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EDITOR'S NOTE

The East Asia Centre at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) publishes the bi-monthly newsletter, the East Asia Military Monitor. It tracks important news developments in the military and security issues from the East Asian region. We hope that the continuous coverage help in keeping abreast of the trends in the region and future scenarios.

This newsletter carries one expert review by Dr Opangmeren Jamir of the book titled, "China's International Transboundary Rivers: Politics, Security and Diplomacy of Shared Resources" by Lei Xie and Shaofeng Xia. The news section covers the Chinese President Xi Jinping's military reforms and various weapons systems that China is showcasing to the international community. Japan and South Korea's regional and security efforts in East Asia is also given importance in the newsletter.

The members of the East Asia Centre at IDSA strive to make accessible the military and security trends in East Asia to the larger strategic community and students.

August 15, 2019

M. S. Prathibha

Associate Fellow, IDSA

BOOK REVIEW

LEI XIE AND SHAOFENG JIA, CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS: POLITICS, SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY OF SHARED RESOURCES, ROUTLEDGE, ABINGDON, UK, 2018, 221 PP., ISBN 9781138689060

DR OPANGMEREN JAMIR

The reviewer is a Research Analyst with the East Asia Centre, at IDSA, New Delhi.

China's extensive policy measures— especially from 2000s— to address domestic water crises are not new.¹ History reveals that harnessing water resources efficiently was always a priority for any emperor, as water has always been an important determinant for social order and prosperity in China.² This book, containing ten chapters, authored by Lei Xie and Shaofeng Jia, demonstrates the current challenges and policy initiatives undertaken by China over the years in the management of transboundary water resources with the riparian states.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UNWC), a global framework instrument that sets out rules and principles for governing international watercourses – adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on May 21, 1997 – had entered into force in August 2014, following the accession of Vietnam to the Convention as the 35th member country. China, along with Turkey and Burundi did not sign the UNWC, mainly on the ground that the rights of an upstream state in the appropriation of water resources are not well protected. Hence, in explaining the behaviour of China in relation to transboundary river-sharing, the authors claim that the realist perspective has much relevance as it implies, “China water use in relation to its national interest” (p.75), wherein, China exercises its ‘sovereign rights’ to secure maximum profit by claiming, “that its policies and plans over the development of transboundary resources are legitimate and rational” (p. 51).

Though China is yet to embrace the global water norms in relation to international river- sharing, nevertheless, in several water treaties that China has concluded with the riparian states in the form of agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoUs), several key principles of UNWC have been incorporated. Thus, Lei Xie and Shaofeng Jia comprehensively explore the pattern of Chinese diplomatic effort in developing water treaties with the riparian states by proposing three questions:

- (1) To what extent is China likely to adopt global water norms? (p.10);
- (2) What are the outcomes of China's diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts and promote sustainable water management? (p.12); and
- (3) What is China's rationale in encouraging water cooperation? (p.13).

¹ James Nickum *et al.*, “The Three Red Lines and China's Water Resources Management Policy in the Twenty-First Century, in *Routledge Handbook on China's Environment Policy*, Abingdon, UK, 2017, pp.71-82.

² Philip Ball, *The Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China*, Penguin Random House, London, 2016.

Except in the Mekong River basin, where China took the lead in establishing a basin- wide mechanism, bilateral mechanisms have been the main strategy that China has adopted to settle water conflicts. The authors emphasize that several important global water norms, i.e., ‘no harms’, ‘fairness’ and ‘benefit sharing’ are encompassed in the agreements that China has reached with the riparian states. For example, to reduce mistrust with the riparian states, information provision and data exchange constitutes a main form of China’s cooperation with its riparian states.

The authors closely examine the four selected case studies: Mekong (ASEAN states); Brahmaputra River (India and Bangladesh); Ili and Irtysh (Kazakhstan) and Amur River (Russia); however, the authors identify a varying degree of institutional cooperation with neighbouring states mainly due to asymmetry in the country’s security, the nature of the country’s political system and differences in economic growth. For example, as China relied heavily on the shared river basins for regional development such as Xinjiang in the north-west, Yunnan and Guangxi in the south-west and Heilongjiang in the north-east, a high level of cooperation exists in water basin collaboration.

Meanwhile, in assessing China’s water diplomatic practices, the authors have identified the limited impact on the development of ‘sustainable water basin management’ which needs to be addressed appropriately; otherwise failure could have disastrous environmental and political outcomes and also impact regional security. The causes lie not only in China’s diplomatic initiatives but also in the complex rationale of its riparian neighbours. The formidable limitation is in China’s development of collaborative water management initiatives, where quantity of water remains a strong focus, and little concern has been shown for sustainable basin-wide water management (p.210). For example, as the exploitation of water in Ili and Amur Rivers is reaching an alarming level, dire consequences are likely to impact China, Russia and Kazakhstan relations. Moreover, in several lower riparian states in the Mekong and Brahmaputra River basin, the level of water insecurity has risen over the years and may exacerbate and potentially endanger foreign relations.

To promote the basin-wide water management mechanism, the authors suggest that China should take the lead because of its strong political and geographical advantage over its shared international rivers and negotiation at the basin level can be mobilized. But to achieve the objective, the authors point out that it requires ‘strong leadership’ within China to act as a driving force to promote improvement in its domestic political processes and those of its neighbouring riparian states (p.213).

To better understand the dynamic of conflict and cooperation over Asia’s major transboundary water resources, Scott Moore, a prominent expert on Chinese water management, endeavoured to explore the domestic politics of water resources in China. Moore offered to future researchers a critical puzzle: “Whether and how China’s contentious domestic hydro politics influence its international relations.” Meanwhile, he also cautioned that the priority for scholars interested in such questions must be to strengthen the evidence for understanding the factors that drive sub-national decision-making over shared water resources and possible linkages between sub-national and international politics.³ And tellingly, Lei Xie and Shaofeng Jia make a valuable contribution in understanding the complexity of China’s domestic water policies and its spillover effects on the international rivers. Scholars eager to understand the dynamic of China’s water management would benefit significantly from this book.

³ Scott Moore, “China’s Domestic Hydropolitics: An Assessment and Implications for International Transboundary Dynamics”, *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, 35(5), 2017, pp. 732-746.

MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

President Xi Jinping Calls for Military Reform

- In his latest remarks, Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and General Secretary of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Central Committee, has called for implementing "the strategy of strengthening the military through reform to advance the cause of building a strong military in the new era." He was speaking at a group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC's Central Committee "on reforming military policies and institutions." The session was organised in the run-up to China's Army Day on August 1, 2019. In his remarks, he underlined "the historic change to the organizational structure of China's military and the revolutionary shift in its force composition through reforms since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012." He stated that the aim of "the reform of military policies and institutions" is to "address the incompatibility of policies with the new era, new missions and new institutions." He underscored the complex nature of "the reform of military policies and institutions" and highlighted "the need to take a holistic approach." Furthermore, he prioritized "combat preparedness of the armed forces, key points of operation of the system, as well as those concerning the benefits of officers and soldiers." He called for "concerted efforts" "by the armed forces and the civilian sector."¹

Weaponry

- China inducted "the first domestically developed Type 055 Nanchang" into the PLA Navy. It is likely to join "North China Sea Fleet." It has "a displacement of more than 10,000 tons" and "can carry more weapons and equipment than any other Chinese destroyer." As per media information, it "has eight eight-unit vertical launch systems (VLS) in the front deck and six eight-unit VLS in the middle, a total of 112 VLS units, the most among Chinese destroyers." The VLS units give the PLAN "both hot launch and cold launch abilities" ("a hot launch means a missile ignites in its cell, while a cold launch means a missile is ejected from the launch cell before it ignites"). The ship carries "air defense missiles, anti-ship missiles and anti-submarine missiles," and possibly "land-attack missiles" too. It is likely to have "HHQ-9B long-range air defense missiles and HQ-16B mid-range air defense missiles," and "a type of mid-close-range surface-to-air missile developed from the DK-10 missile." It "could be equipped with YJ-18 anti-ship missiles" and "Y-8 anti-submarine missiles and torpedoes" as well. An advanced sonar system and "medium-to large-sized anti-submarine helicopters on board" are also the likely features of Type 055 Nanchang. All this provides a three-layered security to the ship. "An improved version of the 130 millimetre single-barrelled H/PJ45A-130-1" is its main gun, which "can shoot 40 shells a minute." A Type 1130 close-in weapon system on this ship "can shoot tens of thousands of bullets per minute to neutralize incoming missiles." Its 24-unit HHQ-10 close-range anti-missile system "can effectively intercept supersonic anti-ship missiles." More variant of the Type 055 might be produced in the coming years, which would be able to "carry China's futuristic electromagnetic railgun, which can shoot hypersonic projectiles" and which can even "serve as an antiballistic missile platform."²

¹ "Xi Stresses Focusing on Reform to Strengthen Military", *People's Daily*, August 1, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0801/c90000-9602247.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

² "China's New Type 055 Destroyer among Best in the World: Experts", *People's Daily*, June 5, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0605/c90000-9584934.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

- The media has reported about China successfully revitalising a 152-millimetre Type-66 cannon-howitzer, which “has been part of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) arsenal for more than half a century by updating it with equipment that suits the needs of modern warfare.” The revitalisation of this gun is cost-effective in comparison to “the 155 millimetre PLZ-05 self-propelled howitzer, which has a similar calibre but is highly automated.” The gun may be mass-produced. After revitalisation, it “can now not only shoot normal explosive shells, but also advanced laser terminal guidance shells...these shells can track targets after they are fired, making them as accurate as missiles.” Electromagnetic jamming shells, flare shells, reconnaissance drones and aim-assist radars are part of the modernised gun. Thus, as Jin Shuaishuai, a PLA officer remarked, the gun will have “the artillery wings and eyes.” It was also noted that as for the range of the gun fire, “a dozen of these cannons can fully cover a large target area.” It should be noted that the PLA has a plan to “revamp” its old weaponry and give it effectiveness.³
- The next-generation off-road tactical armoured vehicle, planned to be inducted in the PLA is undergoing “a series of tests.” This is a lightweight and highly mobile off-road vehicle, which can “operate on very difficult terrain and in complicated battlefield situations.” The vehicle is being perceived to be competitor of the US’ Humvee. The tests conducted on the vehicle “include high-speed runs on angled tracks and passing a variety of difficult, combat-oriented terrain thousands of times.” It is reported that “it has already passed bullet-proof capability examination” and “can resist concentrated attacks from 7.62 millimetre calibre rounds, a bullet type used by many rifles.” Thus, “it can protect personnel from light weapon fire.” The vehicle, though possibly unnamed thus far, appears to be “the latest product from the Dongfeng Mengshi off-road vehicle series.” It is much more modern than the existing vehicles, which can “operate during more complicated battlefield situations and will have a longer service life.” It may have two versions, “one with four wheels, and another with six wheels towing a cart.” The vehicle is designed as a multi-purpose vehicle, which will “conduct personnel transportation missions”, and at the same time may also be used as “a battlefield ambulance.” As far as weapons are concerned, it will carry “heavy machine guns, rockets launchers and missiles.”⁴
- The media discussed that the People’s Liberation Navy (PLAN) will acquire “its own F-35B-like short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) stealth fighter jet” for its aircraft carriers and its amphibious assault ships. STOVL “could outperform attack helicopters in landing and island defense missions.” As per the discussions, China can have three options for its STOVL, which are “a J-20 variant, an FC-31 variant or a totally new one that might feature STOVL capabilities.” This should be noted that “a STOVL aircraft can take off from a short runway and land vertically without a runway.” The US’ F-35B is a major example in this regard. STOVL fighter jets would greatly contribute to amphibious assault ships because they are “not designed for a normal fixed-wing fighter jet to take off and land.” They will be particularly helpful on small islands, “which are not large enough to build proper air fields.”⁵

³ “China Revitalizes Old Howitzers with Modern Add-Ons”, *People’s Daily*, July 5, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0705/c90000-9594940.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

⁴ “China’s Next-Generation Off-Road Tactical Vehicle Soon to Enter Military Service: Report”, *People’s Daily*, June 14, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0614/c90000-9587981.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

⁵ “PLA Navy Needs Own ‘STOVL Stealth Fighter’ Jets to Protect Territory”, *People’s Daily*, June 17, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0617/c90000-9588735.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

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- China's FC-31 warplane, reportedly to be equipped with "very similar capabilities to the US' F-35 fighter jets," is attracting international buyers. The media reported that "Turkey is considering purchasing China's FC-31 and Russia's Su-57 to replace the US' F-35 stealth fighter jet." FC-31 warplanes are being manufactured for exporting them to the international buyers. The Shenyang Aircraft Corporation under the Aviation Industry Corporation of China has developed the fighter jet, which "is a fifth-generation medium-sized twin-engine multi-role stealth fighter jet intended for export." FC-31 is not being produced on mass-scale yet. It will take one or two years to be fully prepared for induction into the military.⁶
 - Another media report discussed that "China's maritime early warning radar system is immune to "radar killer" missiles and is capable of detecting stealth aircraft," and informed that it "can detect naval and aerial hostiles hundreds of kilometres away under any weather condition." This system has been created by Chinese academician Liu Yongtan, who "received the 2018 State Pre-eminent Science and Technology Award for his contributions to the development of the radar system." The award is "the highest scientific award with 8 million yuan (\$1.17 million) prize." The system "features high frequency electromagnetic waves that have long wavelengths and wide beams." It was also explained that "while electromagnetic waves emitted by a normal radar travel in straight lines and, since the Earth is round, cannot help see what is beyond the horizon, the high-frequency ones used by [this] radar travel along the sea surface, and makes it possible to detect and monitor vessels and aircraft beyond visual range." In fact, "the long wavelengths used by the system could also detect stealth aircraft"... "because current stealth aircraft are mainly designed to hide from microwaves and not waves of longer wavelengths." The Chinese maritime radar system "can also avoid attacks from anti-radiation missiles, thanks to the waves' wide beams, because such missiles cannot carry antenna large enough (to track them)."⁷
 - In a demonstration of technological advancement, twenty AI-based robots have been doing "some heavy duties for workers in the ongoing construction of a power supply system for the 7th Military World Games in the host city of Wuhan" in October 2019. These robots are "integrated [with] the latest technologies in fields of big data, the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence that leads to highly efficient construction with workers freed from traditional labour-intensive duties and tough working environments." The robots use "the transient ground-wave and ultrasonic technology." They have "strong motion sense abilities, capable of recognizing instabilities that are not easily noticed by human sight...They can even send data to the control centre for analysis."⁸

⁶ "Intl Interest in China's FC-31 Stealth Fighter Jet Grows", *People's Daily*, June 13, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0613/c90000-9587532.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

⁷ "New Radar System Immune to 'Radar Killer' Missiles", *People's Daily*, June 11, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0611/c90000-9586703.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

⁸ "AI Robots Take on Important Role for World Military Games Preparation", *People's Daily*, June 8, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0608/c90000-9585827.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

Military Training and Games

- The PLA and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) conducted a joint exercise named “Exercise Cooperation 2019” at Singapore’s Murai Urban Training Facility on August 5, 2019.⁹ Similarly, around 150 soldiers from the Chinese People’s Armed Police Force (PAP) and the National Guard of Kyrgyzstan, held a joint training in Urumqi, in Xinjiang’s Uyghur Autonomous Region, on August 13, 2019. The exercise was in line with the PAP and the National Guard’s consensus “to deepen security cooperation.” The two countries have mandated the two agencies for security cooperation for joint operational command, counter-terrorism, and combat capabilities.¹⁰ The PLA and its German counterparts held a joint exercise “on medical support.” The exercise, conducted from July 3 to 17 in Munich, was the second of its kind, the first having been concluded in 2016 in Chongqing. The personnel from the relevant medical units from two militaries participated in the exercise, which was modelled “on the joint operation of medical support teams from the two militaries in international humanitarian medical rescue missions and will focus on tasks including joint command, rescue and disease control.” A 91-member strong Chinese military medical support team participated in the exercise.¹¹
- Recently in July 2019, the joint air patrol by Chinese and Russian Air Force in the East China Sea and Sea of Japan invited some adverse reactions from Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). In this exercise, two Chinese H-6K bombers and two Russian Tu-95 bombers conducted the joint patrol in the aforementioned area in North-eastern Asia. Japan and the ROK’s defence ministries accused a Russian A-50 Mainstay airborne early warning aircraft of violating “the airspace around disputed islands that Seoul calls Dokdo and Tokyo calls Takeshima.” The two countries (Japan and ROK) “claim sovereignty over the islands.” They claimed to have “scrambled fighters to intercept the Russian aircraft.” South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff informed that South Korean fighters even “fired warning shots at the Russian aircraft.” However, Russia refuted this account, and counter-charged that “the South Korean fighters had dangerously intercepted two Russian bombers during a planned flight over international waters.”¹²
- The 7th Military World Games, organised by International Military Sports Council (CISM), will be held in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, from October 18-27, 2019. Around 10,000 participants from “more than 100 countries and regions are expected” to participate in the event. The media reported about a torch-lighting ceremony for the 7th Military World Games being held in Nanchang in east China’s Jiangxi province, which is known as a “cradle of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).” It was reported that the torch relay would “see a total of 2,019 torch-bearers parading the flame in 27 cities and 16 military spots across the country through October 18.” The torch was reported to be “70 cm long and weighs 780 grams.” The games are being organised in China for the first time.¹³

⁹ “‘Exercise Cooperation 2019’” China-Singapore Armies Joint Training Ends in Singapore”, *People’s Daily*, August 7, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0807/c90000-9604067.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

¹⁰ “China, Kyrgyzstan Conclude Joint Counter-Terrorism Drill”, *People’s Daily*, August 14, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0814/c90000-9605864.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

¹¹ “China, Germany to Hold Joint Military Exercise on Medical Support”, *People’s Daily*, July 3, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0703/c90000-9594084.html> (Accessed August 20, 2019).

¹² “Chinese Bombers on Exercise ‘Did Not Violate Any Country’s Airspace’”, *People’s Daily*, July 24, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0724/c90000-9600090.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

¹³ “7th Military World Games Torch Relay Starts from Nanchang”, *People’s Daily*, August 1, 2019 <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0801/c90000-9602588.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

Veteran Affairs

- The Ministry of Veteran Affairs and the Ministry of Finance China announced to “further increase the pension and subsidies for disabled veterans, Red Army veterans and families of martyrs.” They have announced that “the pension allowances for disabled soldiers, police officers, and militia members will be raised by 10 per cent starting from August 1, the Army Day.” Similarly, “the pension for families of martyrs and the subsidies for retired Red Army soldiers will also be raised by 10 per cent.” Likewise, monthly allowances for rural retired soldiers are to be raised by 200 yuan, approximately US\$ 30. The media reported that it was the 26th increase in the pension benefits since 1978, the last one being in August 2018.¹⁴ It should be noted the protest demonstrations by the PLA veterans in recent years, particularly 2016 onwards, across China has emerged as a major development in China’s domestic socio-political landscape, which has attracted international attention and forced the government of China to adopt various new measures for the benefit of the veterans’ benefits.

Miscellaneous

- In an interesting development, China’s Ministry of National Defense clarified that Qian Weiping, a former senior military officer, was not suspected of espionage, but was being “investigated by discipline watchdogs of the Central Military Commission for serious violations of discipline and duty crimes.” The officer Qian was the deputy head of the Central Military Commission’s (CMC’s) equipment development department. The media reported that he “was the chief designer of the tracking, telemetry and command and communication systems for China’s manned space programme and the Chang’e 2 lunar exploration programme.” Incidentally, the equipment development department is “one of the CMC’s fifteen functional departments” which were created recently as part of military reforms. The department “is responsible for planning and developing military equipment, research and development, testing, and the construction of information systems.”¹⁵

JAPAN

Japan-India-America Trilateral Meeting hosted at Osaka

On June 28, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a ‘productive’ trilateral summit meeting with the US President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the side-lines of the G20 Summit in Osaka. Regional security concerns, strategic challenges and international issues of mutual interest featured in the discussions, especially with regard to the Indo-Pacific. Ideas were exchanged on how the three nations can collectively work on issues of connectivity and infrastructure and safeguard peace, security and stability that will benefit the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. This is the second Japan-India-America trilateral meeting. The first Japan-India-America trilateral meeting was held during the 2018 G20 summit in Buenos Aires. The three nations have agreed to continue this trilateral framework in order to deal with the challenges and realise the opportunities that the Indo-Pacific region has to offer.

¹⁴ “China to Further Improve Welfare for Retired Soldiers”, *People’s Daily*, July 24, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0724/c90000-9600091.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

¹⁵ “Former Officer Being Investigated for Discipline Violations, Not Espionage”, *People’s Daily*, July 24, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0724/c90000-9600027.html> (Accessed on August 20, 2019).

India-US-Japan Navies take part in Mine Warfare Exercise (MWE)

Beginning July 18, 2019 the Indian Navy took part in a ten-day Mine Warfare Exercise (MWE) along with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the US Navy around the coast of northern Japan. This was the first time when the Indian Navy was a full participant, with four Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel partaking with diving equipment in the Exercise. Earlier in 2018, the Indian Navy participated as an observer with two personnel. The objective of this joint exercise is to rehearse unit-level mine warfare tactics including sweeping, hunting, and mine detection, as assets are exposed while sailing, since mines can affect them negatively. Dealing with the threat of mines is a key priority in ensuring security in the free and open Indo-Pacific region. In recent times, trilateral naval cooperation has strengthened. The annual Malabar exercise is the foremost example of three navies coming together with the objective of boosting interoperability and enhancing maritime cooperation.

Japan deliberates dispatching SDF personnel to the Strait of Hormuz

In the middle of intensified tensions in the Persian Gulf, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga reportedly indicated that Self-Defense Forces troops may be dispatched to the Middle East in order to join a US-led coalition with the objective of securing the critical SLOCs. This may prove to be a sensitive decision for the political leadership since public opinion polls— for instance, the one conducted by the Kyodo News survey— reflect that around 57 per cent of those surveyed do not support despatching the SDF to join the US-led maritime coalition in the Middle East amid tensions with Iran. The US indicated its desire to build a coalition to safeguard freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandab and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper have pressed Japan to participate in such a coalition.

Japan-South Korea suspend the General Security of Military Information Agreement

Growing trade tensions following the South Korean Supreme Court's verdict on the Japanese forced labour issue in 2018 have percolated the security domain. South Korea has terminated the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) between the ROK and Japan. Both the US allies agreed in 2016 to a military intelligence-sharing pact with the objective of managing regional security issues emanating from the North Korean threat. Tokyo's decision on tightening of export controls on a few key materials vital to Seoul's technology industry, have altered the entire security situation, making it unsuitable to share sensitive information such as military intelligence. This will have security implications in Northeast Asia, particularly in the wake of North Korea's recent firing of short-range ballistic missiles.

Japan protests drill near the contested islands

South Korea conducted a two-day military drill in late August involving the Navy, Army, Air Force and Coast Guard around the contested Takeshima/Dokdo Islands in the Sea of Japan. The drills are reportedly bigger in scale compared to those of earlier years. From the Japanese side, Kenji Kanasugi, the head of the MOFA's Asian and Oceania Affairs Bureau, has registered strong protest against South Korea, stressing that such drills are unacceptable and extremely deplorable. Japan has reiterated its claim over the contested islands. Meanwhile, South Korea claimed that such drills are just regular training to improve the military capability against possible threats and to defend its national security interest, sovereignty and territory. The drill was originally planned for the month of June, but was deferred given the concerns over its implications on the bilateral relations, which is witnessing escalation of tensions over restrictive trade measures, wartime labour and history issues. This move came following South Korea's decision to suspend the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan. The security relations suffered previously in 2018 December following an escalation when a South Korean warship allegedly directed its fire-control radar at a Maritime Self-Defense Force patrol plane.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Japan-China-South Korea Trilateral hosted in Beijing

On August 21, Beijing hosted the ninth Japan-China-South Korea Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The leaders shared views on international and regional issues of common concern and agreed to play a stabilizing and constructive role in promoting cooperation and regional security in East Asia. This year is the 20th anniversary of trilateral cooperation between China, South Korea and Japan which has worked for regional peace, stability and prosperity. The objective is to enhance mutual trust and build convergence of interests and manage differences. China urged Japan and South Korea to resolve bilateral issues amicably and emphasized that the three countries should work in a spirit of cooperation to make Japan-China-South Korea relations the cornerstone of prosperity and stability in Northeast Asia. State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi suggested that it is important to uphold 'sound bilateral relations, continue to uphold the spirit of facing up to history and looking into the future, respect respective core interests and major concerns, and properly handle the problems that crop up'.

US-North Korea meeting in the DMZ

US President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un held a historic meeting at the DMZ on June 30, 2019. Chairman Kim suggested that, 'If it was not for our excellent relation between the two of us, it would not have been possible to have this kind of opportunity'. On this historic occasion when a US President crossed the DMZ, Trump said 'it was an honor that you asked me to step over that line. And I was proud to step over the line'. This was the first time the leaders met after the deadlock at the Hanoi Summit. Besides, President Trump held an official meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in where both sides discussed complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, permanent peace on the Peninsula, alliance management issues, especially in terms of security, economic cooperation, trade expansion, mutually beneficial development and amendment of the KORUS FTA.

US-South Korea hold joint exercises

In August, the US and South Korea held a ten-day 'Combined Command Post Training' exercise. Prior to this, they participated in a four-day 'Crisis Management Staff Training'. The 2019 Exercises, which replaced the Ulchi Freedom Guardian Exercise, reportedly included computer simulations without the real mobilisation of troops or military equipment, and constituted a part of the allies' reorganization of major exercises, with the goal of supporting peace with North Korea. However, the training was conducted in comparable scenarios to those earlier, in two parts: guarding the nation against North Korean attacks and initiation of a counter-attack. The emphasis was on confirming if South Korea is on track to meet the conditions necessary for regaining operational control of its forces from the US during war. The exercise was undertaken within the intended platform of future joint command where a South Korean general commands the Combined Forces Command (CFC), with an American general taking the role of vice-commander.

Resumption of missile launches by North Korea

North Korea has conducted several missile tests since July 25 with the objective of expressing its reservations vis-a-vis the US-South Korea computerized command post-military exercises and the stalled negotiations with the US. In the latest round, it has test-fired a new super-large multiple rocket launcher on August 24. Previously in August, Pyongyang conducted the second known test of a new type of short-range ballistic missile from Tongchon, similar to the one tested for the first time in early 2019 in Hamhung. This was subsequent to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's suggestion that North Korea and the US should resume dialogue to realise the

goal of denuclearisation so that South Korea could pursue the unification of the two Koreas. In the latest spree of launches by the North, it has launched two new short-range ballistic missiles and a new guided multiple-tube rocket launcher. Meanwhile, Seoul has disclosed its intentions to construct new warships and develop precision-guided weapons. South Korea announced mid-term military spending plans in the backdrop of North Korea's expanding missile capabilities.

Developments in South Korean ADIZ

On July 23, 2019, South Korea confirmed that two Chinese H-6 bombers entered South Korea's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). They entered the ADIZ again at Ulleung Island off South Korea's east coast where they were joined by Russian TU-50 bombers and returned to the ADIZ for a third time. In addition, a Russian A-50 early warning aircraft and two Tu-95 bombers entered the ADIZ near the disputed Dokdo Island. Seoul sent jets in response to these entries by the A-50. Meanwhile, Russia has stated that its aircraft did not encroach South Korea's airspace and further stressed that these movements were a part of the maiden joint long-range Sino-Russian patrol. Seoul has registered official protests with Russia. Japan has also done so, claiming that Russian and Chinese bombers entered Japan's ADIZ in the East China Sea.

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

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