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Japan's Cooperation to India

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Recently, Indian and Japanese warships conducted naval exercises in the Indian Ocean With the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force. It is designed to “promote mutual understanding.”

- The exercises consisted of four warships; INS Rana and INS Kulush from India and JS Kashima and JS Shimayuki from Japan.
- The Japanese embassy in New Delhi says it is the 15th such exercise in the past 3 years.

The Japanese Navy is one of the principal partners of the Indian Navy in bilateral exercises including **JIMEX**, **SHINYUU Maitri** and **Dharma Guardian**. Both countries also participate in **Malabar exercise** with the USA.

India-Japan Relations

- In 2014, India and **Japan** upgraded their relationship to '**Special Strategic and Global Partnership**'.
- **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Railway (MAHSR)** is a very important area of cooperation between India and Japan in the Railway Sector.
- A “**India-Japan Digital Partnership**” (**I-JDP**) was launched during the visit of the Prime Minister of India to Japan in October 2018, furthering existing areas of cooperation as well as new initiatives within the scope of cooperation in **S&T/ICT**, focusing more on “Digital ICT Technologies”.
- The **India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** that came into force in August 2011 covers trade in goods, services, movement of natural persons, investments, Intellectual Property Rights, custom procedures and other trade related issues.

Common Interests of India and Japan

- Both the countries are the member nations of **G-4**
- Apart from naval exercises, the two nations conduct mil-to-mil exercises, coast guard and air force exercises as well.
- India and Japan both are facing difficulties in the maritime area due to the dominance of China in the area and the recent naval exercise was related to the military stand-off between India and China in Ladakh.
- Chinese assertion of power in the oceans is something which brings India and Japan on the same page. The growing congruence of the views is propelling the two countries to take up a closer understanding of strategic issues.
 - Both countries are opposed to the idea of unipolarity being asserted by China time and again.
 - Both of them look forward to making the Indo-pacific multipolar, free, open and inclusive.
- **China's Maritime Vulnerability:** Though China has shown aggressive posture in the South China Sea and as well as Indian ocean, it has been anxious about its vulnerability at sea — or what is referred to as the Malacca dilemma.

Taking this in cognizance, India and Japan can develop sea-denial capability mainly at choke points in Indian ocean such as Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Strait of Malacca.

China as a Threat

- The dominance of China in the maritime area is a serious threat for India as well as Japan in terms of economic development.
- China due to the **nine-dash line**, has developed conflicts with Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan.

- Moreover, China has recently made new territorial claims in the eastern sector of **Bhutan's** Trashigang district.

China's "Malacca Dilemma"

- Energy security, and particularly oil supply security, has become a major concern for the Chinese government over the past several years. The focus of this anxiety is the vulnerability of seaborne energy imports.
- China lacks the naval power necessary to protect its sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). It fears that during a national security crisis ships carrying energy resources could be interdicted by hostile naval forces.
- Any disruption to the free flow of energy resources into China could derail the economic growth on which the Chinese government depends to shore-up its legitimacy and pursue its great power ambitions.
- China's heavy use of the Malacca and Lombok/Makassar straits in Southeast Asia is emblematic of this concern. The Malacca Strait is a narrow and congested waterway separating Indonesia and Malaysia, with Singapore located at its southern tip.

Nine-Dash Line

The nine-dash line refers to the undefined, vaguely located, demarcation line used by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), for their claims of the major part of the South China Sea.

G-4

It is a group of four countries i.e. **Brazil, Germany, India and Japan** which support each other's bids for **permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.

Conclusion

- China with its untenable tactics and muscle power is able to overpower several nations and is working upon it by dealing with each country individually.
- China has antagonised several nations which:
 - Can be taken as an advantage and nations such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Taiwan and France should be approached for cooperation.
 - Is a lesson to be learnt by India and Japan as far as security related relations are concerned.
- China in its present situation cannot be contained but can be restrained which requires the like-minded nations; countries with the same approach for the same objective, to come together and speak in one voice.

- In order to prevail over China, India already has the **QUAD**, and shall bring together the middle-powers and the nations that are in conflicts with China.

Way Forward

- The other possible areas of cooperation between India and Japan can possibly be:
 - The field of infrastructure, technology and telecommunication.
 - India and Japan need to work together in the Indo-Pacific Region in order to obtain mutual benefits.
 - With the help of Japan, India can pave its way to the permanent membership of the UN Security Council.
 - In the IT- sector, in order to harness the gains of the **fourth industrial revolution**, India and Japan should collaborate.
 - Within the defence platforms, Japan could be approached to provide assistance in building warships, weapons, submarines etc.
- Apart from taking assistance from Japan, India should also think about how Indian components could reach Japan, and how they can be rewarded dividends in Japan: the notion of the **Aatma-Nirbhar Bharat** also needs to be promoted.
- India needs to look into the matter of post covid ties too, ensure good relations with the other parts of the world so as to emerge from the losses and also in order to restrain Chinese influence in the areas of maritime.