

## MAKING WAVES: AIDING INDIA'S NEXT-GENERATION AIRCRAFT CARRIER

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The United States and India have agreed to form a working group to explore the joint development of India's next-generation aircraft carrier. While the Indian Navy has already begun design work, wide-ranging cooperation with the United States has enormous potential and offers India the opportunity to acquire the most capable warship possible. Such collaboration would increase the Indian Navy's combat power and would resonate throughout the Asian continent to India's strategic advantage. The most valuable U.S. contributions are likely to materialize in the fight, possibly in the move, and hopefully in the integrate functions.

### Bringing Cooperation Into Focus

- The prospect of a major Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean transforms India's hitherto secure rear into a springboard from which coercive power can be brought to bear against the Indian landmass.
- The principal objective underlying bilateral cooperation should be to ensure that India's next-generation aircraft carrier—to include its air wing and its capacity for combat operations—will be superior to its Chinese counterparts.
- Though cooperation on the fight, move, and integrate functions is likely to be most indispensable and rewarding, joint development should in principle span all the mission areas involved in carrier design.
- Above all else, the Indian Navy should not succumb to the temptation to make collaborative development merely an exercise in procuring technology.

### Recommendations for the United States

#### *The Fight Function*

- Explore the possibility of equipping India's carrier with the electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS).
- Offer India access to various advanced aviation systems, such as the U.S. Navy's E-2C/D Hawkeye for airborne early warning and battle management and the fifth-generation F-35C Lightning strike fighter, so as to permit the Indian Navy to secure a combat advantage over its rivals' air wings.

#### *The Move Function*

- Consider changes to current U.S. policy to allow for discussions about nuclear propulsion technology in order to, among other things, make the integration of EMALS technology a viable option for India's next-generation carrier.

#### *The Integrate Function*

- Support a partnership between the Indian Navy and the U.S. Naval Sea Systems Command, and U.S. private industry as appropriate, to validate the vessel's engineering and production designs, imbibe best practices from the U.S. experience when constructing the carrier, and coordinate on sea trials prior to commissioning the ship.
- Encourage the conclusion of consulting contracts and memoranda of understanding between Indian shipyards and U.S. industry to assist India in incorporating advanced construction techniques when building its new large-deck carriers.

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