



# Indo-Pacific Monitor No. 12

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**Related Categories:** Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Military Innovation; Missile Defense; China; India; North Korea; Pakistan; Southeast Asia

### INDIA TESTS NEW ANTI-SUBMARINE WEAPON, TRAINS WITH U.S.

On October 5th, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh confirmed his country's successful test of the Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system, a weapon that vastly increases India's anti-submarine warfare capabilities throughout the Indian Ocean. During the test, India launched the weapon from Abdul Kalam Island on its eastern coast, but the SMART is made to be carried by warships at sea. In concert with P-8 *Poseidon* aircraft and MH-60R *Seahawk* helicopters, the SMART system could target submarines currently beyond the reach of ship-based radar.

India's new focus on naval warfare comes largely in response to China's growing fleet of submarines, which the Pentagon currently pegs at 60 in number. India is also expanding cooperation with the United States to offset China's undersea advantage. Shortly before the SMART test, a U.S. Navy P-8 aircraft refueled at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the first time. (*The Print*, October 2, 2020; *CNN*, October 6, 2020)

### PAKISTAN ANNEXES PART OF KASHMIR TO PROTECT CHINESE INVESTMENTS

Tensions surrounding longstanding territorial disputes between India and Pakistan are set to spike, following Pakistan's intention to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan from an administrative territory to a province. The move mirrors India's designation of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh as union territories in 2019, but economic considerations are also informing Pakistan's gambit. To wit, China has upped its investment in Pakistani construction projects by \$11 billion since July and, in so doing, is doubling down on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that runs directly through Gilgit-Baltistan. By formally annexing the territory, Pakistan and China can more easily guarantee the security not only of the corridor, but also of local infrastructure like the Diamer-Bhaska dam, a joint venture project between China Power and the Frontier Works Organization, a construction arm of Pakistan's military. Annexation could also pave the way for Chinese military visits, even deployments, to Gilgit-Baltistan. (*Asia Times*, September 14, 2020; *Tribune India*, September 17, 2020)

### MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES SPAR OVER SABAH

Persistent sovereignty disputes have flared recently between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah, Kuala Lumpur's second largest state. The tensions began in July, when Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. declared on social media, in response to an official United States diplomatic account, that Sabah does not belong to Malaysia. After summoning the Philippine ambassador for a *démarche*, Malaysia submitted a *note verbal* to the United Nations on the matter in August. Currently, legislation is pending before the parliament in Manila that would include Sabah in maps on Philippine passports.

Historically, the disagreement centers on Sabah's status after Britain offloaded it as a colony, and the terms of monetary payments dating back to 1878. Geopolitically, both governments seek access to Sabah's oil and natural gas. Practically, this dispute is one of several fissures among Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members that prevent a united response to China's expansive claims in the South China Sea. Indeed, Foreign Secretary Locsin's comments contrast sharply with the ambivalence that has been exhibited by President Rodrigo Duterte over disputes with China in the region. (*Nikkei Asia Review*, September 29, 2020)

### NORTH KOREA'S NEW MISSILE

A year ago, North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un announced a vague "new strategic weapon," and also indicated a willingness to resume long-range missile testing. In the midst of the global pandemic, Kim has remained quiet on bilateral negotiations with the U.S., and has made little noise on his country's nuclear program. Over the weekend, however, Kim unveiled what appears to be North Korea's largest intercontinental ballistic missile at a military parade in Pyongyang, raising questions about the missile's capabilities. Visual analysis suggests the road-mobile weapon is larger than the *Hwasong-15*, which North Korea claims can strike any target in the United States. Notably, Kim unveiled the missile before testing it. (*New York Times*, October 12, 2020)