

Bimonthly
Newsletter

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 2 | MARCH - APRIL 2019



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave,

Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi - 110010

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

Volume 2 Issue 2 MAR-APRIL 2019

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The *East Asia Military Monitor (EAMM)*, a bi-monthly newsletter published by the East Asia Centre at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), focuses on updating the academic and policy-making community about military defence and security and some relevant political developments during the period covered in the issue. More importantly, it aims at creating a continuous record of these developments, which are expected to indicate the emerging trends in the fields this newsletter covers, in a timely manner.

The newsletter covers news reports emanating from the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan. These news reports are collected from open sources and thematically presented after suitable editorial inputs.

This issue of the *EAMM* is divided into two sections. It begins with a perspective on China and the Indo-Pacific by M.S. Prathibha, followed by news from the region in the next section. It reports about the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PLA Navy, China's armed amphibious drone boat, which is said to be the first of its kind, and measures taken by the Chinese government for the welfare of PLA veterans among other aspects. The issue also takes note of the 'military developments' in the Taiwan Strait. The newsletter records important developments from Japan such as the creation of new facilities to defend its remote lands, release of scramble data, Japan's protest against Russia's planned drone deployment and India-Japan joint maritime exercises in the Andaman Sea. Speculations about a third US-North Korea Summit, and a report on the US-South Korea Summit in Washington and Chairman Kim Jong-un's policy speech in the Supreme People's Assembly, are some of the significant developments emanating from the Korean Peninsula, which have been covered comprehensively in this issue of the newsletter.

May 29, 2019

Dr. Prashant Kumar Singh

Associate Fellow, IDSA

EXPERT COMMENTARY

CHINA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC: CONTESTATIONS FOR POWER AND NUCLEAR UNCERTAINTIES



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The contest between the United States and China for power globally has come to define the Indo-Pacific. Consequently, the emerging great power competition is leading major powers in Asia to an uncertain future, and poses challenges when attempts are being made to navigate the relationship between the two countries. On the question of whether to engage the Indo-Pacific for gains or limit participation to avoid entanglement, Asian countries, including India feel the need for diplomatic wisdom to forestall undue choices being imposed on them.

These shifts in power contestations between the US and China were brought about by the change in assessment about their own power in the global order. China's ability to utilise its resources comprehensively for the successful conclusion of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and the failure of the US to manage the financial crisis (2007-2008), enabled China to project its rise with confidence. But, the initial exercise of its influence translated into aggressive tactics against its neighbours, in particular in the South China Sea in 2010. China tempered its policy after earning a push back against its tactics and the US' successful strategy of rallying its neighbours against Chinese maritime excesses. Nonetheless, when the Chinese President Xi Jinping stabilised political control within the Communist Party of China (CPC), more changes became visible. After the 19th Party Congress, Chinese diplomacy portrays confidence and pro-active strategies that make it hard for neighbours to deny cooperation.

The US on the other hand was battling perceptions in Asia that it is an unreliable partner amidst its relative decline in the global order. Over the years, sections of US decision-makers began to express doubts about the US policy of engaging China, which is aimed at socialising China in international norms and institutions to accept the liberal order. They believed that contrary to prevailing wisdom, the Chinese economy is much more dependent on the US, and rejected the notion that any conflict would adversely affect both economies, and interdependence between the two countries limits US choices.

Meanwhile, ideas percolated on ways to avoid great power competition. The Chinese side wanted to follow the US-Soviet Union model, where strategic parity was established through consensus on nuclear order by accepting that both countries could mutually destroy each other. The nuclear dialogue held between the US and China to facilitate consensus, failed to fructify with the US' refusal to accept the validity of China's No-First Use (NFU) Policy on the basis that it was unreliable and unverifiable. Moreover, the US does not accept parity with China despite its avowal that its limited arsenal is a sufficient nuclear deterrent against a superior nuclear force. Further, the US' development of missile defence complicates the deterrence relationship between the two powers.

As a result, this inability to arrive at a consensus on limits to each other's power has led to the birth of the Indo-Pacific. The Trump Administration wants American dominance to reinvigorate its leadership in the Indo-Pacific, rejecting the notion that American power is declining as well as convincing its allies and partners in Asia that it is

not ceding its position to China. Hence, 'Indo-Pacific' gained currency within the discourse, as the US perceived 'Pivot' or 'Rebalancing' to be inadequate, for persuading Asian countries to counter growing Chinese dominance in the region.

Thus, Indo-Pacific's aim is to shift the narrative towards greater US role in the region. However, a deviation from its predecessor 'rebalancing', lacks an economic component in its priorities. Unlike the rebalancing strategy, which devoted considerable American investment and trade relationship to Asia through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Indo-Pacific remains primarily a military approach. Alternatively, the US wants to reserve its investments for energy projects as it wants to showcase its energy dominance in the Indo-Pacific. Further, by decoupling economic interdependence and shifting the supply chain from Asia, the US hopes to increase its manufacturing sector and accrue investment worth US \$1 trillion dollars for its infrastructure. The military dimension, without its economic adherents in the Indo-Pacific, increases uncertainties, especially in the nuclear sphere. In other words, in the Indo-Pacific, Asia is not a 'growth story' but a 'contested' space, thus requiring the US to respond militarily. This military response in the Indo-Pacific encompasses a renewed focus on fielding nuclear-based defensive and offensive assets in East and Southeast Asia as a way to maintain dominance in the region.

Thus, the nuclear order emerges as a contested space in the Indo-Pacific. The growing Chinese military capabilities, especially ground-based ballistic and cruise missile developments has the US concerned about its ability to maintain regional stability in East Asia. The US' deployment of missile defences in East Asia through its alliance and partnership with the Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan after its rejection of Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, had already unravelled the system established during the Cold War. But in the Indo-Pacific, defensive deployments aside, the US plans to introduce low-yield submarine-launched cruise missiles, and development of land-based intermediate missiles after its withdrawal from the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty (INF) would introduce new types of offensive missiles in this theatre in response to the Chinese deployments.

Therefore, India being portrayed as a stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific, these nuclear uncertainties would prevail upon its security dimensions. Whether it is hardened Chinese attitudes towards nuclear arms control or non-proliferation, strengthened strategic nuclear submarines in the Indian Ocean, or new and improved nuclear ballistic missiles in the Asian theatre, India would be hard-pressed not to respond to these nuclear uncertainties. A pro-active diplomatic role leading the discussions on norms on the Asian security architecture would pave the way for forestalling any uncertainties caused by these shifts. In addition, it would ensure that its own calculations regarding its nuclear status are well-encapsulated in these new norms.

MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

China Celebrates 70 Years of PLA Navy

On 23 April, China celebrated 70 years of PLA Navy (PLAN).¹ The event was celebrated as an international event, which was embellished with grand naval parade, high-level seminars and joint military band display. The grandeur of the event could be fathomed by overwhelming participation of naval warships from ten different countries and naval delegations from more than 60 countries. India's indigenous stealth destroyer *INS Kolkata* and fleet tanker *INS Shakti* also participated in this mega international fleet review conducted in Qingdao, Shandong province.² PLA naval contingent included the aircraft carrier *Liaoning*, new nuclear-powered submarines, new destroyers and aircrafts.

Naval event of such magnitude is being perceived by many regional countries as flexing of muscles and display of military prowess; China though refutes these claims as baseless, and maintains that such events are to create greater transparency and instil mutual trust. Rather "China wishes to safeguard world peace and stability in the region along with other navies around the world".³ As per few Chinese security experts, since 2008, the PLA Navy has escorted over 6,600 vessels in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia. Naval hospital ship *Peace Ark* has completed multiple overseas missions providing free medical services to over 230,000 people since 2010 and in March 2015, a Chinese naval vessel has evacuated 621 Chinese citizens from Yemen and more than 270 people of other nationalities. It will not be incorrect to say that the real objective of this celebration was to display its military might, showcase its state-of-the-art and technologically advanced military hardware and achieve deterrence in a subtle way.

World's First Armed Amphibious Drone Boat

China has built the world's first armed amphibious drone boat which could be used in land assault during amphibious operations. The ship has been constructed by Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group under China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC), and this has been named *Marine Lizard*. As per known sources, ship is 12-metre long trimaran, which is propelled by a diesel-powered hydro jet and can reach a maximum speed of 50 knots while maintaining stealth. Ship's payload includes, electro-optical and radar system, while weapons include two

¹ Xie Chuanjiao, "Qingdao Celebrates 70 Years of the Chinese Navy", *China Daily*, April 25, 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/25/WS5cc15450a3104842260b8576.html> (Accessed April 27, 2019); "China Holds Meeting Celebrating Navy's 70th Founding Anniversary", *China Daily*, April 21, 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/21/WS5cbc33f9a3104842260b75e4.html> (Accessed April 27, 2019); Zhang Zhihao, "Event Planned to Fete PLA Navy's 70th Anniversary", *China Daily*, March 29, 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201903/29/WS5c9d520fa3104842260b32c4.html> (Accessed April 27, 2019); "China Focus: China to Mark 70th Navy Anniversary with Multinational Naval Events", *XinhuaNet*, April 20, 2019, at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/20/c_137993338.htm (Accessed April 27, 2019).

² "IN Ships Kolkata and Shakti are at Qingdao, China to Participate in IFR to Mark 70th Anniversary of PLA(N)", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, April 23, 2019, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=189829> (Accessed April 27, 2019).

³ Ben Blanchard, "China Wants 'Tranquillity', Navy Chief Says Ahead of New Warships Reveal", *Reuters*, April 22, 2019, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-military-anniversary/china-wants-tranquillity-navy-chief-says-ahead-of-new-warships-reveal-idUSKCN1RY0WB> (Accessed April 27, 2019).

machine guns and a vertical launching system for anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles. This amphibious drone boat is suitable for island assault operations and could lead the attack after the artillery and air strikes. This can also discover enemy positions and provide suppressive fire to the follow up troops. In addition to offensive tasks, this could also be used for coastal-defence, while being controlled via satellite. Development of such weapon system is largely designed for amphibious operations, to launch ground forces in any island / coastal territory as part of integrated joint operations. This could also be employed during any natural / artificial disaster for HADR (humanitarian and disaster relief) mission.⁴

China Deploys 32nd Convoy for Anti-Piracy Operations

China had deployed its 32nd convoy fleet to the Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations, which comprises Guided Missile Destroyers and Frigates. The fleet set sail from the military port in Zhoushan in Zhejiang Province, where the Type-052C guided missile destroyers, the *Xian*, are on escort missions, which have over-the-horizon strike capability at sea.⁵ According to the *Global Times* article, “*Anyang*, is capable of attacking surface ships and submarines alone or in conjunction with other naval forces” and has strong long-range alert and air defense capabilities.⁶ These missions are becoming an important part of Chinese maritime activities in the far seas to not only test its capabilities but also as part of its deterrence signalling to other regional powers. China is also revealing its newest ships for these purposes. For instance, it recently introduced a new Guided Missile Destroyer, named *Lhasa*, a Type-055 Destroyer, which has capabilities of “new air defense, anti-missile, anti-ship and anti-submarine weapons, and is characterized by strong information perception, air defense and anti-missile as well as maritime strike capabilities”.⁷

China Refutes the Presence of its Military Base in Tajikistan

Amongst wide speculation and reports, especially by Western media on China setting up a military base in Tajikistan, a few miles from the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan, the Chinese government officials on several occasions disprove the presence of its own military base in the Central Asian region.⁸ Speaking with AP News, the spokesman of the Chinese Ministry of National Defense Colonel Ren Guoqiang, reiterated that military cooperation between China and Tajikistan is in consonance with a series of international laws and resolutions passed by the UN Security Council, wherein having military cooperation “benefits the two countries, their two militaries and regional peace and stability.” But on being asked about the military base, Colonel Ren affirmed the non-existence of a Chinese military base adjacent to Wakhan.⁹ In fact, in August 2018, the Chinese defense

⁴ Liu Xuanzun, “China Builds World’s First Armed Amphibious Drone Boat that can Lead Land Assault”, *Global Times*, April 14, 2019, at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1145839.shtml> (Accessed April 20, 2019).

⁵ “China Sends New Naval Destroyer Fleet to Somali Waters for Escort Mission”, *Global Times*, April 4, 2019, at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1144634.shtml> (Accessed April 25, 2019).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wang Jun, “Media Reveals PLA Navy’s Guided Missile Destroyer *Lhasa*”, *China Military Online*, February 15, 2019 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-02/15/content_9428071.htm (Accessed April 25, 2019).

⁸ “In Central Asia’s Forbidding Highlands, A Quiet Newcomer: Chinese Troops”, *The Washington Post*, February 18, 2019, at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-central-asias-forbidding-highlands-a-quiet-newcomer-chinese-troops/2019/02/18/78d4a8d0-1e62-11e9-a759-2b8541bbbe20_story.html?utm_term=.ab79dc1718f9 (Accessed on April 8, 2019).

⁹ “China Denies Speculation of Military Presence in Afghanistan”, AP News, February 28, 2019, at <https://www.apnews.com/1d6c5a6472aa499d9a2e4fed42667df4> (Accessed on April 10, 2019).

ministry's official spokesman Colonel Wu Qian, too disproved such claims, stating that "there is normal cooperation between China and Afghanistan in the field of military security" in which China along with "the international community are helping the country with its construction of national defence and counter-terrorism capabilities." But information about "China's deployment of troops in Afghanistan does not accord to the fact."¹⁰ Though the Chinese officials categorically denied the setting up of a military base in Central Asia, it should be noted that China formally established the first ever overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017, which has previously denied having overseas bases.

Veteran Affairs

The issue of welfare of PLA veterans appears to have emerged as a concern as well as a priority in recent years. The government has numerous measures for veterans' welfare. Recently, "a national service centre to provide better services and safeguard veteran's welfare" began functioning in Beijing. The centre will help "veterans find jobs or start businesses," and receive "preferential treatment and assistance," in relevant matters of their welfare. This centre will also assist them with their "petition letters and visits of veterans, in addition to safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests." The Ministry of Veterans Affairs proposes to set up similar "service centres and stations at local levels...nationwide."¹¹

CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

China Justifies Conduct of Military Exercise in the Taiwan Strait as Taiwan Expresses Concerns

On April 15, 2019 China conducted a large-scale military exercise, East of Taiwan. This military drill was conducted by the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command, which witnessed participation of various warships, bombers, and reconnaissance aircraft. As per Theatre Command's spokesman, Senior Colonel Zhang Chunhui, "this was designed to test the joint assault capability between different branches of the military; and this was a pre-planned military event and is not intended towards any individual / third country".¹² The Chinese Defence Ministry elaborated further that China has full legal rights to protect its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. However the interesting part is, it says "to protect the common interests of people from both sides of the straits".¹³ Place of the exercise also created certain degree of sensitivity and relative anxiety among the Taiwanese central government; though, President Tsai Ing-wen maintains that they are not intimidated by these military drills. However, the President said that these military drills of such nature are "a threat to Taiwan and an act of coercion".¹⁴ Whilst, China blames the present Taiwanese dispensation for using these military drills as an

¹⁰ Defense Ministry's Regular Press Conference, Ministry of National Defence, People's Republic of China, August 30, 2018, at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2018-08/31/content_4823737.htm (10 April 2019).

¹¹ "China Unveils National Service Center for Veterans," *China Daily*, February 26, 2019 at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201902/26/WS5c74d67da3106c65c34eb787.html> (Accessed on April 19, 2019).

¹² "Military Drill near Taiwan 'Necessary'," *China Military* at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/17/content_9480891.htm (Accessed on April 19, 2019).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

opportunity to “deceive and mislead the residents of Taiwan and to provoke and escalate a Cross-Straits confrontation.”¹⁵ The realist perspective is, since the announcement of military reforms in 2015 and transformation from military regions to theatre commands, Chinese military has been making focused efforts to develop capabilities to conduct “integrated joint military operations”,¹⁶ which insofar has remained a challenge, especially, when operations are conducted beyond China’s territorial boundaries. In the times to come the frequency of such military drills are likely to increase with addition of sophisticated equipment and training methods.¹⁷ The military analysis of the exercise brings to focus, China’s attempt to test, practise, rehearse and evolve military drills with modern military hardware are added in the inventory, to counter any extra-regional intervention, in case of Taiwan crisis.

From Taiwanese sources and perspective on this manoeuvre by the PLA, “numerous Chinese military fighter jets and surveillance and transport planes operated near Taiwan and were closely monitored,” on April 15, 2019. The Ministry of National Defense (MND) informed that these military planes, which included “KJ-500 airborne early warning and control aircraft, at least one Xian H-6 bomber, Shaanxi Y-8 transport aircraft, and Sukhoi Su-30 and Shenyang J-11 fighters”, “flew over the Bashi Channel after taking off from southern China.” The Bashi Channel separates Taiwan from the Philippines. The planes “believed to be on their way to the West Pacific Ocean for routine distant-sea exercises”, “returned to their base along the same route”, except one Xian H-6 bomber, “which returned via the Miyako Strait, a waterway that lies between Japan’s Miyako Island and Okinawa Island.” The MND saw this manoeuvre “as an attempt to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.”¹⁸ In another incident, such a military manoeuvre took place on March 31, 2019, when “two Chinese Shenyang J-11 fighter jets crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait in China’s first incursion across the line since 1999.” According to Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR), a Taipei-based think tank that is supported by Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense, “Chinese military planes circled Taiwan a total of 20 times between November 2017 and June 2018, while China’s aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, circled Taiwan a total of five times between November 2013 and April last year.”¹⁹

However, a Chinese defence ministry spokesperson remarked that the drill by “Chinese bombers and warships around Taiwan on Monday [April 15, 2019] was routine,” and he “slammed the island’s administration for misleading the Taiwan people and hyping tensions.” He maintained that the drill was “completely within the normal legal rights of a sovereign country, and it’s beneficial for maintaining peace and security in the Taiwan Straits.”²⁰ In a recent opinion piece, a Chinese commentator remarked that even though the situation in Cross-Strait relations is fragile and US meddling in Cross-Strait affairs has increased, the situation has yet not reached crisis point, and the problem should be peacefully resolved.²¹

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Implications behind PLA Warplanes’ Cruise around Taiwan Island”, *China Military*, April 19, 2019, at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/19/content_9483233.htm (Accessed April 19, 2019).

¹⁷ “Military Drill near Taiwan ‘Necessary’”, *China Military*, at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/17/content_9480891.htm (Accessed April 19, 2019).

¹⁸ Matt Yu and William Yen, “Numerous Chinese Military Aircraft Operate near Taiwan: MND”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 15, 2019 at <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201904150011.aspx> (Accessed on April 19, 2019).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “Military Drill near Taiwan ‘Necessary’”, *China Military* at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/17/content_9480891.htm (Accessed on April 19, 2019).

²¹ Huang Panyue, “Cross-Straits ‘Ties haven’t Reached a Crisis Point’”, *China Military* at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/17/content_9480445.htm (Accessed on April 17, 2019).

TAIWAN

The US Arms Sales to Taiwan

Recently, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen welcomed the US "arms sale of US\$500 million," stating that the sale "will strengthen Taiwan's overall military capabilities." Speaking at the Magong Air Base in Penghu Island, she informed, "Under the new package, the training of Taiwan Air Force pilots and maintenance crews will continue at Luke Air Force Base in the US, which will allow them to bring back knowledge to the armed services." Tsai made these comments in the backdrop of the US Department of Defense Security Cooperation Agency issuing a statement about the approval of "a possible deal with Taiwan for the continuation of a pilot training program and maintenance/logistics support for F-16 aircraft at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, at an estimated cost of US\$500 million."²²

JAPAN

Japan Names the New Era as *Reiwa*

On May 1, His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince will accede to the Imperial throne following the abdication of His Majesty the Emperor. Japan will move from the *Heisei* era to the new era, *Reiwa*, as confirmed by the Cabinet Order. The name is taken from *Manyoshu*, Japan's oldest anthology of poems, compiled more than 1,200 years ago.²³ While there was some debate regarding the meaning of *Reiwa*, the Japanese foreign ministry confirmed that *Reiwa* implies 'beautiful harmony'.²⁴

Japan Launches New Camps to Defend its Remote Islands

The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) launched new camps in March on Amami Oshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture and Miyako Island in Okinawa Prefecture, with the objective of bolstering Japan's defence capabilities amidst China's increasing assertiveness in the region.²⁵ Defence Minister Takeshi Iwaya argued that the Miyako Island camp is on the front lines of Japan's defences in the southwestern region. Miyako Island is approximately 210 km from the contested Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, where Chinese government vessels have frequently marked their presence. The JGSDF is trying to fill the defence vacuum given the severe

²² "US: 'New Arms Sales will Boost Taiwan Combat Capabilities: Tsai'", *Focus Taiwan*, April 17, 2018, at <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201904170014.aspx> (Accessed on April 19, 2018).

²³ "On the New Era Name 'Reiwa'", Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, April 1, 2019 at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201904/_00001.html (Accessed on April 15, 2019). At the time of going to Press, His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince had acceded to the Imperial throne.

²⁴ "Govt.: 'Reiwa' Means 'Beautiful Harmony'", NHK, April 3, 2019 at https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20190403_38/ (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

²⁵ Kosuke Takahashi, "Japan Sets Up Three Military Camps on Southwestern Islands", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 26, 2019 at <https://www.janes.com/article/87467/japan-sets-up-three-military-camps-on-southwestern-islands> (Accessed April 15, 2019).

security environment surrounding Japan with the deployment of the GSDF in the southwestern region. A 380-member security unit was deployed to the Miyako camp and there are plans to deploy a medium-distance surface-to-air missile unit and a surface-to-ship missile unit in the current fiscal year.²⁶

Developments Around the Miyako Strait

On April 15, Chinese military aircraft flew over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait as part of a military exercise. Earlier, on March 30, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) sent four Xian H-6K long-range bombers, one Tupolev Tu-154MD electronic intelligence plane, and at least two fighter jets through international airspace between the Okinawa and Miyako Straits in the East China Sea as part of a military exercise. Meanwhile, on March 28, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) also sent out three ships to the Western Pacific including two Type 054A *Jiangkai II*-class guided-missile frigates and an oiler from the PLAN's East Sea Fleet. In case of a conflict with Taiwan or Japan, the Miyako Strait and Bashi Channel would be critical. China has intensified long-range patrols and air exercises around and over the Miyako Strait. Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) on March 30 scrambled PLAAF bomber formation over the East China Sea. Earlier on March 20, JASDF also scrambled to intercept two PLANAF Shaanxi Y-9JB (GX-8) electronic warfare and surveillance aircraft in the East China Sea.²⁷ Subsequently, the US trained with Japanese Air Self-Defense Forces in April in the Western Pacific. B-52H Stratofortress bombers from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam conducted integrated training with Koku-Jieitai (Japan Air-Self-Defense Force) fighters and 18th Wing F-15s from the Kadena Air Base.²⁸

Japan Releases Scramble Data for the First Three Quarters of FY2018

Japan's Ministry of Defense shared the status of scrambles through the first three quarters of FY2018 (April to December 2018). The data reflects that the Japan Air Self-Defense Forces (JASDF) scrambled 758 times during this period, representing an increase of 22 times compared to the same period in FY 2017. The country-wise and region-wise analysis of scrambles shows that about 63 per cent was against Chinese aircraft, about 36 per cent against Russian aircraft, and 1 per cent against other aircraft. The JASDF scrambled 476 times against Chinese aircraft, representing an increase of 81 times compared to the same period in the previous year; 270 times against Russian aircraft in total, representing a decrease of 58 times compared to the same period in the previous year.²⁹

Japan Sends SDF Personnel to Sinai Peninsula

On April 2, the issue 'Regarding Implementation of the International Peace Cooperation Assignment in the Sinai Peninsula,' was decided at the cabinet meeting following a decision made at the National Security Council. Japan decided to dispatch two Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel to work as staff members at the headquarters of

²⁶ "Press Conference by Defense Minister Iwaya", Ministry of Defense Japan, April 7, 2019 at <https://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/conference/2019/04/07a.html> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

²⁷ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Japan Scrambles Fighter Jets to Intercept 4 Chinese Bombers Over East China Sea", *The Diplomat*, March 31, 2019 at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/japan-scrambles-fighter-jets-to-intercept-chinese-bombers-over-east-china-sea/> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

²⁸ Jesse Johnson, "U.S. Trains with ASDF in Western Pacific as Area Sees Ramped-Up Military Drills by China", *The Japan Times*, April 5, 2019 at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/05/asia-pacific/u-s-chinese-bombers-soar-western-pacific-area-sees-ramped-military-drills/#.XLhdQOgzbiU> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

²⁹ "Japan Defense Focus No 110", Ministry of Defense (Accessed on April 15, 2019) at <https://www.mod.go.jp/e/jdf/no110/activities.html#article04> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), which engages in operations similar to the UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), such as monitoring the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel. The objective behind this decision was to demonstrate Japan's additional contributions to the peace and stability of West Asia and training of SDF personnel. Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security provides for participation in operations similar to PKO. This will signify Japan's participation in an internationally coordinated operation for the first time under the Legislation for Peace and Security. The scope of Japan's international contributions has widened as Japan can now take part in operations similar to PKO that are not essentially managed by the UN.³⁰

Japan Objects to Proposed Drone Deployment by Russia

Japan has registered its protest with Russia over reported plans to deploy a new type of surveillance drone *Orlan-10* unmanned aerial vehicles to an artillery unit stationed on two of the four Russian-controlled islands. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono emphasised that it is vital for the two nations to settle the issue of the four islands and conclude a peace treaty.³¹ Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Russia 'view(s) the actions undertaken by Japan as yet another testament of their persistent unwillingness to recognize the results of World War II laid out in the Japanese Instrument of Surrender signed by the country [in 1945] and later in 1956 when it became a UN member state'. Earlier on April 8, *Izvestia* reported that Moscow had deployed UAV units in the Kamchatka region and the Kuril Islands. Especially, the 18th machine gun-artillery division, stationed in the islands of Iturup and Kunashir, received the *Orlan-10* UAVs which has a range of 120 km.³²

MSDF Participation in the International Fleet Review

For the international fleet reviews in Qingdao, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) sent its Suzutsuki destroyer to China in April. This was the first time in more than seven and a half years for a JMSDF vessel to be sent to China since December 2011. The MSDF Chief of Staff Hiroshi Yamamura was in China from April 22-25 for the fleet review. During the Japan-China summit meeting in October 2018, both sides decided to discuss exchange visits by their ships and defence authorities.³³

F-35A Crashes into the Pacific Ocean

Following the crash of one F-35A into the Pacific Ocean off Aomori Prefecture, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) grounded its fleet of Lockheed Martin F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters. This was the first crash of an operational F-35A anywhere in the world. Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya confirmed on April 10

³⁰ "Press Conference by Defense Minister Iwaya", Ministry of Defense Japan, April 2, 2019 at <https://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/conference/2019/04/02a.html> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

³¹ "Japan Protests Planned Russian Drone Deployment", NHK, April 9, 2019 at https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20190409_34/ (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

³² "Diplomat Slams Tokyo for Its Demarche over Russian Sovereignty on South Kurils", TASS, April 11, 2019 at <http://tass.com/politics/1053317> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

³³ "MSDF to Send Destroyer to China", *The Japan News*, April 13, 2019 at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0005671159> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

that the JASDF's remaining 12 F-35As would be grounded until their safety is confirmed. Meanwhile, an investigative committee at the Air Staff Office were engaged in determining the cause of the crash.³⁴ Meanwhile, the American and Japanese military vessels were engaged in finding the wreckage to protect its technology advantage, that could possibly alter the balance of air supremacy in case the Russian or Chinese forces find it first.³⁵

India-Japan Joint Maritime Exercise in the Andaman Sea

The India-Japan Joint Maritime Exercise was conducted on March 31 in the Andaman Sea with focus on communication and tactical cooperation exercises. The objective is to strengthen the tactical skill of the JMSDF and deepen the mutual understanding with the Indian Navy. JMSDF's escort vessel *Asagiri* participated in the exercise with *INS Kadmat*.³⁶

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Speculations Over a Third US-North Korea Summit

The possibility of a third US-North Korea summit was discussed during South Korean President Moon Jae-in's visit to Washington. Following the lack of progress in the second US-North Korea summit in Hanoi in February, negotiations on denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula have reached a difficult phase. On April 11, President Trump stated with reference to a possible third summit that 'it could happen.....it's step by step....it's not a fast process...it's not going to go fast....if it goes fast, it's not going to be the proper deal'. President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un have differed over the model of denuclearisation and sequencing issues since the first US-North Korea summit in Singapore in 2018. Meanwhile, Chairman Kim Jong-un has reportedly suggested that he is prepared to hold a third meeting with President Trump as long as the US changes its posture on enforcing sanctions by the end of 2019. Korean media reported that Pyongyang 'will not hesitate at all in signing an agreement only if it is written in a way that meets the interests of the DPRK and the U.S., and is fair, mutually acceptable, and this will entirely depend upon with what attitude and calculus the U.S. would come up with.'³⁷

Chairman Kim Jong-un Delivered Policy Speech in the Supreme People's Assembly

Chairman Kim Jong-un delivered a policy speech at the first session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in April where he argued that modelling the whole society on *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is the supreme programme of the Party in order to accomplish a powerful socialist country. Reflecting on the developments related to the negotiations with the US on denuclearisation, Chairman Kim stressed that US demands run counter to the fundamental interests of the country and sanctions constitute an intolerable challenge to North Korea. He emphasised the need for self-reliance in socialist economic construction and argued that *Juche* philosophy of the

³⁴ Kosuke Takahashi, "JASDF Grounds F-35A Fleet Following Crash", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, April 10, 2019 at <https://www.janes.com/article/87809/jasdf-grounds-f-35a-fleet-following-crash> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

³⁵ Tetsuro Kosaka, "US Scrambles to Keep F-35's Secrets Safe from Russia and China", *Nikkei Asian Review*, April 14, 2019 at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-scrambles-to-keep-F-35-s-secrets-safe-from-Russia-and-China> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

³⁶ India in Japan, April 8, 2019 at <https://twitter.com/IndianEmbTokyo/status/1115501079477739520> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

³⁷ "Kim Jong-un: 'Open to Another Summit with Trump'", *The Korea Times*, April 13, 2019, at https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2019/04/103_267109.html (Accessed April 15, 2019).

national economy have to be augmented. Furthermore, Chairman Kim called for consolidating the political and military might of the country and stated that self-reliant national defence capabilities are vital for defending the sovereignty of the country. Stressing that the current peace in the Korean Peninsula may not be durable, he articulated that peace can be guaranteed only by powerful military capabilities.

Reflecting on the inter-Korea summits, Chairman Kim emphasised the importance of realising the goals of the historic Panmunjom Declaration and the Pyongyang Declaration for sustained peaceful atmosphere and lasting reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula. However, references were made of the US's attempts to control the pace of inter-Korea relations and implementation of the north-south agreement. Referring to the US-North Korea negotiations, Chairman Kim stressed that Pyongyang took the first step of confidence-building with the objective of defusing the hostile relations with the US by way of moratorium on the nuclear test and test-fire of the ICBM and facilitating the repatriation of the remains of GIs. While North Korea gives value to settle the issue through dialogue and negotiations, Chairman Kim said that the US methods to impose its unilateral demand do not suit North Korea's constitution. In case the Trump administration adopts a right attitude and methodology by the end of 2019 that is acceptable to North Korea, then a third summit is possible.³⁸

Meanwhile, in a leadership shuffle, Choe Ryong Hae became the President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly and the Vice-Chairman of the State Affairs Commission. Choe Ryong Hae replaced Kim Yong Nam. Additionally, Kim Jae Ryong became the Premier, replacing Pak Pong Ju. Kim Yong Chol retained his position on the State Affairs Commission, and Choe Son Hui, the first Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, was named to the State Affairs Commission for the first time. Kim Jong-un retained his official title as Chairman of the State Affairs Commission but he is also referred to as 'supreme representative of all the Korean people.'

In addition, North Korea also celebrated the 107th birthday of founding leader Kim Il-sung, known as the Day of the Sun, on April 15.

UN Panel of Experts Report Reflects Sanction Evasion by North Korea

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Panel of Experts established pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009) presented its report covering the period from February 2, 2018 to February 1, 2019. The report highlighted that North Korea, while maintaining the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, has defied UNSC resolutions by way of illegal ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products and coal and violated the import caps on petroleum products and crude oil. Ship-to-ship transfers comprise more and more advanced evasion techniques. The camouflaging of vessels through ship identity theft and false Automatic Identification System (AIS) transmissions is not taken into consideration by many international and regional commodity trading companies, banks and insurers, whose due diligence leaves much to be desired. The manipulation of vessel AIS transmissions constitutes an predominant feature of unlawful transfers, conflicting with International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations governing safety of life at sea, which necessitate that AIS be in operation at all times.

In addition, international banks and insurance companies inadvertently facilitate payments and offer coverage for vessels. Pyongyang has also ignored the arms embargo and tried to supply small arms and light weapons and

³⁸ "Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Makes Policy Speech at First Session of 14th SPA", *The Rodong Sinmun*, April 13, 2019 at http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&xnewsID=2019-04-13-0001 (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

other military equipment to Houthi rebels in Yemen, in addition to Libya and the Sudan, through foreign intermediaries, including Syrian arms trafficker Hussein al-Ali. Furthermore, this Panel continued investigations into designated entities and individuals in Asia who covertly obtained centrifuges for North Korea's nuclear programme and tried to sell military equipment to armed groups and governments in West Asia and Africa. Financial sanctions are inefficiently implemented. The Reconnaissance General Bureau continues its international financial operations by transferring funds from accounts closed in the European Union to those held at financial institutions in Asia. The global operations of Glacom and the Malaysia-Korea Partner Group of Companies (MKP) continue regardless of the Panel's past reporting on their illegal activities. The Panel also investigated the sophisticated cyber-attacks and suggested that in August 2018, about \$13.5 million was withdrawn from Cosmos Bank in India in more than 14,000 simultaneous automatic teller machine (ATM) withdrawals in 28 countries as well as in additional transfers to an account belonging to a Hong Kong-based company using SWIFT.³⁹

US-South Korea Summit in Washington

South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited the US from April 10-11, 2019. During his summit meeting with President Trump, several regional security issues were discussed including the shared objective of achieving complete denuclearisation, the need to continue to maintain the moratorium on nuclear and missile tests and a lasting peace in the Korean Peninsula. Both sides agreed that the top-down approach will be crucial in the peace process in the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁰ In addition, the prospects of another inter-Korean summit in the near term was stressed by President Moon. He also reiterated his commitment to work closely with President Trump to make possible a third US-North Korea summit aimed at negotiating the goal of denuclearisation. President Moon also held meetings with the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton, where the importance of continued dialogue with North Korea and the importance of the US-South Korea alliance was stressed as the linchpin of peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Earlier, on April 1, Acting US Secretary of Defense, Patrick M. Shanahan held a meeting with his South Korean counterpart Jeong Kyeong-doo at the Pentagon and discussed joint efforts to support denuclearisation and other important alliance-related issues together with the comprehensive military agreement between the two Koreas.⁴¹

South Korean National Assembly Ratifies the Special Measures Agreement

On April 5, the National Assembly ratified the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) defining South Korea's share of costs for stationing US forces in Korea in 2019. Additionally, the Implementation Arrangement came into effect. Seoul's share for stationing US forces in Korea amounted to 1.04 trillion Won (US\$914.13 million), an

³⁹ "Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009)", S/2019/171, Security Council, March 12, 2019 at https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_171.pdf (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

⁴⁰ "Coordinated Readout of the ROK-US Summit", Cheong Wa Dae, April 11, 2019 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-moon-jae-republic-korea-bilateral-meeting/> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

⁴¹ "Remarks by Acting Secretary Shanahan at an Enhanced Honor Cordon and Meeting Welcoming Republic of Korea Minister of National Defense Jeong to the Pentagon", US Department of Defense, April 1, 2019 at <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1802273/remarks-by-acting-secretary-shanahan-at-an-enhanced-honor-cordon-and-meeting-we/> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

increase of 8.2 per cent from last year. In February, South Korea and the US settled the 10th Special Measures Agreement after several consultations to realise a mutually satisfactory win-win solution. The need for stationing of American troops amidst the fast-changing geopolitics in the Korean Peninsula and the further strengthening of the US-South Korea alliance constitutes a priority for President Moon Jae-in. President Trump has repeatedly pressed South Korea to considerably raise its contributions corresponding to Seoul's national status and economic power. South Korea agreed to an 8.2 per cent increase, the same level as its defence budget increase for 2019, considering USFK's contribution for the defence of the Korean Peninsula, Seoul's financial ability, and the security circumstances of the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, the in-kind system in the South Korea Funded-Construction (ROKFC) programme has been strengthened. South Korea also stressed on safeguarding the rights and benefits of the Korean National workforce of USFK, together with removing the upper limit in using SMA contributions for labour costs of USFK Korean National employees. Additionally, a Joint Working Group on the SMA System Improvement, a standing consultative mechanism, was established for consultation on measures to further advance the current SMA system in the mid-to long term.⁴²

US-South Korea Military Exercises

On March 2, South Korean Minister of National Defence Jeong Kyeong-doo and the Acting US Secretary of Defense, Patrick Shanahan approved the decisions suggested by the Commander of US Forces Korea and the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff, regarding combined exercises and training programmes. Ensuring close coordination on both sides, the decision to conclude the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle series of exercises was taken.⁴³ Both sides reiterated their commitment to ensure the continued combined defence posture of the US-South Korea combined forces in order to deal with any security challenge and maintain strong military readiness through the newly-designed Command Post exercises and revised field training programmes. The leaders confirmed sustained support for South Korea and US armed forces, the Combined Force Command, and the United Nations Command. The alliance's decision to adjust the training programmes reflects the intent to decrease tension and support the ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. The large-scale annual exercises were a cornerstone of the US-South Korea alliance and North Korea has repeatedly expressed severe reservations and analysed these as hostile acts. Reconfiguring these exercises into smaller exercises will dilute the high profile of previous such endeavours. The US and South Korea held Dong Maeng (Alliance), a computer simulated command post exercise, from March 4-12, focussing on strategic, operational and tactical aspects. Both sides have decided to maintain a firm posture of military readiness by replacing the Foal Eagle drills with the modified field training exercise (FTX).⁴⁴

⁴² "ROK and US Reach Agreement on 10th Special Measures Agreement", Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, February 10, 2019 at http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=320383 (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

⁴³ "Readout of Minister of National Defense JeongKyeong-doo's Phone Call with Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan", Department of Defense, March 2, 2019 at <https://dod.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/1773294/readout-of-minister-of-national-defense-jeong-kyeong-doos-phone-call-with-actin/> (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

⁴⁴ "South Korea and the US Launch New 'Dong Maeng' Exercise to Replace Key Resolve Drills", Ministry of National Defence, Republic of Korea, March 15, 2019, at http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/boardList.action?command=view&page=1&boardId=O_47261&boardSeq=O_213599&titleId=null&siteId=mndEN&id=mndEN_020100000000 (Accessed on April 15, 2019).

North Korea Tests Tactical Guided Weapon

On April 17, North Korea reportedly test-fired a new type of tactical guided weapon at the Academy of Defence Science. It considers the latest test as an important step in increasing the combat power of the People's Army. While details have not yet emerged at the time of writing, there is speculation that the new weapon could be a newly-developed short-range guided or cruise missile and may be a tacit message to the Trump administration about lack of flexibility in recent negotiations. Earlier, Chairman Kim Jong-un put forward a year-end deadline for denuclearisation negotiations after the deadlock during the second US-North Korea summit.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "N.K. Leader Supervises Test-fire of New Tactical Guided Weapon: KCNA", Yohnap News Agency, April 18, 2019 at <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20190418000753325?section=nk/nk> (Accessed on April 18, 2019).

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* All the footnotes were verified at the time of publication.

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