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# Strategic Digest

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**US Releases Defence Space Strategy**

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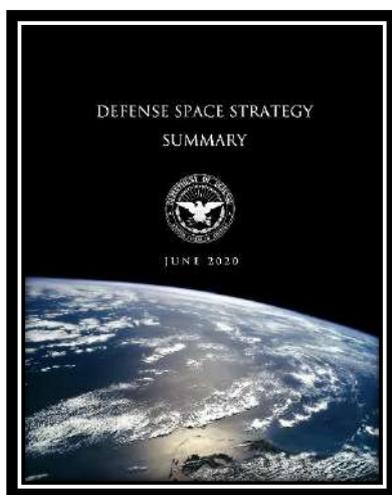
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## US Releases Defence Space Strategy

On 17 June 2020, Secretary of Defense released the Defence Space Strategy (DSS) of the United States aimed at ensuring America's superiority in space as well as secure its vital interests in that domain. DSS is premised on the understanding that space is vital to America's security, prosperity, and scientific achievement, given that space-based capabilities are not only "integral to modern life" but are also "an indispensable component" of military power. The strategy identifies China and Russia as posing "the greatest strategic threat" to US military effectiveness and freedom of operation in space given their "development, testing and deployment of counterspace capabilities" and crafting of military doctrine for employing them.



US Department of Defense

Against this backdrop, the DSS seeks to maintain space as a secure, stable and accessible domain so that the United States can leverage the use of space to "generate, project and employ power across all domains throughout the spectrum of conflict." To achieve this desired condition in space, the strategy advocates the pursuit of three defence objectives: 1) maintain space superiority, 2) provide space support for national, joint and combined operations, and 3) maintain a persistent presence in space through cooperation with allies and partners. In effect, the DSS is advocating the transformation of the US approach to space; from viewing it as a mere support function to envisaging it as a warfighting domain where threats and challenges would be countered, and opportunities exploited.

The strategy calls for four main lines of effort to achieve such a transformation. The first is the build-up of a comprehensive military advantage in space by evolving the doctrinal foundations of military space power, cultivating space warfighting expertise and culture, fielding assured space capabilities, developing capabilities to counter the hostile use of space, and improving intelligence and command and control capabilities in space. The second line of effort is the integration of space into national, joint and combined operations by enabling the US Space Command to "plan, exercise, and execute joint and combined space operations across the spectrum of conflict", integrating space warfighting operations, intelligence, capabilities and personnel into military plans and staff, and integrating allies and partners into the military space effort. The DSS's third line of effort is the shaping of the strategic environment by highlighting the growing threats in space to domestic and international audiences, deterring adversaries from taking inimical actions, and promoting favourable norms of

behaviour in space. Finally, the fourth line of effort involves cooperation with other US government agencies, private industry, and allies and partners.

### America's Pacific Deterrence Initiative

The US Senate Armed Services committee has recommended an additional authorisation of USD 6 Billion towards the 'Pacific Deterrence Initiative' (PDI) in the National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA), the policy bill for the US Defence Budget for Fiscal Year 2021. The Pacific Deterrence Initiative aims to boost deterrence against China in the Pacific and is modelled on similar lines as the multi-year European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), which came into being after the Ukraine crisis in 2014 with a view to deter Russia through increased presence, exercises, repositioning, infrastructure, and partner capacity efforts.

The proposal for an appropriately funded deterrence initiative for the Indo-Pacific was mooted by the late Senator John McCain during his chairmanship of the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2017. Congress included Section 1253 in the 2020 National Defence Authorization Act, which requires the Indo-Pacific Commander to submit an independent assessment by March 15, 2020 of the resources required through 2026 to meet the command's operational responsibilities. Admiral Davidson's report highlighting the strategic approach to 'Regain the Advantage' is the basis for the multi-year budgetary funding of Pacific Deterrence Initiative.



Source: Wikimedia

The Senate has authorised USD 1.4 billion in FY 2021, which would be \$188.6 million above the administration's budget request, and \$5.5 billion for fiscal 2022 towards bolstering deterrence against China. While details of specific programme being funded has not been specified, the broader strategic objective of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative includes three main objectives. The first is to increase the lethality of the Joint Force by improving active and passive missile

defences. The second objective is to enhance the Joint Force's posture through a system of basing that is dispersed, resilient and adaptive, an expansion in the capacity of airfields and ports, enhanced prepositioning of war materiel, and improved logistics management system. Finally, PDI also seeks to strengthen alliances and partnerships to enhance capabilities, improve interoperability and information sharing, and support information operations capabilities.

## Cyber Attacks on Australia

June 2020 saw an increase in cyber-attacks against a wide range of Australian political, governmental, industrial and private organisations. While the Australian government cryptically described the source of the attack as a “sophisticated state-based cyber-actor”, it is widely believed that China is that actor. The attackers have been reported to have used personalised “spearphishing” techniques, including sending their targets links to malicious files and websites aimed at harvesting passwords. Investigations conducted so far have not revealed any “large-scale personal data breaches” of the private information of Australian citizens.



Source: The New Daily, Australia

Australian government sources noted that such activity was “not new”, although the frequency had been increasing “over many months”. In February 2020, for instance, hackers had breached the network of the Australian Parliament. Although the timing of the attack was significant given that it occurred three months ahead of elections, there was no

indication, however, that the information gathered by the hackers was used in any way.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute has stated that the attack was “95 percent or more” likely to have been launched from China because of its scale and intensity. In addition, Australian investigators found the attackers used code and techniques known to have been used by China in the past. China has, however, denied any part in the attacks, dismissing suggestions in that regard as “baseless”. Nevertheless, it is significant that these cyber-attacks have come at a time of growing tensions between Australia and China, with the two countries falling out over the origin of the coronavirus and China’s handling of the pandemic in the initial weeks including suppressing and misrepresenting information shared with the World Health Organisation, in addition to trade and travel issues and, most recently, the death sentence handed to Australian drug smuggler Karm Gillespie.

## Russia Proposes UN P5 Discuss Collective Principles in World Affairs

President Vladimir Putin has proposed that the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) discuss in their upcoming meeting all key issues of global concern. In an online article on the history of the Second World War published in *The National Interest*, he outlined the rationale for the P5 to ‘develop collective principles in world affairs’. This included the need to

preserve peace, strengthen regional and global security, ensure strategic arms control, and tackle terrorism, extremism and other major challenges and threats. Non-traditional security challenges, involving climate change, environmental protection and ‘security of the global information space’ were also spelt out. Similarly, the need for collective action to tackle the COVID-19 global pandemic was emphasised. Russia, President Putin argued, has ‘specific ideas and initiatives’ on all these issues.



Source: <https://www.sporcle.com>

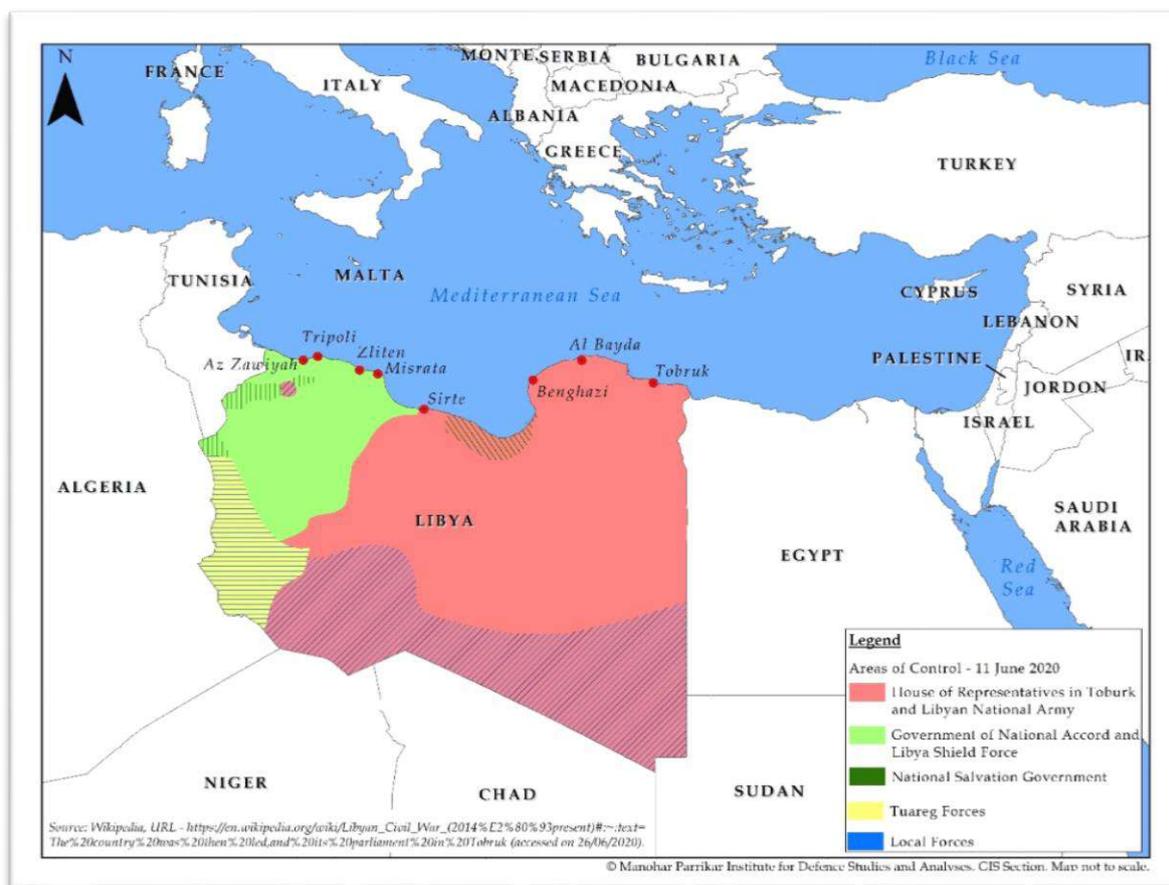
Drawing on the shared historical endeavour to defeat the Nazis in the Second World War, President Putin called upon the P5 members to ‘trust each other’ while formulating their plan of global action. President Putin’s proposal to make the P5 the world’s pre-eminent global forum needs to be seen through the prism of Russia’s ongoing confrontation

with the West. Western attempts to isolate and contain Russia in its neighbourhood has muddied Russia’s external strategic environment. The Kremlin runs the risk of being left behind in a potential bipolar world order wherein it is not a pole. Putin’s new proposal is, therefore, likely to be an attempt to reposition Russia as a key global stakeholder in the comity of nations.

### **Libyan Civil War Escalating into International Conflict**

The Second Libyan Civil War is lurching towards an international conflagration. On 22 June 2020, Libya’s Government of National Accord (GNA) labelled Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi’s recent threat of military intervention as a ‘declaration of war’, even as French President Emmanuel Macron scathingly described Turkey’s role in Libya as a “dangerous game” that can no longer be tolerated.

This recent deterioration of the situation has been caused by an intensification of the post-Gaddafi civil war among the country’s tribal and political factions, which has been further fuelled by foreign powers. In recent times, the two main sides in the civil war are the UN-backed GNA (led by Prime Minister Fayed Al Sarraj) and the Khalifa Haftar-led Libyan National Army (LNA). Marshal Khalifa Haftar was appointed commander-in-chief by a controversially elected Libyan House of Representatives in 2014, even though it had to relocate from Tripoli to Tobrouk following the occupation of the capital by Islamist groups later that year.



The GNA is a government formed through a UN initiative in 2015. It allegedly consists of Islamist factions and is backed by the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other hand, Khalifa Haftar leads the over 25,000 strong LNA, which he had himself raised in 2011 following Gaddafi's killing with the military and financial support of Egypt and the UAE, whose leaderships continue to fear the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood-backed GNA. The Haftar-led LNA now seems to be on the verge of losing territory to its adversary — most notably the coastal city of Sirte and the strategically important Al Jufra air base — which has forced his backers, Egypt and France, to issue threats to the GNA and its Islamist ally Turkey.

The GNA is also supported by Italy, which, by virtue of having controlled Libya during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, believes that it has a better understanding of Libya's internal power dynamics. Italy is hoping that support for the winning faction would benefit its oil companies such as Eni. Russia has also entered the fray in support of Haftar's LNA. Moscow is wary of Turkish plans to channel Libyan hydrocarbons through Mediterranean pipelines to Europe, thereby freeing the continent of Russian energy dependence. It is believed that Germany is playing a wily game of neutrality by hosting peace parleys between the feuding sides, even as France wants to appease its valuable arms clients, UAE and Egypt, in addition to being alarmed by the rise of GNA's Islamist militias backed by Turkey's ambitious Erdogan.