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## Strengthening an Enduring Friendship: Contextualising Japan-Bangladesh Defence Cooperation

Tanvir Habib\*

**Abstract**– Historical amicability, development partnership and mutual trust have shaped Japan-Bangladesh relations. While previous engagements reflected donor and recipient relationships, transformation into more economic cooperation has been observed in recent years. The trajectory of the economic relationship remains strong, and all indications point to them remaining so. However, cooperation related to defence remains non-existent. Although Japan's previous 'peace-state' orientation might answer the historical context, the reformulation of Japan's defence export policy under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe raises the question of the efficacy of non-engagement at present. The paper aims at ascertaining the contexts where cooperation is viable and mutually beneficial. The paper argues that Bangladesh's Abe reformulation and the concurrent defence modernisation drive offer both countries a natural alignment choice. The paper concludes that capitalising on this opportunity, a natural progression through the establishment of the Joint Security and Defence Dialogue (JSDD) Forum, would allow both countries to engage each other under the condition of organisational stability and continuance.

**Keywords** Japan-Bangladesh relations · Defence Cooperation · 'Peace-State' · Japanese Defence Export Policy · Pivot to Asia · Forces Goal 2030 ·

### 1. Introduction

Bangladesh and Japan enjoy a long and trusted relationship. Ever since the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation, Japan has remained one of the key development partners. Japanese assistance in various sectors has only increased over the years. The relationship will be further strengthened with the gradual implementation of Japanese funded Deepsea port and associated

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\* Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka. E-mail: [tanvirhabib94@gmail.com](mailto:tanvirhabib94@gmail.com)

industrial facilities in the Matarbari project (UNB News, 2021). Moreover, Japanese funding of the Metrorail in Dhaka has solidified Japan as a critical investment originator for Bangladesh. While economic engagement and development assistance remain critical drivers of bilateral relations, the defence sector is one key arena with strong potential. Much has been written on its potential since the second Shinzo Abe administration's reformulation of Japan's defence export policy. However, there remains a dearth of academic literature regarding how this opportunity might be realised in the context of Japan-Bangladesh relations. This paper aims to contextualise the implications of Japan's reformulations of its defence export policy and how that might assist in developing Bangladeshi defence capabilities. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the current government articulated a defence modernisation plan termed Forces Goal 2030 after it was elected to power in 2009. The modernisation plan envisages modern weapons platforms and a thorough modernisation of all sectors of the armed forces. Given Japan's aim at defence cooperation with friendly countries and its crucial position within Abe's pivot to Asia (Sakaki & Maslow, 2020), cooperation with Bangladesh can benefit the Japanese strategic interest. With a concurrent development inside Bangladesh that aims at overhauling the military and modernising it to face future challenges, the paper observes a potential natural alignment pattern developing. Realising such a cooperative venture can potentially benefit both the friendly nations and usher in a future where strategic alignment can be envisioned. With a qualitative outlook, the paper aims to understand the implications of Japanese reformulation and identify potential sectors where cooperation is feasible.

## **2. Contextualising Japan's defence re-orientation**

The rampant militarism and the cataclysmic events of the Second World war left a deep scar on the Japanese nation. It, in turn, led to the reformulation of Japan as a Peace State. However, a re-orientation of Japan's pacifist outlook occurred during the Shinzo Abe period, and it can be defined as Japan's emergence as a stable status state. Structural realism posits the influence of international structure on the foreign policy outlook of states (Waltz, 1979).

On the other hand, Neo-classical realism outlines the influence of domestic and external factors on states' foreign policies (Rose, 1998). Keeping in view these perspectives, the paper outlines how regional and domestic concerns shaped Japan's orientation towards defence. The gradual deregulation of Japanese arms control and the successful cases of arms exports, albeit slow, showcases Japan's crawl towards a 'normal state' status in the international system. The paper argues that this reformulation, supported to some extent by techno-nationalism (C. W. Hughes, 2011), should be seen as arising from a complex interplay of aspiring to

achieve 'normal state' status and also responding to an uncertain strategic environment (Grønning, 2014; C. Hughes, 2018; C. W. Hughes, 2017; Jain & Er, 2012; Sakaki & Maslow, 2020). Since the end of the Second World War, Japan has long aspired to shrug off the peace constraints (Sakaki & Maslow, 2020). While Shinzo Abe's reforms finally led it to be more autonomous, the actual shift in Japanese policy regarding arms export or defence cooperation has been long in the making, with the defence industrial complex taking a nuanced but influential role (Sakaki & Maslow, 2020, pp. 653–655). The realisation of a lack of price competitiveness due to lack of international orders was identified as small and medium enterprises were unable to supply the big giants like MHI (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries) or KHI (Kawasaki Heavy Industries) (Lyon, 2011; Sakaki & Maslow, 2020, p. 653). It led the Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), which was supportive of the arms export ban for quite some time, to gradually change its outlook towards Japanese arms export policies (Sakaki & Maslow, 2020, p. 654).

The transformations have been extremely slow to match the pace of other global arms exporting countries, perhaps signifying the structural limitations of Japanese defence exports (S. Takahashi, 2008). However, a growing concern about the emerging uncertainty about the regional security environment has accelerated this transformation. The rapid rise of China, its aggressive posture regarding regional territorial disputes (of which Japan is a part), and the threat emanating from North Korea further accentuated Japan's reproaching towards its arms policy (Chakravorty, 2017; Grønning, 2014; C. W. Hughes, 2017; Jain & Er, 2012; Lyon, 2011; Sakaki & Lukner, 2016; Sato, 2019). Japan, in recent years, has had to reconsider its strategic posture vis-à-vis changing regional environment, and the persistent threat from North Korea has forced it to emphasise its national defence.

Moreover, the regional uncertainties related to the Chinese aggressive territorial dispute stance have forced it to reformulate its defence outlook. In addition to these, Shinzo Abe's 'Pivot to Asia' also envisioned a pivotal role for its defence cooperation with other countries and defence export was seen as a key arena where Japan needed to rethink its traditional approach (Sakaki & Maslow, 2020, p. 656). While we generally take threat perception as emanating from changes in regional circumstances or politico-ideological reasons, it is necessary to ascertain how such approaches are developed within a government to ascertain the policy implications. Recent trends suggest a centralising trend among governments in their threat perception practices (Oren & Brummer, 2020). Noting how governmental threat perception during the second- Abe administration has undergone major changes, Oren and Brummer state that: 'First, Japan has recently undergone extensive centralisation of security policy decision-making power, which enables us to evaluate the potential impact change over the government's

threat perception. Second, since the beginning of the decade, observers both within and outside Japan have portrayed Japan's security environment in increasingly harsher terms (Oren & Brummer, 2020).<sup>1</sup> They further state that: '... .considerable explanatory power rests with the domestic structural elements inherent in government centralisation and political instrumentality(Oren & Brummer, 2020, p. 2).<sup>1</sup> These tie down to Abe's status quo changing determination, i.e. transformation of constitutional provisions regarding defence outlook and arms exports(Oren & Brummer, 2020). In turn, the complex interplay of all these factors accelerated its outlook towards arms export and defence industries.

### 3. Outlining Japanese defence cooperation

The realisation that Japan needed to reformulate its outlook towards arms exports and its defence industries initiated heated debate inside Japan because of associated sensitivities related to history. However, it became evident that a Japan with a transformed security environment no longer guaranteed its security with efficacy. Domestic factors such as industry inputs through Keidanren and Abe's visions of Japan's role and the external factors like aggressive Chinese posture, realignment of with America's 'Pivot to Asia' through defence cooperation with the USA (C. Hughes, 2018; Wright, 2021) and regional allies and persistent North Korean threat and a lack urgency regarding threat perception of Russia(Oren & Brummer, 2020) all facilitated the policy rebound.

To understand the contexts where Abe's reformulated Three Principles would be applicable (Sakaki & Maslow, 2020), it is necessary to outline these (MOFA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014; The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, n.d.). They are:

1. Clarification of cases where transfers are prohibited Overseas transfer of defence equipment and technology will not be permitted when:
  - a) the transfer violates obligations under treaties and other international agreements that Japan has concluded,
  - b) the transfer violates obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions, or
  - c) the defence equipment and technology are destined for a country party to a conflict (a country against which the United Nations Security Council is taking measures to maintain or restore international peace and security in the event of an armed attack).

2. Limitation to cases where transfers may be permitted as well as strict examination and information disclosure
  - In cases not within item 1 above, transfers that may be permitted will be limited to the following cases. Those cases will be examined strictly while ensuring transparency. More specifically, overseas transfer of defence equipment and technology may be permitted in such cases as the transfer contributes to the active promotion of peace contribution and international cooperation or Japan's security from the viewpoint of
  - implementing international joint development and production projects with countries cooperating with Japan in security area including its ally, the U.S (from now on referred to as "the ally and partners"),
  - enhancing security and defence cooperation with the ally and partners and supporting the activities of the Self-Defense Forces, including the maintenance of its equipment and ensuring the safety of Japanese nationals.
3. Ensuring appropriate control regarding extra-purpose use or transfer to third parties in cases satisfying 2. above, overseas transfer of defence equipment and technology will be permitted only in cases where appropriate control is ensured. More concretely, the Government will in principle oblige the Government of the recipient country to gain its prior consent regarding extra-purpose use and transfer to third parties. However, appropriate control may be ensured with the confirmation of control system at the destination in such cases as those where the transfer is judged to be appropriate for active promotion of peace contribution and international cooperation when the transfer involves participation in an international system for sharing parts, and when the transfer involves the delivery of parts to a licenser (*The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, n.d.*).

Considering the first principle that deals with transfer permissibility, it dawns upon us that any transfers occurring to Bangladesh should follow existing international regulations on such transfers. Considering that Bangladesh does not have any arms embargo placed on it and has never violated any U.N. regulations, transfers are not prohibited. Moreover, in the context of regulations, Bangladesh is a signatory to all U.N. regulations relating to the Chemical, Biological and

Radiological convention apart from being a member of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Bangladesh is not a party to any conflicts in the third subsection of the first principle. There have been no U.N. Security Council Resolutions prohibiting any arms transfers to Bangladesh; no such statutory regulations remain in potential transfer to Bangladesh.

The Second Principle outlines that: 'overseas transfer of defence equipment and technology may be permitted in such cases as the transfer contributes to the active promotion of peace contribution and international cooperation (*The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology*, n.d.)'. Considering that Bangladesh is a crucial Troop Contributing Country to the U.N. Peacekeeping Missions and the track record of Bangladesh contributing to global peace is untarnished, such possibilities of defence transfers and development make the case convincing. Moreover, the arguments become further convincing due to Bangladesh's already existing defence cooperation with the United States and other European countries with whom Japan has signed various deals since Abe's reformulation (Ministry of Defense of Japan, n.d.). Recent news suggests that Bangladesh has heavily tilted towards the possibility of buying American made Apache attack helicopters (Grevatt, 2020). However, delays have occurred due to Bangladesh not signing two defence deals with the United States. The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA 2019). It might take a few years for the negotiations to complete and for the deal to materialise. Thus, the second principle also appears to support defence cooperation.

The Third Principle focuses on the importance of user control and transfers to third parties. There has been no record of Bangladesh violating the export control regulations or transferring any military equipment to third parties that violate any defence agreements. The legal restrictions towards defence cooperation per se do not apply in the case of Bangladesh. Moreover, the defensive nature of Bangladeshi armed forces and the fact that Bangladesh has never been aggressive in its armed forces further cements the basic principle of international cooperation and contribution to international peace. The added impetus to defence cooperation is provided when considering the already mentioned role of Bangladesh in UNPKO (Peace Keeping Operations) (Anik, 2020; Department of peace operations, 2021; Department of Peace operations, 2021). Given the dynamism of threat scenarios and the general nature of non-state actors being dealt with the PKO operations and the changing nature of such operations, it becomes a natural choice to cooperate.

Interestingly most modern systems that Bangladesh purchases like the Mi-17 helicopters and MRAP (Mine Resistant and Ambush Protected) vehicles are often deployed in U.N. missions (Army Recognition, 2021). Thus further distancing any

potential of Japanese armaments or defence products being used against any state actors in short to medium term. While the paper would argue that even if Bangladesh uses Japanese armaments or defence equipment against nation-state actors, it should still be acceptable. Given good historical relations between Bangladesh and India, it can be stated with a degree of dexterity that the possibility of a war between the two friendly nations is very low and almost non-existent. The possibility of a war with Myanmar is also low, considering Bangladesh's response to all the provocations and airspace violations by Myanmar has been to approach it diplomatically and to diffuse tensions (Bangla News 24 Desk, 2017; Tribune Desk, 2017).

Intending to export defence equipment's, Japan has enacted an Export Trade Control Order for its defence equipment (*Overview of Japan's Export Controls*, 2015). These are outlined as 'Arms and Arms Production-related Equipment Listed as Item 1 of the Annexed List 1 of the Export Trade Control Order'. These are:

1. Firearms and cartridges to be used, therefore (including those to be used for emitting light or smoke), and accessories there of, as well as parts thereof.
2. Ammunition (excluding cartridges), equipment for its dropping or launching, and accessories thereof, as well as parts thereof.
3. Explosives (excluding ammunition) and military fuel.
4. Explosive stabilisers.
5. Directed energy weapons and parts thereof.
6. Kinetic energy weapons (excluding firearms) and equipment for their launching, as well as parts thereof.
7. Military vehicles, accessories, and bridges specially designed for military use and parts thereof.
8. Military vessels, hulls and accessories thereof, as well as parts thereof.
9. Military aircraft and accessories thereof, as well as parts thereof.
10. Anti-submarine nets, anti-torpedo nets, and buoyant electric cable for sweeping magnetic mines.
11. Armour plates and military helmets and bullet-proof jackets and parts thereof.
12. Military searchlights and control equipment thereof.
13. Bacterial, chemical and radioactive agents for military use, and equipment

and parts for dissemination, protection, purification, detection, or identification.

14. Chemical mixtures specially formulated for the decontamination of objects contaminated with biological agents and radioactive materials adapted for use in war and chemical warfare agents.
15. Biopolymers for detection and identification of chemical agents for military use and cultures of cells for production thereof, as well as biocatalysts for decontamination and degradation of chemical agents for military use and expression vectors, viruses or cultures of cells containing the genetic information necessary for production thereof.
16. Equipment and parts thereof for the production or testing of military explosives.
17. Equipment for the production or testing of arms and parts and accessories (*Arms and Arms Production-Related Equipment Listed as Item 1 of the Annexed List 1 of the Export Trade Control Order*, n.d.).

These summarise the list of products that Japan intends to export, but there is a possibility to engage in joint development of defence products.

We also witness transformations within Japanese bureaucracy to better deal with the challenges associated with defence cooperation or exports. It was observed that Japan needed to streamline the functions of its various agencies. To streamline various agencies of the Ministry of Defence into one agency and to help to set up a foundation for smoother defence cooperation with allies and other overseas partners, the Japanese government established the 'Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA) in 2014. The primary mission of ATLA is as follows:

1. Ensuring Technological Superiority and Responding to Operational Needs Smoothly and Quickly
2. Efficient Acquisition of Defense Equipment (Project Management)
3. Strengthening of Defense Equipment and Technology Cooperation with other countries
4. Maintain and Strengthen Defense Production and Technological Bases
5. Cost Reduction Efforts and Strengthening of Inspection and Audit Functions (Ministry of Defense, n.d.).



#### 4. Japanese defence agreements and potential challenges

Japanese defence cooperation agreements focus highly on jointness with the USA. With Japan being the regional depot for F-35 aircraft, both countries also have a joint maintenance base for the V-22 aircraft (Ministry of Defense of Japan, n.d.). Japan has also signed deals with the U.K. on UK-Japan High-Level Defense Equipment and Technology Cooperation Steering Panel, Cooperation on Future Combat Air System (FCAS) / Future Fighter and also on Cooperative Research on a Joint New Air to Air Missile (JNAAM) that utilises Japanese made Active radar seeker for the Meteor Missile (Allison, 2017; *Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting 2021: Joint Statement, 2021*; "Japan and U.K. to Collaborate on Missile Development," 2017; K. Takahashi, 2020). While the full-blown scope of Japanese defence deals cannot be discussed within the paper's limits, they provide the possibility of defence cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh. It is crucial in the Japan-Bangladesh context as Japan can utilise Bangladeshi labour and have a more competitive advantage. Cooperation with Bangladesh will be helpful as Bangladesh can merge its cheap labour and already existing nascent industrial base with Japanese technological excellence to create better products in terms of quality and pricing.

A few challenges that Japan faces are High labour costs, lack of expertise in previous defence contracts and slow pace of its institutions to defence diplomacy (Pryor, 2016; Wright, 2021; Yeo, 2018). The gradually declining birth rate that has been observed for the past few decades has created a significant hindrance to Japanese defence export potential (Bosack, 2019; Pryor, 2016). The lack of labour means that mass-scale cheap labour needed for such competitive defence trade is absent, thus forcing Japan to utilise its domestic labour forces, further escalating the cost due to unavailability or higher wages. Moreover, Japan's lack of proper guest worker schemes, as offered by Germany during the 1960s, also creates a problem for Japan to effectively address this issue, although Japan has been dealing with this (Menju, 2014; Sekine, 1990). Considering that Japan has one of the lowest immigrant acceptance rates globally, the prevailing mentality regarding immigration and non-Japanese people coming to work and living in Japan can be ascertained (Davison & Peng, 2021). Similar to what we have witnessed during Brexit or the immigration debate in the USA or even in Germany, cheap, abundant labour from abroad might create domestic backlashes from the right-wing as well as other groups because some segment of the Japanese society might feel their jobs, livelihood and culture are being threatened (Davison & Peng, 2021; Menju, 2014; Sekine, 1990; Stokes & Devlin, 2018).

Regarding actual exports, Japan's first successful export was to the Philippines. Japan was selected to supply radars for the Philippines Air Force. The order consists of both fixed and mobile radar systems. The contract is valued at about \$

103.5 million (Roblin, 2020). According to Philippines Defence Resource, the deal reportedly includes one mobile J/TPS-P14ME and three fixed J/FPS-3ME (Philippine Defense Resource, 2020). These are Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radars. AESA in military perspectives form the top tier as they are much more resistant to jamming and other electronic countermeasures. The radar systems which the Philippines Air Force is ordering are better suited for medium-to-high altitude surveillance (Roblin, 2020). So the Philippines will have better situational awareness in the region. Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (MELCO) builds the radars. Japan has also donated five training aircraft to the Philippines Navy to strengthen its capability. The Philippines has already deployed these planes in disputed shoals in the South China Sea (A.P. Desk, 2018; Nikkei Asian Review, 2017).

Moreover, Japan has already signed a deal for logistical supply with India and both countries mull signing the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) that will facilitate jointness in their defence cooperation (KYODO News, 2020). Similarly, Japan and Indonesia have ironed out a deal to facilitate military sales and defence cooperation with each other (Kobara, 2021). All these points to a more robust approach by Japan regarding defence sales and cooperation.

## 5. Potential defence cooperation sectors

Submarine: Japan has recently started work on its successor to the Soryu Class of submarines (Mizokami, 2019; Yeo, 2020). Soryu is one of the best diesel-electric attack submarines in the world. Naval Technology report states: 'A diesel-electric propulsion system powers Soryu. Two Kawasaki 12V 25/25 SB-type diesel engines and four Kawasaki Kockums V4-275R Stirling engines provide a total power output of 2,900kW surfaced and 6,000kW submerged. Soryu is the first submarine of the JMSDF to be equipped with Stirling engines manufactured by Sweden-based Kockums. Stirling is a silent and vibration-free external combustion engine. The Kockums Stirling air-independent propulsion system onboard reduces the need for frequent battery charging and increases the submerged endurance of the submarine. Soryu class is fitted with six HU-606 533mm torpedo tubes for Type 89 torpedoes and UGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles. The submarine is equipped with a ZPS-6F navigation or surface search radar. The sonar suite integrates four low-frequency flank arrays, a bow-array, and towed array sonar (*SS Soryu Class Submarines, n.d.*).'

Moreover, the quality of Soryu and the fact that the project started in 2005 means that it is still a very new platform and suits Bangladeshi needs much better than what we have available now (Habib, 2017). While the new Taigei-class submarine is sure to be of much interest to Bangladesh, the pricing might prohibit such acquisition, and instead, Bangladesh should focus on acquiring Soryu class as

they are being gradually replaced by the new submarines. Soryu offers top of the line quality and has the endurance to patrol the depths of the Bay of Bengal (Military Today, n.d.; *SS Soryu Class Submarines, n.d.*).

**Radars and Electronics:** The recent deal with the Philippines proves that Japan is capable and willing to sell military equipment to countries it considers friendly (Roblin, 2020). Japanese electronics remain a world leader, and Bangladesh requires better quality radars and communication systems to fulfil its Forces Goal 2030. Japan has a plethora of equipment like ground surveillance radars, communication equipment, military radars, various lifesaving products from which Bangladesh can pick and choose what it needs best (Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2020). It would be prudent to assume that not all Japanese products suit Bangladeshi needs and that Bangladesh fulfils some of its needs from other sources. However, the paper aims to identify potential sectors for cooperation and not make any specific suggestion regarding actual requirements as those will be the prerogative of respective defence services of Bangladesh and subject to the success of defence diplomacy between the countries.

**Air to Air Missiles:** As part of its modernisation drive, Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) has sought high-performance Multirole Combat Aircraft. The need for such a platform has finally transformed into a westward leaning by BAF. While the initial tender was restricted only to Russia, it was later cancelled due to stalled negotiation on various grounds (Rafiq, 2021). Later the U.K. offered Bangladesh to assist it with the procurement of high-performance fighter jets in a strategic dialogue held between both countries, and Bangladesh leaned towards this platform (British High Commission Dhaka, 2019). The Foreign and Commonwealth Office news release stated: 'The U.K. further expressed its readiness to support Bangladesh with procurement of high calibre Multi-Role Combat Aircraft alongside other modernisation programmes (British High Commission Dhaka, 2019).' As the U.K. does not have, in production, any other fighter platform other than Typhoons, the indication becomes clear. The possibility of a Typhoon is very high as it offers unmatched capability in terms of technology, weapons and maintenance.

Moreover, Eurofighter Magazine also mentioned Bangladesh as a potential customer (Garner, 2021). Bangladesh Air Force has also asked the government for more than US\$ 3 billion to solidify the point further to procure a western platform (Rafiq, 2021; Staff Writer, 2021). Due to the nature of modern air combat, where having a proper Beyond Visual Range (BVR) combat capability have become more pressing, any Bangladeshi platform that is due to come will come equipped with such BVR missiles. American BVR missiles might not be a natural choice as the strings associated and the lack of defence deals like GSOMIA and ACSA as

mentioned above (Diplomatic Correspondent, 2019). The other options are French and the latest game-changing Meteor missile. French option is quite old, and even the Rafale fighters that India has purchased from France will be equipped with Meteor missiles (Staff Writer, 2020). It is where Japan can be brought in. Japanese seeker technology is one of the best in the world, and in the UK-Japan strategic dialogue, both countries decided to cooperate on using Japanese seekers on Meteor missiles (Chutner, 2016; "Japan and U.K. to Collaborate on Missile Development," 2017; K. Takahashi, 2020). Any western platform coming to Bangladesh will be naturally equipped with Meteor missiles, and hence this cooperative venture between U.K. and Japan is where Bangladesh can benefit from. Accessing intelligent seeker technology from Japan will enable Bangladesh to enhance its airpower as a credible deterrent force.

**Next-Generation Weapons Systems:** Japan has invested heavily in next-generation weapons technology like Directed Energy weapons, Hypersonic missiles and Missile defence Systems (Ministry of Defense, 2016). While most projects are still under research, it offers Bangladesh an opportunity to get involved in the process and be prepared for the challenges of the next few decades and the emerging threats. The Japanese Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA) has set up its visions and strategies for successfully implementing its goals, and cooperation is a vital part of that (Ministry of Defense, 2016; Ministry of Defense of Japan, n.d.). Thus the potential benefits to be gained from such a cooperative venture remains enormous.

## 6. Conclusion

The reformulation of Japanese defence export policy under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has offered a unique opportunity for Bangladesh that requires proper scrutiny. The implications for both countries represent a future trajectory that is congenial to both, and identifying potential sectors for cooperation will remain a key identifier of future success. It is suggested that both countries form a Joint Security and Defence Dialogue (JSDD) forum where regular discussions occur. It will enable institutional stability and continuity in the development of the relationship. Given the nature of future emerging threats, Bangladesh will emerge as a net-gainer of this arrangement, and Japan can envision similar outcomes. With an integrated defence cooperation agreement, joint development and production will permit the economic viability of the projects and competitive advantages for the end products, thus justifying the primary objectives of any such association. As Bangladesh's urgency to modernise its armed forces gradually lean it to the western block, Japan can benefit from the strategic alignment resulting from its defence cooperation with Bangladesh. Given the economic nature of the relationship, the paper believes that broader strategic and regional concerns allow

both countries a natural choice to cooperate in the defence sector and thus elevate the relationship into a strategic one. It will result in more strategic stability in the South Asian region with a trickle-down effect on the broader Asia-Pacific region.

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