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EDITOR'S NOTE

East Asia Centre's bimonthly newsletter, *East Asia Military Monitor* tracks pertinent military, defence and security related developments with the goal of understanding the evolving trends in a timely manner. Our endeavour is to make accessible the military and security trends in the region to the larger strategic and academic community in a reader-friendly manner.

This Issue of the *East Asia Military Monitor* captures significant military, defence and security related developments in China, Taiwan, Japan and the Korean Peninsula by way of brief news items for the month of January-February 2020.

We look forward to comments and suggestions from our readers.

Dr. Titli Basu

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MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

China Releases Outline for Primary Units and Safety Guidelines to Counter Fatal Accidents

The Chinese military has released the guidelines for strengthening capabilities at the grass-roots level, and the Central Military Commission (CMC) has advised primary units to study and implement the guidelines. Further, China has also outlined safety guidelines in the wake of deadly crashes within the Chinese air force and naval aircrafts. The guidelines would strengthen training for their personnel so that they could use these sophisticated arms with confidence, and enforce strict safety procedures as per the international standards.¹

Hacking Allegations against China

The US Department of Justice has charged four members of the PLA's 54th Research Institute of hacking Equifax.² Equifax is one of the largest consumer credit reporting companies in the US and can assess information of 88 million businesses world-wide. The DOJ issued these indictments against the PLA personnel and accused them of stealing “trade secrets and personal data of 145 million Americans”.³ The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang refuted these allegations and accused the US of showing double standards on the basis of cyber surveillance of foreign nationals and governments. He stated that “from the case of WikiLeaks to Edward Snowden, the U.S. hypocrisy and double standard on cybersecurity have been fully revealed”.⁴ The Chinese perceive a broader strategy to these indictments as they believe that the US is building a case to portray China as a threat to the international community. The Chinese also charge that the US Trojans regularly affect the Chinese computers, and other cyber-attack capabilities are conducted against China that are far more dangerous than the Chinese capabilities. Citing a German newspaper report by the *Der Spiegel*, the Chinese believe that the National Security Agency (NSA) to have targeted Huawei.⁵ The Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson has labelled the US report as groundless, hegemonic and judicial bullying.⁶ These indictments by the US seem to be unabated as the US further added additional charges as a new indictment against Huawei, including racketeering and conspiracy to steal trade secrets.⁷ From the US perspective, the investigations into Equifax show that the

¹ Kristin Huang, “China’s Military Gets New Rules to Improve Safety After Series of Fatal Accidents”, *South China Morning Post*, December 21, 2019 at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3042705/chinas-military-gets-new-rules-improve-safety-after-series> (Accessed on March 26, 2020).

² “Chinese Military Personnel Charged with Computer Fraud, Economic Espionage, and Wire Fraud for Hacking into Credit Reporting Agency Equifax”, Department of Justice, Press Release, February 10 2020 at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-military-personnel-charged-computer-fraud-economic-espionage-and-wire-fraud-hacking> (Accessed on March 26, 2020).

³ Paul Mozur, “With Harsh Words, China’s Military Denies it Hacked Equifax”, *The New York Times*, February 13, 2020 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/13/business/china-equifax-denied.html>, (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁴ “Chinese Spokesperson Refutes U S Accusation of Cyber Theft of Trade Secrets”, *Xinhua*, February 11, 2020 at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-02/11/c_138774926.htm (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁵ Guo Yandan, “US Indictment of PLA Members Aims to Make China Threat Theory a Consensus in Society: Experts”, *Global Times*, February 11, 2020 at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1179163.shtml> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

⁶ “Chinese military never engages in cyber espionage: Defense Spokesperson”, China Military Online, Press Briefing, Ministry of Defense, February 13, 2020 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-02/13/content_9741182.htm (Accessed March 20, 2020)

⁷ Bevin Fletcher, “Huawei Slams DOJ Indictment as Political Persecution”, *Fierce Wireless*, February 14, 2020 at <https://www.fiercewireless.com/regulatory/huawei-slams-doj-racketeering-trade-secret-theft-indictment-as-political-persecution> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

Chinese were able to use Equifax's vulnerabilities against them and were able to successfully steal information, revealing the need for companies to be up-to-date with their security vulnerabilities.⁸

China Launches Naval Destroyers

China's Dalian Shipyard launched two destroyers, one missile-guided such as the Type 055 (6th) and Type 052D (23rd) in December 2019. The Jiangnan Changxing Shipbuilding and Heavy Industry Corporation in Shanghai launched another Type 052D (24th) in addition to the Type 056 Corvette (71st) launched by the Huangpu Shipyard.⁹ However, along with these new destroyers, China is lacking the "professional and qualified personnel" to manage it.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the deployment of these destroyers raises the combat capabilities of the PLA as they have "112 vertical launch missile cells capable of launching surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles and anti-submarine missiles" and the capability of launching long-range land-attack cruise missiles.¹¹ Moreover, the water displacement of Type 055 is more than 12,000 tonnes, which has taken many by surprise as they expected it to be around 10,000 tonnes.¹² This new class of Type 055 was first commissioned in January 2020 and could be deployed for "long-range air defence, anti-surface warfare, anti-air and anti-submarine warfare missions".¹³ The Type 052D is the previous classification for the destroyer and has a smaller water displacement of around 6,000 to 7,000 tonnes. Because of its air-defence capabilities, these destroyers are seen as a counter to the US Aegis combat system. Overall, just in December 2019, China had launched five warships in three types such as the Type 056A Jingdao-class corvette, Type 052D and Type 055.

Russia's Rostec Accuses China of Reverse-Engineering Their Products

The Russian defence manufacturing company Rostec has alleged that China has been copying their hardware illegally and has identified 500 such cases.¹⁴ China has had a history of reverse-engineering weapons systems, especially Russian hardware and equipment. In the broader market of arms, Russia is worried that once China reverse-engineers Russian technology, then it would become a contender in the arms sales industry against Russian

⁸ Brian Barrett, "How 4 Chinese Hackers Allegedly Took Down Equifax", *Wired*, February 10, 2020 at <https://www.wired.com/story/equifax-hack-china/> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

⁹ Xavier Vavasseur, "China Launched The 24th Type 052D, 6th Type 055 & 71st Type 056 Vessels For PLAN", *Naval News*, December 30, 2019 at <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2019/12/china-launched-the-24th-type-052d-6th-type-055-71st-type-056-vessels-for-plan/> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹⁰ Kristin Huang, "China Steps Up Warship Building Programme As Navy Looks To Extend Its Global Reach", *South China Morning Post*, December 31, 2019 at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3043975/china-steps-warship-building-programme-navy-looks-extend-its> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹¹ "China's 10,000 ton-class destroyer Equipped with Long-Range Land-attack Missiles", *Global Times*, December 23, 2019 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/1223/c90000-9642733.html> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹² "China's Type 055 warship larger, more powerful than expected", *navyrecognition.com*, February 2020 at <https://www.navyrecognition.com/index.php/news/defence-news/2020/february/8006-china-s-type-055-warship-larger-more-powerful-than-expected.html> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹³ Franz Stefan Gady, "China's Navy Commissions First-of-Class Type 055 Guided Missile Destroyer", *The Diplomat*, January 13, 2020 at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/chinas-navy-commissions-first-of-class-type-055-guided-missile-destroyer/> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹⁴ Dimitri Simes, "Russia Up In Arms Over Chinese Theft of Military Technology", *Nikkei Asian Review*, December 20, 2019 at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Russia-up-in-arms-over-Chinese-theft-of-military-technology> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

companies. The Chinese arms would be cheaper than Russian technology and loss of market share is fast becoming Russia's concern. Rostech Corporation's Chief of Intellectual Property has pointed out that "China alone has copied aircraft engines, Sukhoi planes, deck jets, air defence systems, portable air defence missiles, and analogues of the self-propelled medium-range surface-to-air systems Pantsir,"¹⁵ The worry for Russia would be how far they can maintain the competitive edge against China given the latest technological leaps that China has managed so far in its defence industry.¹⁶

China Conducts Exercises in Tibet

In January, China conducted major military exercises in Tibet with their newest weapons to check the troop's combat-readiness. Some of these weapons include Type-15 light battle tank, 155-MM vehicle-mounted howitzer, which enables China to move its troops in the plateau region more effectively.¹⁷ These new weapons have increased the Tibet Military Region mechanisation and equips them with the latest technology. These new weapons were introduced in the Chinese Military Parade in October 2019 and offer the required firepower for the PLA. For instance, the battle tank can be equipped with explosive or composite armour, and protected against grenades. These new weapons are crucial as the PLA has found that heavier weapons are ill-suited in elevated conditions and oxygen-depleted areas.¹⁸ Most importantly, howitzers could be air-lifted in military aircraft.¹⁹

China Strengthens Border Patrol in Tibet

The PLA has commissioned a three-seater gyroplane for border patrol in Tibet called the *Leiyang Falcon*. It can be used to carry personnel, transport wounded personnel and as a floatation device. Importantly, it could be used for stealth reconnaissance due to its design and size of the plane.²⁰ Produced by the Shaanxi Baoji Vehicles Manufacturing Company, the *Leiyang Falcon* has a single motor, two-seater, tricycle landing gear and a Rotax 914 engine.

Chinese Military in Covid-19 Response

The Chinese leadership has used the PLA to manage its response to the COVID-19. The military assets were used to transport medical supplies and personnel. The Central Military Commission on February 13, 2020, for instance, used the Y-20 transport plane for the first time for non-military operations, for transportation of

¹⁵ "With Foreign Patents, 500 Russian Arms Copied Abroad", *Defenseworld*, December 14, 2019 at https://www.defenseworld.net/news/26006/With_No_Foreign_Patents__500_Russian_Arms_Copied_Abroad#.XnBO7Kgzbcc (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹⁶ Robert Farley, "Russia-China: What's A Little IP Theft Between Friends?", *The Diplomat*, December 27, 2019 at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/russia-china-whats-a-little-ip-theft-between-friends/> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹⁷ Press Trust of India, "China's PLA Begins Major Military Exercises in Tibet", *The Week*, January 06, 2020 at <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2020/01/06/chinas-pla-begins-major-military-exercises-in-tibet.html> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹⁸ "Latest Light Tank, Howitzers Deployed in Exercises in Tibet", *Global Times*, January 06, 2020 at <http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0106/c90000-9646162.html> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

¹⁹ Sutirtho Patranobis, "China Tests New Tank, Cannon in Military Drill along Tibet", *Hindustan Times*, January 6, 2020 at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-tests-new-tank-cannon-in-military-drill-along-tibet-border/story-Tng5UVuvakY0PZMDSMO67O.html> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²⁰ "Chinese PLA Commissions 3-Seat Gyroplane for Border Patrol in Tibet Region", *Defenseworld*, February 3, 2020 at https://www.defenseworld.net/news/26263/Chinese_PLA_Commissions_3_seat_Gyroplane_for_Border_Patrol_in_Tibet_region#.Xm9Ykagzbcc (Accessed March 20, 2020)

medics and medical supplies to Wuhan, the epicenter of the Covid-19 outbreak.²¹ These deployment were done in batches and totaled around 6,600 specialists. These steps were taken after an assessment that the virus was much more serious and infectious than previously thought and the medics were taken from “all branches of the military and theatre commands”.²² Moreover, the PLA was also in-charge of the field hospital (Huashenshan) in Wuhan, where 1400 military medics were treating the infected patients.²³ According to the report, “majority of these medics – 950 – are from hospitals administered by the PLA Joint Logistic Support Force and another 450 are with the PLA Ground Force Medical University, the PLA Navy Medical University and the PLA Air Force Medical University. Fifteen experts from the PLA Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the PLA Academy of Military Science’s Military Medical Institute will join them to offer professional consultation”.²⁴ In addition, the Chinese CMC “put highest level of preparedness and response, a crisis management system designed for wartime and severe natural disasters. The system calls for veterans to be ready to return to active duty at any time and local governments should work with the military to roll out a series of measures to prevent further infection”.²⁵ The PLA was also involved in the leadership role in its fight against Covid-19. Major General Chen Wei from the PLA, who had extensive credentials in China’s response to Ebola outbreak and SARS, is the team leader of the Biological Hazards Prevention and Control Program. She is responsible for leading a team to improve Covid-19 screening tests and has now assumed leadership over China’s fight against the new novel coronavirus.²⁶

India-China Finish Hand-in-Hand Bilateral Exercise

The two countries have concluded their bilateral joint exercise called the Hand-in-Hand on December 20, 2019. According to the defence ministry of China, the soldiers “had mixed team training exercises and exchanged experiences in counter-terrorism operations and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)”.²⁷ According to one report, the “the module also included physical training activities, battle obstacle courses and games, special heliborne operations and case studies of various operations carried out in counter-terror environment. Close to 250 military personnel participated in the exercise that lasted for two weeks”.²⁸

²¹ Xinhua, “11 transport aircraft of PLA Air Force send medics to Wuhan”, February 13, 2020 at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-02/13/c_138780271.htm (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²² Minnie Chan, “Chinese military sends in fresh medical crews to coronavirus-hit Wuhan”, *South China Morning Post*, February 13, 2020 at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3050520/chinese-military-sends-fresh-medical-crews-coronavirus-hit> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²³ “PLA medical personnel to run new Wuhan hospital”, *China Daily*, February 2, 2020 at <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/article/119878> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Minnie Chan, “China’s military put to the crisis test in coronavirus call-up”, *South China Morning Post*, February 9, 2020 at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3049672/chinas-military-put-crisis-test-coronavirus-call> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²⁶ Bill Gertz, “Chinese general with bioweapons background takes leading role in coronavirus fight”, *Washington Post* February 16, 2020 at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/feb/16/chinese-maj-gen-chen-wei-takes-leading-role-in-cor/> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²⁷ “Defence Ministry’s Regular Press Conference on December 26”, China Military Online, December 27, 2019 at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-12/27/content_9705152.htm (Accessed March 20, 2020)

²⁸ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, “Hand-in-Hand 2019: Indian and Chinese Armies Come Together for Joint Military Exercise”, *The Diplomat*, December 27, 2019 at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/hand-in-hand-2019-indian-and-chinese-armies-come-together-for-joint-military-exercise/> (Accessed March 20, 2020)

China-Tanzania's "Sincere Partners 2019" Military Training

China and Tanzania have conducted their comprehensive military training in Tanzania, where the PLA's 73rd group army were involved in the exercises. According to the Chinese *PLA Daily*, the two countries' "participating troops demonstrated weapons and equipment of each other. It was learnt that the joint training would take about 25 days, which includes the exchange of combat experience and skills, joint actual-troop drill and command post exercise".²⁹ The joint training was concluded on January 16, 2020, where the ground forces of both countries were only involved.³⁰ These exercises were supposed to encourage understanding between the two militaries and boost growing ties between China and the African countries.

THE TAIWAN STRAIT

- In end-December, the Chinese aircraft carrier *Shandong*, the "first domestically-built aircraft carrier and the second in the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)," sailed through the Taiwan Strait. "It officially entered service" just last month. It sailed north through the Strait. Since January 2017, the Chinese aircraft carriers have "transited the Taiwan Strait six times."³¹ The US State Department issued an appeal "to "abstain from coercion" following the transit."³² The Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence also informed, "the Chinese airplanes, including H-6 bombers and KJ-500 early warning and control aircraft, flew to the south of Taiwan through the Bashi Channel, which separates the nation from the Philippines" in the end of January.³³ In the past couple of years since Tsai Ing-wen became President, these sailings and flights close to Taiwan have been quite regular. However, this time the timing of *Shandong's* sailing and the airplanes' flights was noteworthy because these took place immediately before and after Tsai's re-election in mid-January. Besides, Taiwan scrambled F-16 fighter jets to monitor the movement of Chinese military planes that circled half of Taiwan as confirmed by the Ministry of National Defense (MND). Besides, in early February, the Chinese J-11 jet fighters, KJ-500 early warning aircraft and H-6 bombers, "flew near the eastern side of Taiwan." The Taiwanese defence ministry informed that "Taiwan's air force responded by scrambling the missile-carrying F-16s to follow the Chinese planes, as well as mobilizing other surveillance and air defense assets."³⁴
- Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (parliament) passed a 12-article anti-infiltration bill on December 31, 2020. The newly-enacted Act "criminalizes political activities backed by hostile foreign forces such as China." The bill

²⁹ "China-Tanzania 'Sincere Partners-2019' military training kicks off in Tanzania", *PLA Daily*, December 30, 2019 at http://english.pladaily.com.cn/view/2019-12/30/content_9706488.htm (Accessed March 20, 2020)

³⁰ "China, Tanzania conclude 'Sincere Partners 2019' joint military training", China Military Online, January 21, 2020 at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2020-01/21/content_4858932.htm (Accessed March 20, 2020)

³¹ Jake Chung, "Ministry Monitoring Chinese Aircraft Carrier's 'Transit'", *Taipei Times*, December 27, 2019 at <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/12/27/2003728273> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

³² Stacy Hsu and Matthew Mazzetta, "US Responds to Chinese Aircraft Carrier Transit in Taiwan Strait", *Focus Taiwan*, December 27, 2019 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/201912270005> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

³³ Reuters, "Chinese Warplanes Pass through Bashi Channel", *Taipei Times*, January 24, 2020 at <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/01/24/2003729767> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

³⁴ "Taiwan Scrambles F-16 Fighters to Monitor Chinese Warplanes", *Taipei Times*, January 24, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202002090014> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

was first introduced in November 2019. The anti-infiltration act has generated a debate and has met with strong resistance from the opposition KMT and other concerned circles. The KMT has questioned the urgency that has been shown in the passage of this bill. The critics are flagging the possibility of victimisation of people who maintain contact with China, for example businessmen and academics, as this law has a lot of gaps with regard to the scope and its implementation.³⁵

TAIWAN

Arms Purchase

- The US Senate has passed the National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA). The US\$738 billion defence bill “includes further support for Taiwan and assessments of Beijing’s military capabilities.” If it receives the presidential approval, it will provide “for a 2.8 per cent increase in US military spending and outlines measures to counter US adversaries such as China and Russia... require reports on Beijing’s military capabilities.” The Senate passed it with an 86 to 8 majority before which the House of Representatives had passed it with a 377 to 48 majority. Thus, the bill enjoyed bipartisan consensus.³⁶ The bill received prompt presidential assent and became law.³⁷
- With Taiwan signing Letters of Offer and Acceptance (LOAs) with the US, the deal for buying 66 F-16 C/D Block 70 (also known as F-16Vs) jets, 108 M1A2 Abrams tanks and 1,240 BGM-71 TOW anti-tank missiles is confirmed. “One F-16 C Block 70 (single-seater) and one F-16 D Block 70 (two-seater)” is likely to be delivered “in 2023 for testing ... [and] formal deliveries will begin in batches a year later, with four to five units per batch.”³⁸
- The media reported that Taiwan is buying anti-tank missiles and launch platforms worth NT\$11.3 billion (US\$375.3 million) from the US. This deal “involves the NT\$7.5 billion purchase of TOW 2Bs, following a procurement of 460 missiles in March 2018 that cost NT\$3.8 billion.” The Letter of Offer and Acceptance for this was signed on July 8, 2019. The missiles will reach Taiwan by March 2028 in separate batches, though when the supply would commence has not been reported. Importantly, “the missiles are to be deployed on the nation’s outlying islands — such as Kinmen, Matsu and Penghu — to defend against Chinese amphibious tanks, hovercraft and airborne infantry fighting vehicles.” The media estimated that “the total order would be for 1,240 to 1,700 missiles (including the previous order for 460 missiles), 57 sets of launchers and 100 vehicles.” The TOW 2B anti-tank missiles would replace the TOW 2A missiles of the 1960s. The media

³⁵ “Anti-infiltration Bill Passes Legislature Amid Protests”, *Focus Taiwan*, December 31, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/201912310012> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

³⁶ Sarah Zheng, “US Senate Passes US\$700 Billion Defence Act to Support Taiwan and Counter China and Russia,” *South China Morning Post*, December 18, 2019 at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3042654/us-senate-passes-us700-billion-defence-act-support-taiwan-and> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

³⁷ Lin Chia-nan, “Ministry Thanks Trump for Taiwan-friendly Act,” *Taipei Times*, December 22, 2019 at <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2019/12/22/2003727968> (Accessed March 4, 2019).

³⁸ Elaine Hou, Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, “US, Taiwan Seal Arms Deals,” *Focus Taiwan*, December 21, 2019 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/201912210008> (Accessed March 4, 2019).

learnt that “the TOW 2B uses a wireless guidance system,” which has “improved accuracy” and faster shoot-and-scoot capability.³⁹

The Diplomatic Front

- In an important development, Vice-President-elect Lai Ching-te paid a visit to the US in early February 2020 and “met with White House National Security Council officials in Washington, D.C.” The meeting has been deemed as “the highest-level Taiwanese official to meet with such officials since the US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979.” However, the contents of his discussion with the officials have not been reported. During this visit, he also met important political leaders such as Senators Marco Rubio, Jim Risch, Bob Menendez, Cory Gardner and Chuck Grassley.⁴⁰
- In a yet another important development, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has “urged US governors to resist Chinese pressure to shun Taiwan,” warning that “Beijing was increasingly taking its diplomatic battle to the local level.” He made this remark in his address to the National Governors’ Association in Washington. He gave an example of how China warned Mississippi’s Governor in 2019 “that China would cancel investment over his visit to Taiwan.” He also shared how a Chinese diplomat sent a letter to state governments, urging them “not to congratulate President Tsai Ing-wen on her re-election last month.” He also informed how “a high school in Chicago withdrew an invitation to a Taiwanese representative to take part in a climate discussion.” He summarised, “It is one thing to pressure the secretary of state of the United States of America. It seems quite something else to go after a high-school principal ... It shows depth. It shows systemization. It shows intent.” Therefore, he urged the Governors, “Don’t make separate individual deals and agreements with China that undermine our national policy” and further said, “I know none of you would do so intentionally. Let us help you make sure we’re getting it right.” He underlined that the Trump administration would “step up communication with state and local governments about dealing with China,” but on their own, the state and local governments should follow the “trust but verify” approach in doing business with China. He emphasised that these instances of Chinese interference at the local level should not be dismissed as insignificant as “the cumulative effect is of enormous national importance and international significance.” Incidentally, he also “warned of Chinese pressure on local leaders not to meet the Dalai Lama.” He was concerned as to how “Florida’s pension fund has invested in a company with ties to surveillance in Xinjiang, where Beijing has detained more than 1 million Uighur and other Turkic-speaking Muslims.” He accused China “of exploiting US freedoms to “gain advantage over us at the federal level, the state level and the local level.” Highlighting the Chinese approach as very organised and methodical, he did not mince words and said, “I’d be surprised if most of you in the audience have not been lobbied by the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] directly.”⁴¹
- That the US Senator Ted Cruz wanted to introduce the Taiwan Symbols of Sovereignty (Taiwan SOS) Act “to ease the US’s ban against displaying symbols of Taiwan’s sovereignty” was duly reported in the media a few months ago. He has finally introduced the bill “that would allow Taiwanese diplomats and military people to display Taiwan’s flag and wear their uniform while in the US on official business.” The bill intends

³⁹ Staff Writer, “Military Buys Anti-Tank Arms, Launchers from US,” *Taipei Times*, January 1, 2020, at <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/01/01/2003728533> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁴⁰ Chiang Chin-yeh and Chiang Yi-ching, “Taiwan’s Vice-President-elect Meets US National Security Officials,” *Focus Taiwan*, February 6, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202002060004> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁴¹ Agence France-Presse (AFP), “US States Urged to Resist Pressure on Taiwan,” *Taipei Times*, February 10, 2020 at <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/02/10/2003730691> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

to “reverse the Obama administration policy, formalised in a 2015 confidential memo, prohibiting the display of the Taiwanese flag at the request of the Chinese Communist Party.”⁴²

- The US, Taiwan, Guatemala and Honduras held their first quadrilateral meeting in Guatemala on January 14, 2020 during Taiwan’s Foreign Affairs Minister Joseph Wu’s visit to Guatemala. Advancing regional cooperation and development was the agenda of the quadrilateral meeting. Acting US Secretary of Homeland Security, Chad Wolf and US International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) Chief Executive, Adam Boehler represented the US in the meeting. Taiwan-US joint promotion of partnerships with “Guatemala and Honduras in trade, investment, infrastructure and other areas” were the main item on the agenda. Notably, earlier on December 13, 2019, President Trump and the Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benitez had also issued a joint statement “that the IDFC would finance the construction of a medical center in Asuncion and offer technical support alongside Taiwan.”⁴³
- Interestingly, the US news website Axios reported that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) was “blocking Twitter accounts that criticized ICAO’s continued exclusion of Taiwan during a global public health crisis.” The United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs has “denounced” ICAO for this.⁴⁴

JAPAN AND THE KOREAN PENINSULA

60th Anniversary of US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security

In January 2020, the US and Japan celebrated 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. The US-Japan Security Treaty was signed in 1951 as a ten-year agreement. In 1960, it was revised. In the post-World War II era, the alliance has anchored America’s strategic presence in the Asia Pacific with forward deployment of troops. President Trump, in his statement, underscored the need for Japan to continue to increase its contributions towards the alliance.⁴⁵ 2020 will be a difficult year as the alliance managers will start negotiating the Host Nation Support with President Trump heading for re-election.

The US-Japan Revised Logistics Interoperability Framework

On February 5, the US and Japan signed a revised Logistics Interoperability Framework with the goal of advancing alliance co-operation in support of mutual concern including humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and other peacetime operations.⁴⁶ This Framework facilitates a strategic approach to integrated logistics and intends to

⁴² Stacy Hsu, Chen Yun-yu and Elizabeth Hsu, “Ted Cruz Introduces Draft ‘Taiwan SOS Act’”, *Focus Taiwan*, February 14, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202002140007> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁴³ Lin Chia-nan, “Talks Held with US in Guatemala”, *Taipei Times*, January 18, 2020 at <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/01/18/2003729457> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁴⁴ Chiang Chin-yeh and Emerson Lim, “US Denounces ICAO for Blocking Critics Supportive of Taiwan Inclusion”, *Focus Taiwan*, January 28, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202001280004> (Accessed March 4, 2020).

⁴⁵ “Statement from the President on the 60th Anniversary of the United States-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security”, The White House, January 18, 2020 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-60th-anniversary-united-states-japan-treaty-mutual-cooperation-security/> (Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁴⁶ Gabriel Dominguez, “USN, JMSDF sign revised logistics interoperability framework”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, February 12, 2020 at <https://www.janes.com/article/94269/usn-jmsdf-sign-revised-logistics-interoperability-framework> (Accessed on March 10, 2020).

effectively employ available resources and ease obstacles while delivering operational requirements. The Interoperability Framework furthers cooperation in all areas of logistics planning, including tactical, operational, innovative and strategic approaches. Furthermore, both sides will explore possibilities of improving radiological screening procedures, and integrating emerging technologies for example additive manufacturing and unmanned systems that can improve lethality and sustainability.

Cabinet Approves 5G Bill

On February 18, the Japanese cabinet approved a bill intended to support the development of secured 5G mobile networks and drone technologies.⁴⁷ The bill facilitates companies that invest in 5G with a 15 per cent tax break with the objective of enhancing the capabilities of Japanese firms. It will require companies to undertake security measures against hacking and data leaks. The bill also supports drone manufacturers. Chinese companies enjoy a 70 per cent share of the international drone market. Japan barred Huawei Technologies and ZTE Corporation from getting involved in public procurement contracts, as apprehensions regarding alleged espionage intensified.

Six Policy Priorities outlined by Foreign Minister Motegi

On January 20, at the 201st session of the Diet, Foreign Minister Motegi argued that Japan should re-establish the international order by leading new rules-making efforts. He outlined six policy priority for Japan,⁴⁸ including (1) strengthening the US-Japan alliance and advancing Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision together with Australia, India, ASEAN and Europe (2) managing outstanding issues with North Korea (3) improving relations with neighbouring countries including China, South Korea and Russia (4) easing tensions in the Middle East (5) advancing free and fair trade, reforming the WTO, and developing rules on data flow and digital economy under the 'Osaka Track' and (6) addressing global issues including United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms.

China-Japan High-level Political Dialogue hosted in Tokyo

The 8th China-Japan High-level Political Dialogue was held in Tokyo in February.⁴⁹ Yang Jiechi, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, and Shigeru Kitamura, Secretary General of Japan's National Security Council discussed the prospects of President Xi Jinping's scheduled visit to Japan in April. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19, there are reports that the state visit could be deferred until fall after Tokyo hosts the Olympics and Paralympics. This will be the first visit by a Chinese president since 2008. Presently, both China and Japan are preoccupied with containing the COVID-19 outbreak and agreed to share information and experience in epidemic prevention. During this visit, Director Yang Jiechi also met Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.

⁴⁷ "Japan approves bill to help firms develop 5G and drone technologies", *Reuters*, February 18, 2020 at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/02/18/business/tech/5g-drone/#.XqaincgzbIU>(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁴⁸ "Foreign Policy Speech by Foreign Minister MOTEGI to the 201st Session of the Diet", Foreign Ministry of Japan, January 20, 2020 at https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pp/page3e_001153.html(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁴⁹ "The 8th China-Japan High-level Political Dialogue Held in Tokyo", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 28, 2020 at https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1751472.shtml(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

Japan and COVID-19

Japan has registered over a few hundred cases of COVID-19. Hokkaido, the most affected prefecture, has declared emergency.⁵⁰ Other affected prefectures include Aichi, Tokyo, Kanagawa and Chiba. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo requested elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, special needs schools to close temporarily to avert spreading of group infection.⁵¹ But this may have an impact on the micro, small and medium businesses due to the shortage of workers as parents will have to take leave. The government is extending support through the Employment Adjustment Subsidies irrespective of industry. It has launched emergency packages drawn from contingency funds to fight the outbreak. There are reports suggesting that Japan is considering clinical trial of anti-flu Avigan to observe if it is effective on coronavirus. Economic impact of COVID-19, following drop in foreign tourists and disruption in production lines, are creating concerns.

Japan scrambling jets in East China Sea

Despite positive momentum in China-Japan bilateral relations, defence ministry records show that Japan scrambled fighter jets 523 times to intercept Chinese military aircraft, primarily in the East China Sea, between April and December 2019.⁵² This represents a 9.9 percent increase in comparison to last year. There are some opinions that China may alter its behaviour around President Xi Jinping's scheduled visit to Japan in April 2020, but any change would only be temporary.

President Moon Jae-in's New Year Message

In his New Year message, South Korean President Moon Jae-in outlined the prospects of the economy amidst US-China trade frictions. Despite the stress in the global economy, South Korea succeeded as the seventh largest exporter in the world with exports amounting to US\$1 trillion for the third year. In this, partners within the New Southern Policy framework accounted for around 20 percent of the exports while the partners within the New Northern Policy registered double-digit rises. The focus will remain on 5G and rechargeable batteries. President Moon stated that "peace on the Korean Peninsula is not a matter of choice but the path we must take while overcoming all difficulties".⁵³ Inter-Korea cooperation remains a priority. He further articulated that US-North Korea dialogue must continue and stressed that South Korea will continue to facilitate dialogue between the two parties. There is a requirement to explore realistic methods to advance inter-Korean cooperation. He suggested that global coordinated solutions need to abide by the three principles for peace on the Korean Peninsula including zero tolerance for war, mutual security guarantees and common prosperity.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ "Hokkaido declares 'state of emergency' over coronavirus", *The Asahi Shimbun*, February 29, 2020 at <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13175177>(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵¹ "All schools in Japan told to close until April over virus outbreak", *KYODO*, February 27, 2020 at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/02/27/national/hokkaido-coronavirus-school/#.XqkRgWgzBIU>(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵² Franz-Stefan Gady, "Japan Intercepts Chinese Military Aircraft 523 Times in 9 Months", *The Diplomat*, February 4, 2020 at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/japan-intercepts-chinese-military-aircraft-523-times-in-9-months/>(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵³ "2020 New Year's Address by President Moon Jae-in", *Cheongwadae*, January 07, 2020 at <https://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/741>(Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵⁴ *ibid*

US-South Korea Alliance decided to defer combined command post training

Following South Korea's announcement of the "severe" alert regarding COVID-19, the US-South Korea alliance decided to postpone the combined command post training up until further notice.⁵⁵ The decision was taken keeping the well-being of the South Korean and American service members and prioritising containment efforts for COVID-19 within South Korea. Nevertheless, the US-South Korea alliance remains ironclad and devoted to projecting military deterrence to defend South Korea against any threat. Chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, Park Han-ki, suggested postponement of the annual exercise and Commander of the United States Forces Korea (USFK), Robert Abrams agreed given the urgency of the COVID-19 outbreak. It was a preventive measure to preserve the combat capability of the combined forces.

South Korea deploy anti-piracy unit in Strait of Hormuz

South Korean Defence Ministry decided on January 21 to increase Cheonghae Anti-Piracy Unit's operational area for the time being to include the Strait of Hormuz given the rising tensions between the US and Iran.⁵⁶ The unit is composed of a KDX-II-class guided-missile destroyer and about a few hundred personnel. It will widen its mission from the Gulf of Aden to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian/Persian Gulf in order to guarantee the security of Korean people and safeguard the freedom of navigation of containers. It is expected to undertake "independent" operations in this region, even though liaison personnel are sent to the US-led International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) headquarters located in Bahrain to support information sharing.

Kim Jong-un supervises 'Joint Strike' Military Exercise

Chairman Kim Jong-un reportedly supervised a "joint strike" military drill on February 28. It overlaps with the first anniversary of the Hanoi summit between US President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim. The objective was to evaluate the "mobility and the fire power strike ability of the defense units on the front and in the eastern area and offer them an occasion to get proficiency in the command of the combined strike by the services of the KPA."⁵⁷ Meanwhile, North Korea remains under precautionary lockdown over COVID-19. The "joint strike" military drill happened after the US-South Korea decided that their computerized command post exercises would be postponed following the outbreak of COVID-19. At the December 2019 plenum of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman Kim suggested that North Korea would end the moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile testing.

COVID-19 and South Korea

On February 19, South Korea reported the first casualty of COVID-19 as confirmed by Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. President Moon Jae-in spoke to Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss

⁵⁵ "ROK-US Alliance Announcement on Combined Training", United States Forces Korea, February 26, 2020 at <https://www.usfk.mil/Media/News/Article/2095576/rok-us-alliance-announcement-on-combined-training/> (Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵⁶ Gabriel Dominguez, "South Korean navy to deploy anti-piracy unit to Strait of Hormuz", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 21 January 2020 at <https://www.janes.com/article/93826/south-korean-navy-to-deploy-anti-piracy-unit-to-strait-of-hormuz> (Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵⁷ Ankit Panda, "North Korea's Kim Jong Un Oversees 'Joint Strike' Military Exercise Amid Coronavirus Fears", *The Diplomat*, February 29, 2020 at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/north-koreas-kim-jong-un-oversees-joint-strike-military-exercise-amid-coronavirus-fears/> (Accessed on March 10, 2020).

cooperation including sharing of information in dealing with COVID-19 outbreak.⁵⁸ South Korea employed a “Trace, test, treat” approach⁵⁹ after it registered the first confirmed case in late January. Advent of Patient 31 posed real challenge in South Korea’s fight against COVID-19. South Korea devised an all-government move towards creating a task force connecting all ministries, regional and city governments. Foreign Minister Kang said that the “key to our success has been absolute transparency with the public – sharing every detail of how this virus is evolving, how it is spreading and what the government is doing about it, warts and all.”⁶⁰ Testing constituted the key to Seoul’s response to the epidemic. Unlike Europe, South Korea did not opt for lockdown but shut down schools.

North Korea and COVID-19

North Korea promptly shut its border with China following the Outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan. On January 21, it informed tourist companies that foreign tourists would not be permitted to enter North Korea.⁶¹ It also suspended flights from both China and Russia and implemented mandatory quarantine of foreign nationals in the country for 15-30 days. North Korea focussed on a “control first” approach. It officially maintains that it has no positive cases for COVID-19. Any such outbreak would be overwhelming for Pyongyang primarily because of the poor public health infrastructure and the elaborate sanctions in place. Meanwhile, national media has raised awareness by featuring detailed reports on precautionary efforts in managing Covid-19 and mobilisation of medical personnel.

⁵⁸ Kim Tong-Hyung and Hyung-Jin Kim, “South Korea Reports 1st Virus Death; 2.5M Urged to Stay Home”, *The Diplomat*, February 20, 2020 <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/south-korea-reports-1st-virus-death-2-5m-urged-to-stay-home/> (Accessed on March 10, 2020).

⁵⁹ Suhasini Haidar, “‘Trace, test, treat’ mantra helped us control the virus, says South Korean Ambassador to India Shin Bong-Kil”, *The Hindu*, March 26, 2020 <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/coronavirus-south-korean-ambassador-to-india-shin-bong-kil-says-trace-test-treat-mantra-helped-south-korea-control-virus/article31175789.ece> (Accessed on March 26, 2020).

⁶⁰ Sean Fleming, “South Korea’s Foreign Minister explains how the country contained COVID-19”, *World Economic Forum*, March 31, 2020 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/south-korea-covid-19-containment-testing/> (Accessed on March 31, 2020).

⁶¹ Esther S. Im and Andray Abrahamian, “Pandemics and Preparation the North Korean Way”, *38 North*, February 20, 2020 at <https://www.38north.org/2020/02/eimaabrahamian022020/> (Accessed on March 26, 2020).

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

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