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## Kuomintang Advocates Taiwan-US Diplomatic Relations

In a significant development, on October 6, Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (parliament) passed two resolutions moved by the Kuomintang (KMT), the main opposition party. The first asked the Taiwan government to ensure "US military aid in combating aggression by the Chinese Communist Party", and the second advocated the "resumption of diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan." The resolutions were passed by a rare bipartisan consensus, with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) supporting them.



Of the two, the second resolution is particularly notable. It comes amidst calls from Establishment figures in the United States to shed current ambiguity and clearly convey America's commitment to Taiwan's defence if Communist China were to attempt to militarily conquer Taiwan. Noting the upswing in diplomatic and defence ties with the United States in recent years, the KMT resolution recommends that the Taiwan government make the restoration of diplomatic relations with the United States a policy objective and actively promote it. The resolutions are, however, legally non-

binding. That Taipei is unlikely to rush into a change of policy in this regard was made clear by Taiwan's Representative (de facto ambassador) to the United States, who stated on the same day the KMT resolutions were passed that "Taiwan will continue its cautious and balanced approach to Taiwan-US relations".

Even if the Taiwan government does not immediately abide by the resolutions, the fact that they were introduced by the KMT – which had ruled all of China until 1949 and thus represented the organic link between the mainland and Taiwan – marks a watershed in Taiwan's political evolution. This development is also likely to make a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue even more impossible.

## China Flight Tests the FC-31 Gyrfalcon

The *FC-31 Gyrfalcon*, now being developed by the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), has been seen as the Chinese answer to the American Lockheed Martin developed *F-35 Lightning II*. First unveiled in 2012, the fighter aircraft has gone through numerous iterations and modifications to bring it up to true fifth generation capability.

The FC-31 succeeds the Chengdu *J-20*, which, although initially developed as a fifth-generation stealth fighter, was later downgraded to fourth generation. It incorporates stealth characteristics such as forward swept intake ramps with diverterless supersonic inlet (DSI) bumps and a two-piece canopy. It is also reported to be fitted with an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, advanced air defence capabilities, electro-optical targeting system (EOTS), and an attitude director indicator (ADI).



Source: China Central Television

When compared to the *F-35 Lightning II*, the *FC-31 Gyrfalcon* has broadly similar specifications. It has a maximum take-off weight of 25 tonnes, a combat range of 1,200 km (746 miles) and a top speed of Mach 1.8 or 2,205 km per hour (1,370 miles per hour). For its part, the *F-35* has a maximum take-off weight of 27 to 32 tonnes, a range of up to 2,200 km (1,367 miles), and a top speed of Mach 1.6. The Chinese *FC-31* has a weapons payload of 8 tonnes, compared with 6.8 to 8.1 tonnes for the American *F-35*.

Recent progress on the *FC-31* suggests a shift in focus to the development of a naval version, according to military analysts. A further indication was the statement by an AVIC research and development unit that it aims to start testing a new jet next year. Being lighter and smaller than the *J-20*, the *FC-31* may be a better fit for the PLA Navy's next-generation aircraft carrier, which is expected to have a catapult launch system and will need a more advanced stealth fighter than the *J-15* – its only carrier-based fighter in service.

The latest prototypes of the *FC-31* appear to have retained the WS-13 twin turbofan engine, which is based on a 1970s Soviet design thus imposing limits on the fighter jet's function and stealth capabilities. This has severely reduced its appeal to foreign buyers and even been declined by the PLA Air Force for which it was originally intended.

## Turkey's Naval Build-up in the Mediterranean

Turkey's naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean has increased in recent years, creating serious tensions with Greece and Cyprus. It has held regular naval drills and exploration activities in these seas, and claims rights over waters that are also claimed by Greece and Cyprus. While Greece and Cyprus are signatories to the UN Convention on Law of the Sea, Turkey is not.

In November 2019, Turkey signed a maritime boundary agreement with the UN-recognised government in Libya, further irking Greece. Turkey eyes hydrocarbon resources and asserts the Turkey-backed Republic of Northern Cyprus's maritime EEZ claims that are disputed by Greece and Cyprus. Turkish drilling and exploration activities in the contested waters threatened to escalate into a regional conflict a few weeks ago, with Italy and France coming out in support of Greece and Cyprus. Such an outcome has, however, been avoided for the time being.

Turkey is driven by the ambition to play a greater regional and global role. This has been propelling it to develop its military capability including through the modernisation of its air and naval forces. The country's military expenditure witnessed a steep 86 per cent rise in the last decade. According to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, Turkey is the 16th largest military spender in the world. In 2019, its defence expenditure totalled USD 20.4 billion, constituting 2.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and 7.8 per cent of government expenditure.



TCG Anadolu. Source: [dailysabah.com](http://dailysabah.com)

The Turkish naval forces operate over 100 ships comprising frigates, corvettes, submarines, missile boats, landing ships, etc. They also operate 50 aircraft, 15 of which are fixed-wing and the remainder helicopters. With NATO assistance, Turkey is developing the *TCG Anadolu*, an amphibious assault ship

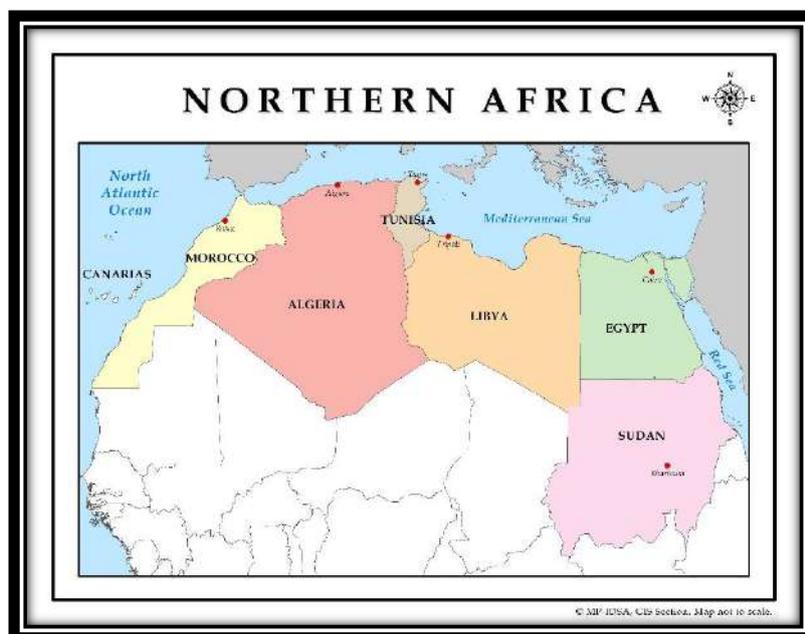
that could be converted into a light aircraft carrier. It is expected to be commissioned into the Turkish Navy shortly.

Turkey has adopted the “Blue Homeland” doctrine in a bid to restore the maritime power wielded by the Ottoman Empire. The doctrine envisages transforming Turkey into the dominant naval force in the Mediterranean and Black Sea as well as expanding its naval presence in the western Indian Ocean.

## US Signs Military Agreements with Morocco and Tunisia

America has signed 10-year defence cooperation agreements with Tunisia and Morocco during Secretary of Defense Mark Esper's recent visit to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Both Morocco and Tunisia are non-NATO allies of the United States in North Africa.

The defence agreement with Tunisia intends to foster cooperation in dealing with terrorist and other armed groups in the region, enhance Tunisia's military capabilities and promote interoperability between US and Tunisian forces. Tunisia has been facing numerous security issues in recent years including cross-border terrorism and maritime security challenges. The



agreement would garner US support for Tunisia to deal with these challenges. In addition, the two countries have a shared interest in 'freedom of navigation, intelligence sharing, humanitarian operations and disaster relief.'

The defence agreement with Morocco intends to strengthen military-to-military cooperation and promote security and stability in the region. For the United States, Morocco has been a key partner in fighting terrorism and dealing with other regional security issues in Africa. For Morocco, the agreement will strengthen their strategic partnership and focus it on "consolidating common security objectives, especially improving the degree of military readiness."

Esper also visited Algeria, which enjoys a strong relationship with Russia – its key arms supplier. Algeria is also an important partner for China, with the two countries having signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2018 on the Belt and Road Initiative. China has also been reaching out to other North African countries in recent years. The renewed American focus on the region is a function of both the identification of China and Russia as strategic rivals as well as the emergence of North Africa as a hotbed of terrorist and non-state actor activities in the wake of the Arab Spring.

## Irregular Warfare Annex to the US National Defense Strategy 2018

Despite its shifting focus towards great power competition in the last few years, the United States has reinforced the importance of irregular warfare against both peer competitors and nation-state adversaries by releasing an Irregular Warfare Annex to its National Defense Strategy. The objective is to shape the competitive environment “to ensure combat dominance” and the “ability to end conflicts” on American terms.



The US seeks to retain and sustain the understanding and application of irregular warfare gained in recent years in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The Annex discards the dichotomy between regular and irregular warfare and acknowledges that most military capabilities can be employed for conducting irregular warfare. It avers that US expertise in irregular

warfare must remain an integral part of conventional force application.

The Annex points out that success in irregular warfare hinges upon the ability to undertake unified action by own agencies as well as in conjunction with multinational partners. Further, it is important to have a nodal agency with the mandate to coordinate actions. This appreciation of the continuing importance of irregular warfare is likely to result in follow-up action to develop and hone force and human resource capabilities with the aim of creating an “agile, cost-informed, and resource sustainable approach” to Irregular Warfare.

The US plans to employ these capabilities to “execute proactive, enduring campaigns” against potential adversaries, be they nation states or violent extremist organisations. The Annex acknowledges that such campaigns, especially those against non-state actors, are likely to be protracted affairs. That, in turn, necessitates the building up of partnerships with “willing and capable partners.”