Indo-Pacific region is, in itself, certainly important but SLOCs do not end in one single region. Inter-regional trade among the Asia-Pacific region, the Indian Ocean region, and the Oceania region has continued to grow in recent years.

If there is any potential threat in these regions, it may be the possibility of an aggressive maritime advance by China both inside and outside of its 1st island chain, including the South China Sea, the East China Sea and Indian Ocean, as its naval capabilities continue to mount. Thus China’s activities will require continued attention. In this regard, close maritime security cooperation to secure vital SLOCs among key maritime powers in the region such as Japan, India, Australia, certain ASEAN members and the United States will require a maritime security coalition for ensuring the security of the SLOCs through the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan-India Maritime Security Cooperation


Japan and India have a very long history of intimate exchange that has been bolstered since 2000. For Japan-India security relations, the summit meeting between Japan’s Prime Minister Abe and India’s Prime Minister Singh in August 2007 was an epoch-making event. They released a joint communiqué and

agreed on the recognition that “a strong India is to Japan’s benefit, and a strong Japan is to India’s benefit.”

Mr. Abe stated that Japan and India should address, in cooperation with other countries, measures to ensure the security of SLOCs as two major maritime powers and democratic countries that share basic values and interests. In his speech on “the exchange between two oceans” delivered at the Indian parliament, he reflected upon the long history of ties between Japan and India, and opined that the newly emerging “expanded Asia” integrating East Asia and South Asia through exchange between the “two great oceans” (the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean) could grow into an open and transparent network that covers the entire Indo-Pacific region.

Since then, relations between Japan and India have gone forward through annual summit talks, and the first Administrative Vice-Ministerial “2+2” Dialogue was held in July 2010 based on the Action Plan, as was the second Subcabinet Defense Policy Dialogue. In June 2012, the first joint naval exercise was carried out between the Indian navy and the JMSDF in Sagami Bay in accordance with the Joint Statement by Prime Ministers Singh and Noda in December 2011.

The 2011 Joint Statement also stressed the need to undertake Japan-India-US trilateral security coordination to deepen the Trilateral Strategic Global Partnership among the three countries. As we have seen, trilateral cooperation among Japan, India and the US has been gradually and steadily developing.

I sincerely expect the new Abe administration to strengthen maritime security cooperation with India as well as with the US. 

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