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EDITOR'S NOTE

The present issue of the bimonthly *East Asia Military Monitor (EAMM)* tracks important military, defence and security and some relevant political developments, which took place during May-June 2019. The objective of this bimonthly publication is to keep a continuous tab on these developments and capture the emerging trends in a timely manner. The newsletter provides a compilation of news reports emanating from the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan. It relies on open sources and presents them in a reader-friendly format.

The newsletter carries two important expert commentaries:

“Quad and India's Multi-alignment” by Titli Basu

“Is the Sino-American Trade War Creating a Wave of Deglobalization?” by Krithika Subramanian.

Situating the nascent plurilateral grouping Quad in India's strategy of multi-alignment, Titli Basu argues that what is pertinent at present is that, “Quad needs to bring in strategic clarity.” Krithika Subramanian summarises the Chinese response to the US accusations against it in the ongoing trade war between them, through its recently released White Paper on China-US Trade Talks.

Technological advancements in weapon systems of the PLA and China's progress in its naval capabilities, attracted media attention during the period under review. The media noted a significant statement by Randall Schriver, US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, in which he informed of the discussions that were underway to make Taiwan “a normal security systems partner.” The newsletter records Japan's efforts to strengthen maritime cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners, its decision to purchase 105 F-35 Stealth Aircraft and the attack on some private Japanese vessels near the Strait of Hormuz. President Xi Jinping's visit to North Korea, President Trump's visit to Japan and South Korea and North Korea's launch of new short-range ballistic missiles were the highlights from the Korean Peninsula. These are covered in this issue.

We at the Centre sincerely hope that the scholarly and policy-making community finds the *EAMM* a useful resource.

June 29, 2019

Dr. Prashant Kumar Singh

Associate Fellow, IDSA

EXPERT COMMENTARY

QUAD AND INDIA'S MULTI-ALIGNMENT

TITLI BASU

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As the US-China strategic competition intensifies, structural changes are unfolding in the international system. In pursuit of preserving the liberal international order and keeping the Indo-Pacific free from coercion with open sea-lanes and infrastructure, key policy papers of the Trump administration have argued for a 'networked security architecture'.¹ The quadrilateral framework is considered 'vital to address pressing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific'.² Even though the Quad framework has its limits, since India has reservations in projecting it as a military alliance aimed at containment of a 'revisionist' China, there is a school of thought which argues that in case of escalating competition with Beijing, the US would increasingly consider employing Quad, especially the military dimension to uphold a favourable international order.³ China's maritime assertiveness is a key variable in the revival of the Quad framework.⁴

Meanwhile, as the regional order becomes more fragmented, Japan's strategy is demonstrating internal and external balancing by reorienting the pacifist posture on the one hand and reinforcing its alliance with the US, and building a universal value-based network of allies in the Indo-Pacific on the other. In this regard, the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee is pursuing the common strategic objective of building partnerships within trilateral and quadrilateral frameworks with India.⁵ Policies are pushing for constructing 'multi-layered cooperative relationships with allies and partners, with the Japan-US alliance as the cornerstone'.⁶ One strand of scholarship in Japan argues that Quad 2.0 has gained traction owing to the momentum in trilateral frameworks Japan engages in on the one hand and Chinese advancement into the Indian Ocean, on the other.⁷

¹ The Department of Defense. 'National Defense Strategy', 2018, at <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf> (Accessed on June 16, 2019)..

² "Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018", 115th Congress, 2018, at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2736/text> (Accessed June 16, 2019).

³ Derek Grossman, "How the US is Thinking about the Quad", RAND Corporation, February 7, 2019 at <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/02/how-the-us-is-thinking-about-the-quad.html> (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

⁴ David Scott, "The Indo-Pacific in US Strategy: Responding to Power Shifts", *Rising Powers Quarterly*, 3 (2), 2018.

⁵ "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 19, 2019 at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000470738.pdf> (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

⁶ "Diplomatic Bluebook 2018", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, September 20, 2018.

⁷ Tomohiko Satake, "Will Japan-U.S.-Australia-India Security Cooperation be Realized? Different Perceptions for Order and Implications for Japan", NIDS Briefing Memo, July 2018.

The strategic community in China analyses the quadrilateral consultation through the prism of military alliance constituting the ‘core of the Indo-Pacific strategy’,⁸ aimed at containing China.⁹ Moreover, Quad is evaluated as a Japanese enterprise to ‘marginalise’ and offset China, as Japanese primacy in East Asia is diluted with the arrival of a confident China.¹⁰ There is a discourse suggesting that the quadrilateral ‘alliance’ will not have an impact on Asian economic interdependence and will fail in containing China.¹¹ Some expect India to ‘take a relatively proactive stance towards the quadrilateral security cooperation and to some extent cooperate with the equally proactive Japan in upgrading the quadrilateral dialogue to a higher level in response to China’s rise’.¹² The existing literature on Quad reflects several schools of thought, labelling it as being an Asian NATO, a military alliance, or just another platform lacking requisite commitments.

The re-emergence of Quad as an informal consultation mechanism is founded on issue-based alignment among the member countries. It is not a military alliance since it is not supported by any formal treaty or does not deliver security guarantees and lacks institutionalisation.¹³ Analysing the Quad as an Asian NATO is far-fetched at a time when four member nations have refrained from issuing any joint statements following their meetings in 2017 and 2018.

Resurrection of the Quad

The revival of the quadrilateral consultation in 2017 after a hiatus of a decade overlapped with the evolving discourse on the Free and Open Indo-Pacific in each of these four countries. This sometimes led to fusing the quad consultation and Indo-Pacific conceptualisation. However, it is imperative to note the difference. The Indo-Pacific construct is a concept underpinned by openness and inclusivity but Quad consultation is a mini-lateral which by its very nature is based on exclusivity and a directed agenda.¹⁴ The strategic environment has altered profoundly since the first Quad meeting in 2007. 2007 neither witnessed Obama’s Pivot to Asia nor the articulation of Xi Jinping’s Chinese Dream of restoring China’s primacy as a great power by mid-century through the grand strategy of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).¹⁵ Since 2007, China grew from a \$3.5 trillion economy to a \$13 trillion economy. Dependency on the Chinese economy has increased considerably.

While the idea of Quad germinated as these four countries worked in the Tsunami Core Group in 2004-05 to facilitate a coordinated effort to deal with the disaster in the Indian Ocean, the concept is largely shaped by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. But the narrative for the collapse of Quad in 2007 stresses on the then

⁸ Liu Zongyi, “China-India Relations in The Future”, SIIS Comment, May 15 2019 at <http://www.sis.org.cn/Research/EnInfo/4711> (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

⁹ Li Li, “India’s Advance East Strategy and its Indo-Pacific Diplomacy”, *Contemporary International Relations*, 28 (3), May-June 2018.

¹⁰ Yan Wei, “A Broader Asia without China?”, *Beijing Review*, September 26, 2007 at www.bjreview.com.cn (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹¹ Cui Shoufeng, “‘Indo-Pacific’ an ‘America First’ ploy”, *China Daily*, November 15, 2017 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-11/15/content_34550177.htm (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹² Yang Rui and Wang Shida, “India and the Indo-Pacific Strategy Vision: Orientation, Involvement and Limits”, *Contemporary International Relations*, 28 (3), May-June 2018.

¹³ Ian Hall, “Meeting the Challenge: The Case for the Quad, Debating the Quad”, The Centre of Gravity Series, March 2018, at http://bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/uploads/2018-03/cog_39_web_-_debating_the_quad.pdf (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹⁴ Huong Le Thu, “Quad 2.0: New Perspectives for the Revived Concept”, *Strategic Insights*, February 2019, at https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/2019-02/SI134%20Quad%202.0%20New%20perspectives_0.pdf?MI2ECFvmUJTTFzK.RsBIsskCRRAqEmfP (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹⁵ Ian Hall, no. 13.

Australian administration's China appeasement policy.¹⁶ Critiquing this discourse, Kevin Rudd argued that it was not 'wise' to make Australia's long-term national interests contingent on 'the future health of the China-Japan relationship' which was beyond Canberra's control.¹⁷ Beyond the China factor, domestic and electoral politics¹⁸ in Japan and India considerably shaped the future of Quad a decade ago.

With his return in 2012, Shinzo Abe further built on his 'Confluence of the Two Seas' founded on the dynamic coupling of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. He pushed for the revival of the quadrilateral security dialogue underpinned by his idea of framing Asia's Democratic Security Diamond. Subsequently, as President Trump designed US's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, Washington coordinated with allies and partners to revive the Quad.

Situating Quad in India's Multi-alignment

Quad should not be analysed exclusively through the prism of alliance politics. Even though three of the four Quad members are weaved in decades-old hub-and-spoke alliance framework, India does not approach Quad as a military alliance. For India, Quad is one of the numerous consultative mechanisms created on issue-based alignments. Irrefutably, the relative standing of each country in the gambit of the others has advanced since the 2007 Quad meeting, but each nation in the matrix is exclusively directed by its respective national interest. Thus, India is likely to pragmatically engage and leverage its strategic partnerships with regional actors in its pursuit of economic development, seeking markets, resources, capital and technology, but not form traditional alliances. Balance of interest is motivating India since this is not a zero-sum game.¹⁹ Moreover, there are some differences regarding respective outlooks on order. As US allies, Japan and Australia support a US-led liberal international order underpinned by a strong US military presence, which has served their respective national interests in the post-War era. However, India despite its growing strategic depth with the US, supports a multi-polar world order, with New Delhi being one of the key poles.²⁰

India's attitude concerning geopolitical dynamics is shaped by an equilibrium between engagement and autonomy. Undeniably, under Modi's leadership, India has professed deeper strategic coordination within trilateral and mini-lateral arrangements, including the US-India-Japan, India-Australia-Japan, Quad consultation in addition to the India-China-Russia, SCO and BRICS framework. As India aims to modernise, 'both the United States and China—and indeed the ASEAN, Japan, Republic of Korea and Europe—can contribute to this transformation. The centrality of this commitment ensures that India will set a positive and inter-active agenda with other major powers and groupings.'²¹

¹⁶ "Joint Press Conference with Chinese Foreign Minister", 5 February 2008 at https://foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2008/080205_jpc.html (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹⁷ Kevin Rudd, "The Convenient Rewriting of the History of the 'Quad'", *Nikkei Asian Review*, March 26, 2019 at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/The-Convenient-Rewriting-of-the-History-of-the-Quad> (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹⁸ Tanvi Madan, "The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Quad", *War on the Rocks*, November 16, 2017 at <https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/rise-fall-rebirth-quad/> (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

¹⁹ Titli Basu, "India's Approach towards Indo-Pacific Triangularity", *The Asian Forum*, May 18, 2016 at http://www.theasianforum.org/category/alternative-scenarios/?post_id=7243 (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

²⁰ Narendra Modi, "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World", World Economic Forum, Ministry of External Affairs, January 23, 2018 at <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29378/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Speech+at+Plenary+Session+of+World+Economic+Forum+Davos+January+23+2018> (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

²¹ S. Jaishankar, "India, the United States and China", IISS-Fullerton Lecture, Singapore, July 20, 2015 at <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/events/archive/2015-f463/july-636f/fullerton-lecture-jaishankar-f64e>. (Accessed on June 16, 2019).

Managing geostrategic and geo-economic interests as India navigates the US-China strategic competition is critical. Prime Minister Modi has positively engaged in deeper strategic coordination with Japan and the US on some particular regional concerns, but India has at the same time invested in building a closer developmental partnership with China. There are structural tensions between the US and China as an established power and the rising challenger, but the economic footprint of China in each of these Quad economies has significantly complicated the strategic paradigm. Undeniably, all four actors have some polarity with Beijing, but each is engaging China given its standing in the Asian calculus. Managing relations with China is imperative for each of the four Quad members. For example, Abe's administration worked tirelessly for a 'tactical detente' with China given President Trump's unconventional approach towards alliance management and implications of the trade war. Moreover, even before the advent of the Trump presidency, Japan has pursued a 'dual hedge' policy, protecting security interests by means of its alliance with the US and economic objectives through trade with China.²²

The Way Forward

Going forward, Quad needs to bring in strategic clarity. It is important to keep realistic expectations from the Quad framework. Reflecting on the Quad in May 2018, Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba has diluted the military dimension arguing that 'India is the only country in the Quad with a land border with China. In case of conflict...nobody will come and hold your hand.'²³ While Japan and Australia are maritime countries, India's primary focus continues to be continental borders and Indian Ocean. Moreover, the South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean, and their littoral regions are considered as secondary areas in the Indian Maritime Security Strategy. India is the only country in this Quad framework having a land-boundary dispute with Beijing. Additionally, unlike other members, India does not enjoy any formal security guarantees from the US. However, this does not inhibit the ability of the Quad members to cooperate on HADR operations and capacity-building. In this regard, the increasing geographical and operational latitude in the trilateral Malabar exercises are noteworthy. Australia has yet not joined Japan and the US in the annual Malabar exercises. The popular yet misrepresented rationale behind India's continued reservation in this regard is that India does not intend to upset China. Malabar exercise in its current form is already a concern for China, irrespective of Australia.²⁴ India's hesitation in incorporating Australia draws from its previous experience of desertion by Canberra together with the disparity in the strategic depth of New Delhi's bilateral relations with Canberra vis-a-vis Tokyo and Washington. For Quad 2.0 to sustain, it is important to manage expectations, develop strategic clarity and engage in practical cooperation beyond the logic of counter-balancing China.

²² Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Japan's Dual Hedge", *Foreign Affairs*, 81(5), September/October 2002.

²³ "Indian Navy Chief Says No Need to Give Military Angle to the Quad", *The Hindustan Times*, May 23, 2018 at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indian-navy-chief-says-no-need-to-give-military-angle-to-the-quad/story-VZVrnkwhvVRICt5UwXB9tN.html> (Accessed on 16 June 16, 2019).

²⁴ Ramesh Thakur, "Australia and the Quad", *Strategic Insights*, July 5, 2018.

HOW IS CHINA PERCEIVING THE SINO - AMERICAN TRADE WAR?



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The Sino-American trade war has been in the news for over a year now. Donald Trump's first rule of order was to launch a full-scale investigation into Chinese trade policies. He accused China of manipulating their currency and indulging in unfair trade practices. The result if which were the tariffs levied on Chinese goods worth billions of dollars to which China retaliated in kind. Currently, the United States has imposed tariffs on Chinese goods worth \$200 billion, while China has levied tariff hikes on American goods worth \$60 billion.

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, in June 2019 issued a White Paper outlining the widening gap between China and the United States in light of the ongoing trade war.¹ The paper argues that economic ties have been instrumental in improving the stability, peace and prosperity of both the nations. However, the current trade disruptions, solely initiated by the United States, according to the Chinese government has adverse negative impacts on the global economic order. It also hinted at the Chinese willingness in resuming trade talks that are mutually beneficial and trustworthy upon the condition that the Chinese principles are not compromised.

The paper pointed out that China was also responsible for the growth in employment, and revenue generation in the United States. By highlighting that the trade war is responsible for having increased production costs, and that domestic price hikes in the United States was leading to a negative impact on the American economy, the Chinese government aims to convey that Sino-American trade and economic relations are mutually beneficial, rather than America being taken advantage of.

By providing a detailed perspective on the global impact of the trade war, the Chinese White Paper highlights instances where the United States back-tracked on its promises, proving to be an unreliable negotiator. It also quashes claims of intellectual property theft and underscores China's efforts at establishing credible communication and mutual benefit. This document serves the domestic purpose of stressing the need to respect "sovereign affairs" as a prerequisite to further talks, and a purpose of communicating the Chinese position internationally to the countries attending the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit, at Osaka, Japan, where Presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump are expected to meet.

The White Paper states that the United States, starting from 2017 has been indulging in protectionist measures and has been coercing countries into accepting their demands. With the onset of the trade war, from early 2018, the United States has damaged its reputation, investment and trade. Not only has it been responsible for the drop in Chinese exports to the US it has also caused a global economic slowdown. The Chinese State Council repeatedly

¹ "Full Text: China's Position on the China-US Economic and Trade Consultations", The State Council, The People's Republic of China, June 2, 2019, at http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2019/06/02/content_281476694892692.htm (Accessed June 17, 2019).

insists that the tariff imports levied on the United States are exclusively a retaliatory measure taken by the government for protecting the dignity and interests of their people; and that they hope to resolve these issues via dialogue and negotiations. However, if China's principles are disrespected, the nation is prepared to go to war.

Incidentally, the United States has accused China for changing the text under negotiation after the latest round of dialogue and discussions. The PRC's response to this allegation was that it was common to make adjustments and new proposals when talks are underway, and that this was not a new practice given that the United States has repeatedly indulged in the same. It argues in the White Paper that since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the introduction of market reforms in 1979, China's growth has seen an upward trajectory and historical records support their claims. The United States' observation of the country is purely negative, especially in terms of the theft of intellectual property rights (IPR) and technological innovation, leading to a back and forth relationship of levying tariffs and restrictions. Thus, the People's Republic has brushed aside, what it terms, the baseless accusations and maintains that it has worked hard for the inventions and innovations developed, which have been instrumental in the growth and progress of the nation.

By establishing a legal system and enforcement mechanism in line with the international standards for IPR protection, China claims to have addressed the concerns raised by international organizations. The White Paper informs that these efforts have enhanced the Chinese citizens' knowledge of intellectual property, intellectual property applications and rights, payment of royalties and registrations, which have eased the process of doing business.

Highlighting the disadvantage the trade restrictions are posing to both the nations and the rest of the world, the People's Republic of China, in the White Paper, has called out the mistake the United States is making by equating the trade deficit with being taken advantage of. The PRC has also accused the United States for having undermined the authority of the multilateral trading institutions by breaching the fundamental World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, which in turn will threaten the global economic growth. It reminds that according to the US Department of Commerce, in 2018, the PRC was identified as America's largest trading partner and source of imports; third largest export market; and was a mutually beneficial ally in developing the spheres of tourism, culture and intellectual property rights.

Underscoring the instances throughout 2018 where the United States back-tracked on their commitments and levied sanctions, China strongly believes that the United States keeps changing its demands and want more than what it is being offered. Beijing has also accused Washington for having used corruption and intimidation as tools to achieve their goals, which according to the PRC will be responsible for the detrimental nature of their relationship. The Chinese Government has suggested that it is essential for both nations to mutually respect institutions and not cross red lines. While the paper failed to define the concept of red lines or sovereignty, it strongly suggested that the United States is indulging in coercing the PRC into a settlement where mutual benefit is absent.

In conclusion, the author believes that through this white paper, China has put forth its willingness to participate in a dialogue and discussion; but what is not clear though, is the duration for which this Chinese window is open for negotiation. It is a well-known fact that China's development is not a smooth process. Having said that, the country has also been perceived to be optimistic and open to learning and has shown willingness in turning risks into opportunities. In the Post-Mao era, it has advocated for dialogue and negotiations as an effective method for solving the challenges at hand. A smart American move at this juncture would be to secure its relationship with the PRC by establishing a formal communication and negotiation platform in ensuring an unruffled engagement in economic and trade consultations.

MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

Gun-tracking Chip to Track Weapons

China has recently developed BeiDou, global positioning system-based chip, which is embedded on the firearms, and gives out the location of the weapon for ease of monitoring. In case the firearm is smuggled out by any unauthorised person, it shall trigger an alert alarm. The person authorised will be issued with a BeiDou smart watch, and therefore, when the firearm goes into wrong hands, real-time firearm data will be generated, which will be sent to the control centre. The technology has been developed by Beijing Bailineng Technology, and the chip is embedded inside, which is invisible from outside and cannot be removed without damaging the weapon. At present the range of accuracy is 3 metres. China has strict gun- control regulations, where no one other than the military, police and a few specific personnel like armed transport convoy guards are permitted to carry firearms. This will be very effective against smugglers and miscreants, who steal these firearms for ulterior motives and create unrest.¹

Field-Trials by Chinese Unmanned Chopper

China recently conducted field trials of its unmanned helicopter, AV500. This helicopter has been developed by the state-owned Aviation Industry of China (AVIC). On June 14, 2019, AV500 successfully completed its night trials, by flying over sea in China's Hainan province, under challenging environmental conditions including strong head winds, salinity and humidity and proved its capability of operation and performed under challenging conditions. AV500, on reaching the target area, located its target vessel with its electro-optical pod and was able to successfully transmit the data back to its headquarters. The drone is apt for conducting patrols, reconnaissance, damage



Source: http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-06/20/content_9535105.htm

evaluation and also attack missions. The helicopter also has an armed version, the AV500W, can fire a machine gun or a laser-guided missile with a 175-kg payload. Successful trials for the same have already been conducted in 2018. As PLA does not have an unmanned helicopter drone in its inventory, it may contemplate adding it to its inventory, considering multi-tasking functions in anti-terrorism operations, fire-fighting and disaster evaluation.²

China has Maritime Advantage over Russia

China, as per military analysts, has overtaken Russia as a maritime power, and this is attributable to years of joint naval exercises between the two countries. The naval drills have assisted China in honing its military drills to become an advanced naval power. As per the Washington-based think tank, the Centre for Strategic and

¹ Liu Zhen, "Gun-tracking Chip Created by China Tech Firm to Keep Nation's Weapons under Surveillance," *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, 22 June 2019, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3015661/beidou-linked-satnav-chip-tracking-guns-china> (Accessed June 25, 2019).

² "Chinese Top Unmanned Chopper Completes Night Drills, Military Service Eyed," *China Military Online*, 20 June 2019, at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-06/20/content_9535105.htm (Accessed June 25, 2019).

International Studies (CSIS), the PLA Navy, is even larger than the US Navy. China's navy today boasts of 300 naval warships in its inventory, consisting of aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, submarines and amphibious assault ships.

The German Institute for International and Security Affairs has analysed ten joint naval exercises since 2012, to support the assessment "China's navy has surpassed Russia as a maritime power". The two rival communist countries of the Cold War era, are today writing a new chapter in bilateral cooperation. And the two are counterbalancing their relations with the US. Collin Koh, a military expert from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Singapore, alluded that though Russia has played a prominent role in developing China's blue-water capabilities, one cannot discount China's singular focus towards development of marine economy, ports and the impetus to the shipbuilding industry. All this, coupled with joint military exercises with Russia has contributed towards shaping China's military as a global naval force. As per experts, the budgetary allocation to the navy is projected to increase by 82 per cent from US\$ 31.4 billion to US\$ 57.1 billion during 2015-2021, according to reports issued by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. Increased budgetary allocation has contributed towards the development of the most modern and high-technology warships and weapon systems. With increasing overseas interests and assets, China needs to hone its skills with superior navigation, speedy mobilisation and deployment of troops and precision strikes, and protect its overseas interests.³

Surface Ships Dominate Chinese Navy

The Chinese Navy has now more small but powerful surface ships such as the corvettes, frigates, and guided-missile destroyers that are giving it an edge over the United States. While the US has more aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, cruisers and nuclear submarines, in the past decade, the increase in surface ships are setting alarms bells in the US navy about its policy of maintaining dominance in the Asia-Pacific. China has so far looked to develop destroyers that would play a role in escort missions for aircraft carriers and perform anti-submarine and air/missile-defence missions and has 64 vertical launch systems. On May 14, 2019, the PLA Navy launched two more Type 052D guided-missile destroyers, bringing the total number to 20 052D destroyers that were being deployed or being fitted for deployment.⁴ According to one report, the type 052D has several mature technologies such as 'advanced active electronically scanned array radar system'.⁵ A more powerful Type 055 is also developed that has the 'displacement of 10,000 tonnes and 112 vertical launch missiles' and can "provide stronger defence umbrellas to an aircraft carrier combat group".⁶ The first one to be commissioned is the "Nanchang", that was first seen during the Chinese Navy's 70th anniversary parade.⁷ It is being speculated among Chinese military news reports that the Nanchang would be part of the North China Sea Fleet as the South China Sea Fleet and the East China Sea Fleet have "already other advanced warships".⁸

³ "China 'has Overtaken Russia' as a Maritime Power, Boosted by Joint Naval Drills," *SCMP*, 16 June 2019, at <https://www.scmp.com/print/news/china/military/article/3014659/china-has-overtaken-russia-maritime-power-boosted-joint-naval> (Accessed June 25, 2019).

⁴ "China Launches Two New Missile Destroyers Amid US Show of Force in South China Sea", May 11, 2019, *Sputnik News*, at <https://sputniknews.com/military/201905111074917586-china-destroyers-launch-amid-tensions/> (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

⁵ Liu Xuanzun, "Chinese Guided Missile Destroyer Suitable for Mass Production: Experts", *Global Times*, May 12, 2019, at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1149545.shtml> (Accessed at June 1, 2019).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "China to Commission First Type 055 Guided Missile Destroyer", *Xinhua*, April 25, 2019, at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/25/c_138009615.htm (Accessed at June 1, 2019).

⁸ Liu Xuanzun, "Type 055 Destroyer 'Pillar' of North China Sea Fleet: Report", *Global Times*, May 26, 2019, at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1151680.shtml> (Accessed at May 28, 2019).

Frigates on the other hand, are smaller and versatile could also be used in similar roles, such as escorting ships and anti-air/missile warfare. In the recent IMDEX 2019, at Singapore, China sent its frigate *Xiangtan* to the Changi Naval Base and equipped it with advanced radars and a helicopter deck, torpedo launchers, and cruise missile launchers.⁹ In coastal wars, China would use its corvettes and fast-attack craft, which are equipped with missile and anti-ship missiles aimed at swarming enemy surface ships. While the corvette is used in coastal waters, it patrols these waters and as of now, China has commissioned around 60 of these vessels which are on active duty. The latest one to be commissioned is the Type 056 stealth corvette, which is deployed for “patrol, escort, search-and-rescue, surveillance, EEZ protection, electronic warfare, fisheries’ resources protection, anti-craft warfare, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare”.¹⁰ This was the ship that was recently spotted at Scarborough Shoal conducting EEZ patrol.¹¹ In the last decade, China has produced such a large number of these surface warships that they are unable to find names of provincial capitals to name them.¹² The increasing strength of the Chinese navy is worrying countries with dominant navies such as the US, that they would be losing their dominant position in the seas to the Chinese navy. While the production capacity of China has seen impressive change over the years, there are experts who believe that the US navy still has a qualitative advantage over the Chinese navy, as the US fleet has a displacement of 4.6 million tonnes of water whereas the Chinese Navy has a displacement of 1.8 million tonnes.¹³

Limiting Technology to Chinese Military

The US has introduced a bill that would restrict Chinese military students or scholars who are affiliated with Chinese military and technological institutions from getting student or research visas in the United States. This is to curtail the PLA from sending their students to the US, who then work on dual-use technologies in American research institutions.¹⁴ This has been described as a way to reduce Chinese economic espionage through US education institutions and universities.

Unfolding Security Threats in and Around CPEC Projects

Security threats from various militants groups operating within Pakistan, targeting mainly the ongoing CPEC projects, have proliferated in the last two years. The latest attack on the Zaver Pearl-Continental Hotel at Gwadar Port on May 12, 2019 killing at least five people and injuring six, raises a serious security risk on an investment of about \$ 60 billion by China in infrastructure across Pakistan including major roads and the Gwadar Port in Balochistan province. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed the responsibility of the latest

⁹ IMDEX 2019: PLA Navy Xiangtan Frigate Was at Changi Naval Base”, May 16, 2019, at <https://www.navyrecognition.com/index.php/news/naval-exhibitions/2019-naval-exhibitions/imdex-2019-news-online-show-daily/7092-imdex-2019-pla-navy-xiangtan-frigate-was-at-the-changi-naval-base.html> (Accessed at June 5, 2019).

¹⁰ For detailed information, See Jiangdao Class (Type 056) Corvette, at <https://www.naval-technology.com/projects/jiangdao-class-type-056-corvette/> (Accessed at June 20, 2019).

¹¹ Frances Mangosing, “Chinese Warship Spotted Near Scarborough Shoal”, June 10, 2019, Inquirer.net, at <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/176072/chinese-warship-spotted-near-scarborough-shoal> (Accessed at June 20, 2019).

¹² Huang Panyue, “Warships Names Show Navy’s Growth”, *China Military Online*, May 7, 2019, at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-05/07/content_9497235.htm (Accessed at June 20, 2019).

¹³ David Axe, “Naval Showdown: Is China’s Navy Catching Up to America?”, *National Interest*, May 3, 2019, at <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/naval-showdown-chinas-navy-catching-america-55592>, (Accessed June 10, 2019).

¹⁴ “PLA Visa Security Bill”, Full Text at <https://www.cotton.senate.gov/files/documents/PLA%20Visa%20Security%20Act.pdf> (Accessed June 24, 2019).

attack, where, in a statement emailed to Al Jazeera, the spokesperson of BLA, Jihand Baloch affirmed, “Our fighters have carried out this attack on Chinese and other foreign investors who are staying in PC hotel.”¹⁵ The hotel was primarily selected for an attack as several Chinese workers and investors used to frequent that hotel.

The BLA and other armed groups have been fighting Pakistani security forces for more than a decade, demanding independence for the ethnic Baloch areas of Balochistan province. Since the launch of the mega CPEC projects in 2015, the BLA opposes foreign investment and issues constant warnings to Chinese investors not to invest in Balochistan. Similarly, in August 2018, a suicide bomber attacked a bus ferrying Chinese mining workers, where again, the BLA claimed responsibility.¹⁶

Following the attack on Pearl Hotel, Major General Asif Ghafoor, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in an interview with a Chinese journalist, stated that “the Pakistan military has raised a whole division-sized force to ensure the security of the CPEC” and the Pakistan army are “planning to deploy another division for this purpose.”¹⁷ Meanwhile, according to a report by *Gulf News*, a Special Security Division (SSD) comprising 9000 Pakistan Army soldiers and 6000 para-military forces personnel has been set up for the security of the CPEC project and Chinese national workers.¹⁸

Strengthening China-Russia Defence Ties: 8th Moscow Conference on International Security

Since 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Moscow, bilateral relations between the two countries have been carefully burgeoning over the years, particularly in the military sector. At the 8th Moscow Conference on International Security, organised by the Ministry of Defence of The Russian Federation, between April 23-25, 2019, the Minister of National Defence of the PRC, General Wei Fenghe reiterated: “As for our relations, they have the greatest common interest, the closest interaction which is the best among all relations between large countries.” Further, General Wei stated that China is ready to implement together with Russia, “the agreement reached by the heads of our states and develop relations in order to achieve new successes and come to a new level.”¹⁹ Conversely, General Sergei Shoigu of the Russian Army acknowledged China as a key partner of Russia in the global arena, where relations between the two countries “are reaching a new, unprecedented high level” mainly maneuvered by President Putin and Chinese President Xi. Further, General Shoigu reiterated that the Russian Defence Ministry is paying special attention to the implementation of various agreements reached between the two countries over the years.²⁰

Thus, implementing the several agreements that have been reached between the two leaders, the Chinese and Russians conducted a six-day joint naval exercise called ‘Joint Sea-2019’ in the first week of May 2019 at Qingdao

¹⁵ Al Jazeera, “Pakistan Military Says Five Killed in Hotel Attack in Gwadar”, May 12, 2019 at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/pakistan-military-5-killed-hotel-attack-gwadar-190512143216520.html> (Accessed on June 2, 2019).

¹⁶ Reuters, “Five Wounded in Attack on Bus Ferrying Chinese Workers in Pakistan”, August 11, 2018 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-blast-china/five-wounded-in-attack-on-bus-ferrying-chinese-workers-in-pakistan-idUSKBN1KW05B> (Accessed on June 2, 2019).

¹⁷ Xinhua “Interview: Pakistan Determined to Ensure Security of CPEC: Pakistani Military Spokesperson”, May 17, 2019 at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/17/c_138064417.htm (Accessed on June 2, 2019).

¹⁸ Gulf News, “Pakistan Army Plans News Unit to Protect CPEC projects”, May 19, 2019 at <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-army-plans-new-unit-to-protect-cpec-projects-1.64050168> (Accessed on June 2, 2019).

¹⁹ Ministry of Defence of The Russian Federation “China’s Defence Minister Consider Relations with Russia as the Best among Large Countries”, April 25, 2019, at <http://eng.mil.ru/en/mcis/news/more.htm?id=12227800@egNews> (Accessed on June 7, 2019).

²⁰ “Ministry of Defence of The Russian Federation Russian-Chinese relations- A Key Factor in Ensuring Global Security”, April 25, 2019 at <http://eng.mil.ru/en/mcis/news/more.htm?id=12227799@egNews> (Accessed on June 7, 2019).

in Shandong province, featuring joint air defence drills, joint anti-submarine and joint submarine rescue drills.²¹ Describing the significance of this particular exercise, Colonel Wu Qian, Director General of the Information Office, Ministry of National Defence, declared that in this particular exercise, there are several ‘first-timers’ i.e., first-time underwater cross-salvaging of each other’s submarine crew members, first-time joint anti-submarine manoeuvre by surface ships and aircraft and first-time live-firing of missile weapons. Thus, it implies that “China-Russia joint maritime exercise is more real-combat and information-oriented and standardized” and it also specifies that “organization of [the] joint defense manoeuvre and the capability to address maritime security threat[s] between the two countries have been strengthened.”²²

Previously, to enhance a defence ties between the two countries, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the Russian Armed Forces held the 20th round of strategic consultations at Beijing in May 2018.²³ Also, in early September 2018, China participated in Vostok-2018, known to be the largest military exercise conducted by Russia.²⁴

China-Africa Defence Cooperation

Deepening China-Africa defence and security cooperation, at the invitation of China’s Ministry of National Defense, more than 100 young military officers from various African countries had a week-long visit to China between April 21-27, 2019. The purpose of this initiative, according to the spokesperson of the Ministry of National Defense, Colonel Ren Guoqiang, was to implement “President Xi’s important initiative about the youth exchange between China and African countries.” The African delegation visited the Aviation Demonstration Team of the PLA Air Force, the Special Armed Police Academy and series of lectures on the Chinese military were conducted. Visits to some high-tech enterprises were also initiated for a better understanding of the Chinese economy and society.²⁵ Commenting on the status of China-Africa military cooperation, Wing Commander Simon Matingwina, from Zimbabwe stated: “Over the past year, we’ve seen tremendous efforts made by African leaders and China in promoting peace in Africa. The African Union in collaboration with China is [taking] huge steps to prevent conflict in Africa.”²⁶

Though defence and security cooperation between China and African countries have existed for a long time, it received a boost under President Xi Jinping when the first-ever China-Africa Defence and Security Forum was inaugurated at Beijing in June 2018. Representatives from fifty African countries and the African Union participated in the Forum, which has significantly changed the African perspective on China.

²¹ “China-Russia ‘Joint Sea-2019’ Exercise Makes Two ‘First Times’”, *China Military Online*, May 5, 2019, at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-05/05/content_9495927.htm (Accessed on June 10, 2019).

²² Ministry of National Defence, People’s Republic of China “Defence Ministry’s Regular Press Conference”, May 30, 2019, at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2019-05/30/content_4842688.htm (Accessed on June 10, 2019).

²³ “China, Russia Hold 20th Round of Strategic Consultation in Beijing”, *China Military Online*, May 30, 2018 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-05/30/content_8045918.htm (Accessed on June 10, 2019).

²⁴ “Vostok-2018 Starts, China’s Participation Attracts World Attention”, *China Military Online*, September 12, 2018 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-09/12/content_9279688.htm (Accessed on June 10, 2019).

²⁵ Ministry of National Defense, The People Republic of China, “Defence Ministry’s Regular Press Conference”, April 25, 2019 at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2019-04/25/content_4840422.htm (Accessed on June 11, 2019).

²⁶ CGTN “China-Africa Ties Deepened in Peace and Security”, April 27, 2019 at <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674d32457a4d34457a6333566d54/index.html> (Accessed on June 11, 2019).

TAIWAN

Discussions on Normalising Taiwan as A Security Partner

In a significant development, Randall Schriver, US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, announced: “We’re going to treat Taiwan as a normal security systems partner...The United States is committed to a normalized process that will make Taiwan a “normal” foreign military sales (FMS) partner.” This announcement was significant because the *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships and Promoting a Networked Region*, which was recently released by the US Department of Defense on June 1, 2019, described Taiwan, Singapore, New Zealand and Mongolia as “natural partners” “of the US in the Indo-Pacific region.” Schriver’s remark came as a response to a question regarding “a proposed US\$2 billion arms sales package to Taiwan has been put on hold for fear of angering Beijing ahead of a planned meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.” However, he clarified that there was no “any specific timing of announcements or releases” in this regard, but there have been discussions regarding “a more normal process, making Taiwan a normal FMS partner for military sales orders and we’re committed to that.” He also suggested, “due to Taiwan’s own security challenges, the country should invest more in its own defense to deter China from resorting to military means to solve the dispute over Taiwan’s status”, which has been in keeping with the US’s longstanding demand and expectation from Taiwan. Schriver was speaking at the Heritage Foundation “on the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy.”²⁷

JAPAN

Japan Emphasises on the Next Steps in Korean Security at the Shangri-La Dialogue

On June 1, 2019 Defence Minister Takeshi Iwaya shared the Japanese perspective on the evolving situation in the Korean Peninsula at the 18th Asia Security Summit. Japan reiterated its policy position of complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges by North Korea and expressed support for President Trump’s policy on North Korea. Minister Iwaya urged Pyongyang to take tangible steps towards the denuclearisation of the Peninsula. In this context, Pyongyang’s recent launching of short-range ballistic missiles constitutes violation of relevant UNSC resolutions and thus is ‘extremely regrettable’. Assessing the current security situation, Japan stresses that there is ‘no essential change in North Korea’s nuclear and missile capabilities. More specifically, North Korea maintains several hundred operational ballistic missiles, which have the whole territory of Japan within their reach. It also possesses ballistic missiles that can possibly reach mainland US. The global security risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – including biological and chemical weapons–remains unchanged’.²⁸ Going forward, Japan proposed maintaining robust deterrence and further reinforcing Japan-US and Japan-US-South Korea cooperation, comprising joint exercises aimed at augmenting ballistic missile warning capability on the one hand and supporting the efficacy of UNSC resolutions and effective implementation of sanctions on Korea including international surveillance, on the other.

India-Australia-Japan-United States Consultations Held in Bangkok

Bangkok hosted the India-Australia-Japan-United States consultations on May 31, 2019. The objective was to

²⁷ “U.S. to Normalize Arms Sales Partnership with Taiwan: Official,” *Focus Taiwan*, June 17, 2019 at <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201906270009.aspx> (Accessed June 25, 2019).

²⁸ Takeshi Iwaya, “Korean Security: the Next Steps”, IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 18th Asia Security Summit, June 1, 2019, at https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/exc/area/docs/2019/0601_speech_iiss.html (Accessed on June 25, 2019).

discuss common strategic concerns with regard to promoting stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. Officials from the four nations discussed the prospects of cooperation in matters of connectivity and infrastructure development, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime cooperation, and cyber security issues.²⁹ During the meeting, India, Japan, the US and Australia reiterated their pledge towards a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific Region based on shared values and principles. Moreover, all four nations underscored their support for ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-led frameworks in the Indo-Pacific architecture and commended the ASEAN initiative for developing a common vision for the Indo-Pacific.

Japan Strengthens Maritime Cooperation with Indo-Pacific Partners

The Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces (JMSDF) conducted the Indo-Pacific Deployment 2019 between April 30 and July 10. In this regard, JMSDF conducted joint exercises with several Indo-Pacific partners with the goal of enhancing operational and cooperative competencies, advance mutual understanding and dependence between Japan and other participating countries. As part of the Indo-Pacific Deployment, the *JS Izumo* and *JS Murasame* conducted joint exercises with the navies of India, the Philippines and the US between May 3 and 9. In addition, JMSDF also conducted the Japan-France-Australia-US multilateral exercise, 'La Perouse' in the Indian Ocean between May 19 and 22. In future, JMSDF will continue to advance cooperation with each country for the realisation of a free and open Indo-Pacific vision.³⁰

Japan to Purchase 105 F-35 Stealth Aircraft

During President Trump's visit to Japan in May, Japan confirmed that it will purchase 105 F-35 stealth aircraft, providing Japan the largest F-35 fleet among all US allies. In 2018, Japan was one of the world's top purchasers of American defence equipment.³¹ F-35s along with Japan's resolve to upgrade the Izumo-class helicopter carriers may cause concern in China and serve to alter the balance of power in East Asia. This is expected to provide Japan with air and naval superiority. During the visit, President Trump boarded the Japanese helicopter carrier *Kaga*, stationed at Yokosuka Bay in Kanagawa Prefecture, along with Prime Minister Abe and addressed both the American Navy and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces. *Kaga* is an Izumo-class helicopter carrier. It is one of two in the class operated as Japan's largest warship. It will be refurbished so that the vessel is capable of carrying F-35B stealth fighter jets developed by Lockheed Martin.³²

Vessel Operated by Japanese Shipping Company Attacked near Strait of Hormuz

On June 13, two vessels, one of which was operated by the Japanese shipping company Kokuka Sangyo, was attacked near the Strait of Hormuz.³³ Japanese Trade Minister, Hiroshige Seko confirmed that one of two vessels,

²⁹ "India-Australia-Japan-United States Consultations", Ministry of External Affairs, May 31, 2019 at https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31403/IndiaAustraliaJapanUnited_States_Consultations (Accessed on June 27, 2019).

³⁰ JMSDF, "Indo-Pacific Deployment 2019 (IPD19)", at <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/operation/IPD19.html> (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

³¹ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference", May 27, 2019 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-prime-minister-abe-japan-joint-press-conference-3/> (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

³² Sakura Murakami, "In Symbolic First, Abe and Trump Jointly Address Military Personnel aboard Japan's Kaga Carrier", May 28, 2019, at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/05/28/national/politics-diplomacy/symbolic-first-abe-trump-jointly-address-military-personnel-aboard-japans-kaga-carrier/#.XRCCqugzbiU> (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

³³ "Attacks on the Ship Operated by a Japanese Shipping Company near the Strait of Hormuz", Statement by Foreign Press Secretary Takeshi Osuga, MOFA Japan, June 14, 2019, at https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002478.html (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

Kokuka Courageous was carrying 25,000 tonnes of methanol and was on its way to Singapore and Thailand when attacked in the Gulf of Oman. The other vessel was a Norwegian-owned *Front Altair*. The incident took place at a time when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was on a historic visit to Iran, the first such visit by a Japanese Prime Minister in more than four decades. The objective of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Iran was to urge Iran to play a constructive role in maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East. Safety of navigation around the Strait of Hormuz is critically important to Japan's energy security. Earlier in May, four tankers were attacked off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. As the US has accused Iran for the latest attacks, Japan has constituted a task force and urged American colleagues to present solid evidence to back its allegation that Iran is responsible for the attacks on the two tankers near the Strait of Hormuz.

Japan-Vietnam Defense Ministerial Meeting Hosted in Hanoi

On May 2, the Japan-Vietnam Defense Ministerial Meeting was held at the Vietnam Defense Ministry. A 'Memorandum on the Orientation of Promotion of Defence Industry Cooperation between Japanese and Vietnamese Defense Ministries' was signed between the Commissioner of Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA) Miyama and Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh, Vice-Minister of National Defence of Vietnam. In addition, Japan and Vietnam agreed to utilise the present cooperation mechanisms and increase defence ties in conformity with signed agreements, such as the Joint Vision Statement on Vietnam- Japan Defence Cooperation. Both leaders promised to carefully coordinate as co-chairs of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts' Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations when Vietnam assumes the role of ASEAN Chair in 2020. Several areas of mutual cooperation were discussed including training, capacity-building, information technology, UN peacekeeping missions, military medicine and defence industry. Japan is expected to support high-level exchange, port and airport calls by vessels and aircraft, enhance capacity-building assistance, and promote multilateral cooperation and hold policy consultations based on its Vientiane Vision.³⁴

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

President Xi Visits North Korea

2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and North Korea. In this regard, President Xi Jinping visited Pyongyang in June 20-21. During his discussions with Chairman Kim, President Xi stressed that China-North Korea relations has entered a new historical phase. Given the complexity in the regional security architecture, both sides stressed the need for high-level exchange to sustain close communication; increase strategic communication on key issues; and increase practical cooperation to bring more benefits to the people.³⁵

This is the fifth meeting between President Xi and Chairman Kim in 15 months. During the visit, President Xi paid homage to martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army at the Friendship Tower. Reflecting on the security situation in the Korean Peninsula, President Xi stated there is a positive outlook on solving the issue through dialogue and appreciated North Korea's initiatives to promote denuclearisation. Moreover, he argued

³⁴ MOD Japan, "Extra Press Conference by Defense Minister Iwaya", May 2, 2019 at <https://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/conference/2019/05/02a.html> (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

³⁵ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Regular Press Conference", FMPRC, June 21, 2019 at https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1674433.shtml (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

that China is prepared to reinforce communication and coordination with North Korea and other stakeholders on the issue to defend regional peace.³⁶

President Trump to Visit Japan and South Korea

On the side-lines of the G20 summit in Osaka on June 28-29, President Trump along with Secretary Pompeo will meet Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to ‘coordinate on the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea and to discuss ways to strengthen trilateral cooperation with the Republic of Korea’. After the G-20 summit in Osaka, President Trump along with Secretary Pompeo will head to South Korea to meet with President Moon Jae-in to discuss methods to strengthen the US-South Korea alliance and coordinate closely on efforts to attain the final, fully verified denuclearisation of North Korea. Meanwhile, in late June Korean Central News Agency reported that President Trump has written a letter to Chairman Kim containing ‘excellent content’. Secretary Pompeo expressed hope that the letter President Trump wrote to Chairman Kim would revive stalled nuclear negotiations. Furthermore, Secretary Pompeo confirmed that Washington is ready to resume talks with Pyongyang immediately. Meanwhile, US Special Representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun underscored that ‘the door is wide open’ for negotiations with Pyongyang.

North Korea Launches New Short-Range Ballistic Missile

On May 4, Pyongyang launched projectiles containing two types of large-caliber, multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) and a new short-range ballistic missile during a firepower strike drill. Subsequently, Pyongyang released pictures of the tested projectiles. While the 240 mm and 300 mm diameter MLRS systems are already present in North Korea, the short-range ballistic missile may meaningfully improve Pyongyang’s ability to conduct strategic strikes against targets in South Korea.³⁷ Additionally, on May 9, Pyongyang conducted a second firepower strike drill with several long-range strike means, including two short-range ballistic missiles. Even though the hawks in the Trump administration considered this move a violation of the UNSC resolutions, President Donald Trump talked down the recent missile test by North Korea. In a tweet, President Trump expressed that ‘I have confidence that Chairman Kim will keep his promise to me’.

Seoul Hosts the Japan-US-South Korea Defence Dialogue

Seoul hosted the 11th Japan-US-South Korea Defence Trilateral Talks (DTT) on May 9, 2019. The objective was to assess the regional security situation following the recent launching of short-range ballistic missiles and further promote trilateral cooperation in supporting the diplomatic initiatives to create complete denuclearisation and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. They also exchanged views on the recent launches by North Korea, and confirmed that they would stay vigilant as defence authorities. All parties underscored their respective commitment to fully implement UNSC resolutions and sanctions and stop illicit ship-to-ship transfers. Beyond the Korean Peninsula, all three countries shared their common perception on the significance of preserving the rules-based order while stressing on issues including freedom of navigation and overflight and peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law. US-Japan-South Korea trilateral security cooperation plays a vital role in regional peace and stability in terms of information-sharing, high-level policy consultations, and joint exercises.³⁸

³⁶ “China, DPRK Agree to Jointly Create Bright Future of Bilateral Friendship”, *Xinhua*, June 22, 2019 at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/22/c_138164572_2.htm (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

³⁷ Michael Elleman, “North Korea’s Newest Ballistic Missile: A Preliminary Assessment”, *38 North*, May 8, 2019, at <https://www.38north.org/2019/05/melleman050819/> (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

³⁸ “Joint Statement of the 11th Defense Trilateral Talks”, Ministry of Defence Japan, May 9, 2019 at <https://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/release/2019/0509a.html> (Accessed on June 28, 2019).

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