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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE	4
EXPERT COMMENTARY	
INDIA-JAPAN TIES UNDER SHINZO ABE..... <i>SIMRAN WALLA</i>	5
BACKGROUNDERS	
PLA'S MILITARY POSTURING AT THE TAIWAN STRAIT	10
<i>DR PRASHANT KUMAR SINGH</i>	
MAPPING EAST ASIA	
CHINA	14
TAIWAN	17
JAPAN	22
THE KOREAN PENINSULA	26
CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS	29

EDITOR'S NOTE

The East Military Monitor aims to deliver critical developments on security and military matters in the East Asian region. Amid the increasing uncertainties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the shifting regional events have assumed greater significance. From the resignation of Shinzo Abe to more aggressive military actions by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), regional security dilemmas are creating more pressure on states to take a re-look at their national strategies. None can be more revealing the changes that are happening in China and its neighbourhood. The pandemic has revealed the security challenges that states face in the region and the responses that are gearing up against those challenges. The East Asian region is undergoing more security realignment as countries are looking towards increasing their defence cooperation with their strategic counterparts to secure their interests as well as strengthening their defence industry. In addition, these security changes are ongoing while countries are also attempting to navigate their economic relationship with China. No doubt that China's economic recovery would enable countries in the neighbourhood to reinvigorate their economies.

In this uncertain regional environment, the East Asia Military Monitor curates significant developments to update our database. More importantly, given that one of the most important states in East Asia, Japan, which has undergone profound changes with the resignation of Shinzo Abe, it has time to re-evaluate India's relationship with Japan.

Ms Simran Walia, in commentary, entitled, "India-Japan Ties under Abe" analysed the achievements that his leadership has managed in strengthening India's role in the region and the way forward after his resignation.

Meanwhile, post-pandemic, the political relations between Mainland China and Taiwan have continued to deteriorate. During the pandemic, the tensions began with the admission of Taiwan in the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the international community's praise for Taiwan's efforts in successfully combating the pandemic. However, the more international attention Taiwan was getting, the more security vulnerable China was beginning to portray, and in turn led it to conduct more military actions near the Taiwan Strait. The Hong Kong situation seemed to have complicated the issue further while raising questions about Beijing's ability to peacefully convince the Taiwanese population of the advantages of supporting the One Country Two Systems.

Dr Prashant Kumar Singh has drawn a brief background on the recent military tensions in the Taiwan Straits. The "PLA's Military Posturing in the Taiwan Strait" looks at the recent actions by the PLA to signal its willingness to confront and pursue its political objective and the probabilities of conflict in the region and the implications of the political situation in Hong Kong on cross-strait relations.

EXPERT COMMENTARY

INDIA-JAPAN TIES UNDER SHINZO ABE



SIMRAN WALIA

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Shinzo Abe's sudden and shocking decision to step down as the Prime Minister has created confusion and dilemma as to whether the strong Indo-Japan ties will continue the same way under Abe's successor, Yoshihide Suga¹. Abe's contribution towards stronger Indo-Japan relations has been phenomenal ever since he took over as the Prime Minister of Japan.

Japan had always embraced India, however, Abe's term took strides towards closer ties between the two nations through economic and strategic relations. Abe had officially visited India four times during his tenure and was also the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit India as a Chief Guest for the Republic Day parade in 2014².

Abe's first tenure

Abe's first tenure as the Prime Minister began in 2006-07, and in December 2006, former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Shinzo Abe signed the joint statement on 'Japan-India Strategic and Global partnership', which focused primarily on security, defence, and political cooperation³.

In 2007, Abe addressed the Parliament of India and delivered his now-famous speech on 'Confluence of the two seas', which marked the beginning of the foundation of the Indo-Pacific⁴. He defined the partnership between the two nations as one where they share fundamental values like freedom, democracy as well as strategic interests. The India-Japan partnership allowed for the evolution of the 'broader Asia' into the Pacific Ocean network, which also incorporated the United States and Australia. Abe was quite successful in observing that as maritime states, both nations have vital interests in the security of the sea lanes⁵.

¹ Akira Kawamoto, 'What a new Prime Minister will mean for the future of Japan', *World Economic Forum*, September 21, 2020, at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/abenomics-shinzo-abe-yoshihide-suga-japan-prime-minister-economics-legacy> (September 22, 2020)

² Sandeep Dikshit, 'Japanese PM to be the Chief Guest at Republic Day parade', *The Hindu*, January 24, 2014, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/japanese-pm-to-be-chief-guest-at-republic-day-parade/article5610555.ece> (August 29, 2020)

³ Joshy M. Paul, 'India-Japan Security Cooperation: A New Era of Partnership in Asia', *Maritime Affairs*, June 2012.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), August 22, 2007, at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> (August 29, 2020)

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), 2007 (August 29, 2020)

In September 2007, a naval exercise known as the ‘Malabar Exercise’ was conducted in which the United States, India, Japan, Australia and Singapore participated.⁶ Moreover, in the same year, a Quadrilateral Security Forum was initiated by Abe between India, Japan, the US and Australia known as the Quad. He had stepped down in 2007 as well due to health reasons.

Abe’s second tenure

Abe again assumed office as Prime Minister in 2012 and bilateral naval exercises such as the ‘Japan-India Maritime Exercise’ (JIMEX) has taken place since 2012 with a special focus on maritime security cooperation⁷. Before gaining a landslide victory, Abe had written an article, ‘Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond’, which was highly assertive and emphasised Japan’s relations with India⁸. He also reflected on the ongoing disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Henceforth, he adopted a strategy of the Quad whereby India, Japan, Australia and the US state of Hawaii formed a Security ‘diamond’ to safeguard the maritime commons, from the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific.

Abe had clearly warned of the South China Sea becoming a ‘Lake Beijing’ due to which he was inclined to push the legislative changes in order to exercise the right to ‘Collective Self-Defence’⁹. In 2013, Abe had stated that ‘Japan is back’ with his topmost priority being to reform the security policies¹⁰. His fundamental aim had been to make amendments to the Post-war constitution, especially Article 9, which has not been concretized till date. His objective was to reinterpret Article 9 to enact the policy of collective self-defence, where Japan would be allowed to participate in non-combat activities. Abe found this vital to secure Japan’s strategic interests with Asian countries like India as well as to counter a rising China and the nuclear threat from North Korea. China and North Korea are major threats for Japan which may hinder its potential to develop stronger relations with countries like India.

Indo-Japan ties got a major boost when Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014 and visited Japan the same year¹¹. Both leaders share a special bond due to the common values of democracy, freedom, and civilizational ties. Both nations upgraded their ties to a ‘Special Strategic and Global Partnership’. Under Abe and Modi’s partnership, India’s ‘Act East policy’ developed converging interests between India and Japan on strategic issues like maritime security, defence cooperation and energy security.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar, ‘First India-Japan maritime exercise in the Bay of Bengal’, *The Hindu*, December 17, 2013, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/first-indiajapan-maritime-exercise-in-bay-of-bengal/article5469941.ece> (August 30, 2020)

⁸ ‘Shinzo Abe | Asia’s democratic security diamond’, *Livemint*, December 31, 2012 at <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/viqg2XC8fhRfjTUIcctk0M/Asias-democratic-security-diamond.html>(August 30, 2020)

⁹ ‘Abe’s Legacy for New Delhi: Enmeshed Strategic Ties and Bringing India Into the Quad’, *The Wire*, August 30, 2020, at <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/shinzo-abe-legacy-new-delhi-japa-india-strategic-ties-quad>(August 30, 2020)

¹⁰ Ananth Krishnan, ‘Analysis | Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister who raised Japan’s profile, deepened ties with India’, *The Hindu*, August 28, 2020, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/analysis-shinzo-abe-the-prime-minister-who-raised-japans-profile-deepened-ties-with-india/article32467220.ece> (September 1, 2020)

¹¹ Elizabeth Roche, ‘Modi’s big victory to boost India-Japan ties’, *Livemint*, May 30, 2019, at <https://www.livemint.com/politics/news/modi-s-big-victory-to-boost-india-japan-ties-1559186060374.html> (September 1, 2020)

The economic relations between the two countries have also gained huge prominence during Abe and Modi's tenure. In 2015, during Abe's visit, India decided to introduce the Shinkansen system – a bullet train project – and its operation is due to begin in 2023¹². Japan's Shinkansen system is a high-speed railway system known around the world for its accuracy and safety. India and Japan also formed the Act East Forum and are widely engaged in projects in northeast India with huge Japanese investments. Bilateral trade between India and Japan has increased from 740 billion Yen in 2005 to 1,821 billion Yen in 2018¹³. However, more than economic relations, the security factor and strategic relations between the two nations, to cope with rising China, were more prominent under Abe's leadership.

India and Japan also saw eye to eye on the issue of the Indo-Pacific architecture. The foundation of this region was laid in 2007 itself during Abe's speech on the Quad. The concept of the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) initiated by Abe in 2016 was also accepted by India amidst aggressive Chinese behaviour in the South China sea¹⁴. The FOIP concept aims at the promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc. which has become one of the cornerstones for Indo-Japanese security cooperation. Abe had made efforts to persuade the US and Western countries to acknowledge India's economic and geopolitical importance, especially regarding the Indo-Pacific region rather than just the Asia-Pacific. In 2016, the Civil Nuclear Deal was also signed between Modi and Abe after wide-ranging negotiations on the issue¹⁵. Moreover, in October 2017, as Chinese aggression increased in the Pacific as well as the Indian Ocean and in Doklam, it was Abe who revived and revitalized the Quad Framework in Manila¹⁶.

Defence ties also improved dramatically between India and Japan under Abe as he got India to participate more in the Malabar naval exercises. An agreement concerning the transfer of defence equipment and technology was signed between Modi and Abe in 2015.¹⁷ Under Abe's administration, the two countries also decided to hold a foreign and defence ministers' meeting, that is, 2+2 and further negotiated the 'Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement' (ACSA)¹⁸. It is known to be a military logistics support pact. This agreement got a boost during the summit between India and Japan in October 2018¹⁹. In November 2019, the two countries held their first-ever foreign and defence ministers' (2+2) meeting in New Delhi, which further strengthened defence and security cooperation.²⁰

¹² MOFA, Official Website at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/data.html> (September 2, 2020)

¹³ MOFA at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/data.html> (September 2, 2020)

¹⁴ 'From Look East to Act East: India's Changing Posture in the Indo-Pacific and the Containment of China', *European Foundation for South Asian Studies* at <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/from-look-east-to-act-east-india%E2%80%99s-changing-posture-in-the-indo-pacific-and-the-containment-of-china/> (September 2, 2020)

¹⁵ K.V. Kesavan, 'India-Japan Civil Nuclear Agreement: Differing Perceptions', Observer Research Foundation, November 18, 2016, at <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-japan-civil-nuclear-agreement-perceptions/> (September 2, 2020)

¹⁶ Jagannath P. Panda (Ed.), *Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025*, KW Publishers, at <https://idsa.in/system/files/book/book-scaling-india-japan-cooperation.pdf> (September 2, 2020)

¹⁷ MOFA official website.

¹⁸ The joint statement, Ministry of Defence at <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1594385> (September 9, 2020)

¹⁹ Rajeshwari Pillai Rajagopalan, 'India-Japan Defense Ties to Get a Boost With Modi-Abe Virtual Summit', *The Diplomat*, August 20, 2020.

²⁰ Ibid.

The Way Forward

The 14th Annual Summit between India and Japan was held through a telephonic conversation between Prime Minister Narendra and PM Shinzo Abe on 10 September²¹. The summit was held through telephone since Abe has resigned from his position. The main focus of the summit was to ensure the strengthening of the defence ties between India and Japan and explore opportunities of shifting some Japanese manufacturing companies to India amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

This has come as an effort of the Japanese companies to shift their operations out of China and reduce their dependence on Beijing, with the economy being hit due to the pandemic²². Due to the pandemic, the Japanese government expects a conservative and contracted approach in regional coordination and consolidating investments for domestic industrial security. This implies that Japan's economic and trade interests shall be served at home first. Japanese companies are also planning to shift their companies from China to India or Bangladesh to reduce their regional dependencies in East Asia and Southeast Asia. Moreover, in August 2020, India, Japan and Australia began discussions to possibly launch a Trilateral Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) amidst Beijing's aggressive political as well as military behaviour²³. India and prominent Indo-Pacific members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as well as —Japan and Australia through the SCRI want to build resilient supply chains independent of China. The initiative was spearheaded through METI, in cooperation with India²⁴.

Many Japanese companies also believe that shifting output back to their own country or to a third country could be uneconomical²⁵. The fact that China is the world's second-largest economy and largest trading partners to most countries, including Japan, makes it difficult for Japanese companies to decide to leave. China's economic potential is hard to replace as it is a large market with good infrastructure and globally integrated supply chains.

India and Japan also signed a key Agreement for reciprocal provision of supplies and services between their defence forces for closer military cooperation and regional security²⁶. The agreement is the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), signed by Japanese Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki and Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar²⁷. The ACSA establishes a framework for settlement procedures towards the reciprocal provision of supplies and services between the Self-Defense forces of Japan (SDF) and the Indian Armed forces. The ACSA covers the reciprocal provision of services and supplies during joint exercises and training missions, UN Peacekeeping operations, humanitarian relief and assistance operations and also the evacuation of nationals of India and Japan from overseas in exigencies²⁸.

²¹ MOFA ,https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/in/page3e_001060.html , September 10, 2020 (September 11,2020)

²² Isabel Reynolds and Emi Urabe, 'Japan to Fund Firms to Shift Production Out of China', *Bloomberg*, April 8, 2020, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-08/japan-to-fund-firms-to-shift-producon-out-of-china> (September 11, 2020)

²³ Pranab Dhal Samanta, 'India-Japan-Australia supply chain in the works to counter China', *The Economic Times*, August 19, 2020, at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-japan-australia-supply-chain-in-the-works-to-counter-china/articleshow/77624852.cms?from=mdr> (September 11, 2020)

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Naomi Tajitsu, Makiko Yamazaki, Ritsuko Shimizu, 'Japan wants to manufacture back from China, but breaking up supply chains is hard to do', *Reuters*, June 9, 2020, at <https://in.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-production-a/japan-wants-manufacturing-back-from-china-but-breaking-up-supply-chains-is-hard-to-do-idINKBN23F2ZO> (September 10, 2020)

²⁶ MOFA, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002896.html, September 10, 2020

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhary, 'Modi and Abe hold summit dialogue over the phone: Indo-Japan navy pact announced', *The Economic Times*, September 11, 2020, at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-japan-sign-agreement-giving-military-access-to-each-others-bases-for-supplies/articleshow/78035221.cms> (September 11, 2020)

The ACSA is known to be broader in scope as it encompasses overall defence cooperation between the two nations, with logistics being one of the important components in the partnership. Further, the agreement would also enhance India's operational reach. For instance, India could gain access to Japanese bases like that of Djibouti²⁹. The Indian navy can conduct enhanced operations with the Japanese support and also deploy its naval ships in the Western Pacific. This will help in the maritime security cooperation between India and Japan.

However, Abe's resignation left many surprised, especially India and its leaders. Abe's decision to resign has also been linked to his failure in certain domestic policies like that of amending Article 9 of the constitution. In terms of foreign policy, Abe could not resolve the territorial dispute with Russia and relations with South Korea also suffered during Abe's term.

During the phone conversation between Abe and Modi, they assured that the basic policy of India-Japan relations shall remain unchanged under the new Japan's PM. Abe also said, 'both Prime Ministers "took actions towards realising the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific and the special strategic and global partnership between Japan and India was elevated to greater heights"³⁰.

The India-Japan relationship grew remarkably under Abe in areas ranging from maritime security to civilian nuclear energy deal, bullet trains to connectivity and infrastructure, Indo-Pacific strategy and defence cooperation. Abe also managed to keep China at bay through the Indo-Pacific concept and included India as a democratic power in the region. Japan has continued to remain a determined partner of India. The Japanese Ambassador to India has supported India on the clashes at Galwan Valley. The pressure from China and Chinese behaviour in the Senkaku Islands, as well as border issues with India, will further strengthen India-Japan ties.

The new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has always favoured close security ties with India. The energy and enthusiasm that Abe brought to his leadership in terms of its ties with India may be lacking. Nevertheless, India-Japan relations will continue to prosper if Suga deals with issues like the Indo-Pacific concept, economic and strategic relations with the same effectiveness. Abe also ensured that his successor would continue strengthening defence ties and boost military spending. India and Japan have managed to build a special and strategic relationship, especially under Abe's administration, which is set to deepen in the coming years. Despite strong ties, there have been certain setbacks in their relations, the major one being India's announcement of withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in November 2019³¹. This decision shook the Japanese and also represented a setback for Japan's Indo-pacific policy.

Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the successor to continue the flourishing ties with the same zeal.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Vikash Aiyappa, 'Global partnership is a key achievement, Shinzo Abe tells PM Modi, *One India*, September 10, 2020, at <https://www.oneindia.com/india/global-partnership-is-key-achievement-shinzo-abe-tells-pm-modi-3146956.html> (September 10, 2020)

³¹ Horimoto Takenori, "'Modi Diplomacy" and the Future of Japan-India Relations, *Nippon.com*, May 18, 2020, at <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a06701/> (September 11, 2020)

BACKGROUND

PLA'S MILITARY POSTURING AT THE TAIWAN STRAIT



PRASHANT KUMAR SINGH

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In a series of military posturing by China, “two Chinese warplanes briefly crossed the Taiwan Strait median line” on August 10. The media noted that these “fighter jets, a Shenyang J-11 and a Chengdu J-10, briefly crossed [to] Taiwan’s side of the median line at around 9 a.m. They then retreated to the western side of the line after Taiwanese patrol planes issued radio warnings and with air defense missiles activated on the ground.” The incident took place “one day after the US States Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex Azar and his delegation” had visited Taiwan.¹ The media reported that a Chinese military aeroplane had “entered Taiwan’s southwest air defense identification zone (ADIZ)” on July 4. It was reported that Taiwanese patrol planes chased it away. The Chinese military aircraft was given radio warnings and was monitored “until it flew off.” It was the 10th such incident since June 9.² In the given political stand-off in cross-strait relations, these recurring military incidents has raised concerns about a possible military conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

The Probabilities of Conflict

The media quoted security analysts in Taipei as saying, that “while conventional war between Taiwan and China is unlikely, low-intensity conflict is a possibility.” Retired Air Force Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Chang Yen-ting was quoted as saying that “in light of an increase in military activity conducted near Taiwan by China, it would be advisable for the military to be on the alert for low-intensity conflict, which can start with very little warning. . . the hotspots for potential low-intensity armed conflict include the Pratas Islands (Dongsha Islands) and Itu Aba Island (Taiping Island in the South China Sea, as well as Wuciou Township in Kinmen County, which are all under Taiwan’s jurisdiction.” He remarked that “they are ‘easy to attack, but difficult to defend’.” The media cited another analyst as saying, “a military conflict between Taiwan and China is not a remote possibility, as they have been testing each other’s red line on various issues.”³

¹ Wen Kuei-hsiang, Wang Cheng-chung, Yu Hsiang and Joseph Yeh, “Presidential Office Condemns Beijing for Chinese Jet Intrusion”, *Focus Taiwan*, August 10, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202008100025> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

² Chen Yun-yu and Ko Lin, “Chinese Military Aircraft Enters Taiwan’s ADIZ”, *Focus Taiwan*, July 4, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202007040010> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

³ Staff Writer, “Taiwan-China Low-intensity Conflict Possible: Analysts”, *Taipei Times*, July 25, 2020 at <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/25/2003740533> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

The media gave prominence to the research findings of two research scholars Paul Huang and Hung Ming-te — affiliated with the Institute for National Defense and Security Research — that “Taiwan needs to be better prepared for offensives by China’s state-backed maritime militia, which Beijing uses to pursue its political, economic and military goals in the region.” They had argued that “the use of this armed fishing vessel militia is part of Beijing’s “grey zone” tactics to defend its interests without having to wage a conventional war. This prevents the offended party from responding militarily.” They listed various recent incidents in this regard.⁴

The Fear of Drones

Further to the aforementioned conventional military threats and “grey zone”, the media also reported that the Taiwanese military “is looking into countermeasures against the possible use of a “drone swarm” as part of a Chinese “decapitation strike” against Taiwan.” China’s heavy investment in developing unmanned aerial and marine vehicles and the notable advancement it has made in these capabilities, particularly in using “large and small drones in strategic deployments and reconnaissance” is being viewed with a sense of concern in Taiwan. The security experts in Taiwan fear “the drone swarm tactic” by the PLA. Under this tactic, its agents in Taiwan can “[operate] multiple drones and [attack] the Presidential Office, the Executive Yuan or strategic facilities, such as radar stations.”⁵

Tightening Control over Chinese Media

As a security counter-measure against Chinese threat, the Taiwanese authorities are reportedly focussing on beefing up of the domestic security system to eliminate any possibility of sabotage and subversion, in any form, from within. The Taiwanese authorities revoked the entry permit of two Chinese reporters “from China’s Southeast Television station” and withdrew their journalist credentials. The reporters were expelled from Taiwan. Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) claimed that they had “violated regulations regarding Chinese reporters’ work in Taiwan because they had hosted televised studio programs, and were not simply working as journalists.” They were not permitted to host “television programs” as they had not sought permission for hosting these programs when they applied for the entry permit. According to the Taiwanese authorities, hosting “television programs” was not part of the work that they were supposed to do in Taiwan.⁶

Implications of Political Troubles in Hong Kong on Cross-Strait Relations

Separately, Taiwan is closely following the developments in Hong Kong. It has taken a firm stand in favour of the local people of Hong Kong in the wake of the PRC’s enactment of new security law for Taiwan. As Taiwan has all along cited the One Country, Two Systems in Hong Kong as a “deadly and poisonous embrace” by Hong Kong, it stands vindicated by the recent political turbulence in Hong Kong. It has displayed a natural sympathy and empathy for the people of Hong Kong. Thus, on July 1, Taiwan established “an office to facilitate migration

⁴ Staff Writer, “DIPLOMACY: Maritime Militia Warning Issued”, *Taipei Times*, June 16, 2020 at <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/06/16/2003738309> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

⁵ Lo Tien-pin, Wu Su-wei and Jake Chung, “Military Eyeing Defense against ‘Drone Swarm’”, *Taipei Times*, July 27, 2020 at <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/27/2003740631> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

⁶ Chiu Chun-chin, Lai Yen-hsi and Kay Liu, “Taiwan Expels Two Chinese Reporters for ‘Violations’”, *Focus Taiwan*, July 3, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202007030016> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

from Hong Kong.” China’s new National Security Law for Hong Kong had necessitated the establishment of this office. Although the office would “assist Hong Kong professionals seeking to move to the island for a range of purposes, including education and business”, the most important objective is facilitation of the asylum seekers and residency seekers for the people from Hong Kong who may be wanting to migrate to Taiwan to escape from political persecution in Hong Kong.⁷

A total 3,161 Hong Kong residents have been granted residency in Taiwan from January-June 2020. This number has shown a growth of 116 per cent from last year. The media reported that “many of them had applied either through direct investment in the country, as a qualified professional or as a blood relative of a Taiwanese.” A direct co-relation between the political troubles that started in Hong Kong last year in June 2019 with the anti-extradition bill agitation and the growth in the number of residency seekers can be discerned.⁸

Taiwan has been receiving asylum and residency seekers from Hong Kong in the wake of the political troubles in Hong Kong. However, Taiwan has to grapple with the issue of Mainland Chinese citizens seeking to relocate to Taiwan too. Taiwan has decided to “step up scrutiny of [these] mainland Chinese citizens... to move to the island to ensure they do not engage in spying or other illegal acts.”⁹ In addition, Taiwan needs “to enhance scrutiny over investment from Hong Kong to prevent illicit money from mainland China ‘infiltrating’ its economy” and has to guard against secret influx of Mainland Chinese money to Taiwan. Taiwan treats the Chinese economy as separate from that of Hong Kong and Macau. However, of late, this distinction has increasingly become blurred.¹⁰

The Hong Kong authorities were reported to have asked Taiwanese officials at Taiwan’s *de facto* consulate in Hong Kong to “sign a document supporting Beijing’s claim to Taiwan under its “one China” policy”, or else their visa may not be renewed. The move was seen as a reaction to Taiwan’s criticism of the new National Security Law enforced in Hong Kong by the national government of China. It was believed that the acting chief of the *de facto* consulate, Kao Ming-tsun, had to return to Taiwan “after he [had] refused to sign the document upon his visa renewal.”¹¹ The Taiwan government has responded to this development saying that “it will deal with the issue of work permits for Hong Kong officials based on the principles of parity and reciprocity.”¹²

Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council was reported to have cautioned “‘high-risk groups’ — including people who support independence for Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang and those who have criticized the Chinese or

⁷ “Taiwan Opens Hong Kong Migration Office in Rebuke to Beijing”, AP News, July 1, 2020 at <https://apnews.com/f1734f6e9fff7bf61a831f09f3ab70ad> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

⁸ Yu Hsiang and Ko Lin, “Hong Kongers Granted Residency in Taiwan Jump 116%”, *Focus Taiwan*, August 15, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202008150010> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

⁹ Reuters Staff, “Taiwan to Step up Efforts to Prevent Chinese Spies Settling”, *Reuters*, August 17, 2020 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-hongkong/taiwan-to-step-up-efforts-to-prevent-chinese-spies-settling-idUSKCN25D09E> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹⁰ Yimou Lee and Emily Chan, “Taiwan to Enhance Scrutiny of Hong Kong, China Investment, Source Says”, *Reuters*, July 13, 2020 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/taiwan-security/taiwan-to-enhance-scrutiny-of-hong-kong-china-investment-source-says-idUSL3N2EK1BS> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹¹ Yimou Lee, “Hong Kong Demands Taiwan Officials Sign ‘One China’ Document for Visa Renewal, Source Says”, *Reuters*, July 17, 2020 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-security-taiwan/hong-kong-demands-taiwan-officials-sign-one-china-document-for-visa-renewal-source-says-idUSKCN24I0UM> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹² Miao Zong-han and Evelyn Kao, “Taiwan will Deal with Hong Kong Visa Issue based on Parity: MAC”, *Focus Taiwan*, July 23, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202007230012> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

Hong Kong governments — not to travel to the territory.” The concerned circles in Taiwan strongly feel that the government “should do more to warn all Taiwanese about the possible risks in visiting Hong Kong...As the US and China are engaged in a diplomatic dispute, with China ordering the US to close its consulate in Chengdu after the US ordered China to close its consulate in Houston, Taiwan should be prepared if the Chinese government orders Taiwan to close its consulate in Hong Kong, and should protect its documents and expatriates.” The New Power Party (NPP) conducted a survey about the Taiwan people’s security concerns regarding Hong Kong. Its creative media director Jerry Liu was extensively quoted by the media on the matter.¹³

Thus, Hong Kong has emerged as a new factor in the ongoing stand-off between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, which may contribute to further increase the intensity of the stand-off.

Finally, the political and military situation in the Taiwan Strait has become very fragile and needs to be carefully monitored by the concerned circles of the world.

¹³ Lee I-chia, “HK Law Affecting People’s Willingness to Visit: Survey”, *Taipei Times*, July 27, 2020 at <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/27/2003740629> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

Chinese Military Troops in Domestic Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

- Following unprecedented flooding along the Yangtze River caused by heavy rainfall, where several provinces – Jiangxi, Anhui, Hubei and Hunan – have been severely affected, the Chinese military troops i.e., the PLA and the People's Armed Police Forces (PAP) have been carrying out disaster relief and humanitarian assistance relentlessly. This uphill task comes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the PLA has also played a major role in augmenting medical personnel and logistic support to civilian hospitals.
- According to China's Ministry of Emergency Management (MEM), till July 13, floods in 27 provincial regions had affected a population of 38.73 million, leaving 141 people dead or missing, and necessitating more than 2.24 million emergency relocations. Around 29,000 homes were destroyed, and economic losses totalled 86.16 billion yuan.¹
- To mitigate the challenge brought about by large-scale flooding, President Xi Jinping urged the Chinese PLA and PAP to actively participate in rescue and relief operations.² According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of National Defense (MND) of the PRC Col. Ren Guoqiang, till July 28, the Chinese military has deployed 725,000 soldiers, 228,500 militia, 7,749 boats, and 54,116 construction equipment and vehicles in total to participate in 3,749 rescue operations. It has also assisted in the transfer of 137,000 people and over 4,560 tons of materials from the disaster-stricken areas. And over 11.8 million sandbags were filled, 3,800 piping leaks blocked, 900 kilometers of embankments reinforced, and 224 kilometers of roads were restored.³

Cementing China-Sri Lanka Military Bonds by Alumni of PLA Defence University

- At the inauguration of the first-ever association of Sri Lankan alumni of the People's Liberation Army-National Defence University (PLA-NDU) in Colombo in July 2020, Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Vijitha Ravipriya stated that “the organization would serve as a bridge to connect the PLA-NDU alumni in Sri Lanka with its alma mater in China.” He also reiterated that “China has always extended ready assistance to the Sri Lanka military by way of coordinating more...armed [personnel] for military training.”⁴ Also, speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, Sri Lanka, Maj. Gen. Kamal Gunaratne stated that the alumni association will facilitate the historical military bond and bilateral relation between China and Sri Lanka.⁵ Meanwhile, a letter signed by Maj. Gen. Xu Hui and Rear Admiral Cao Jianqi of the PLA-NDU

¹ “China focus: China increases disaster relief funds amid floods” *Xinhua*, July 13, 2020 at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/13/c_139209865.htm (Accessed on August 21, 2020).

² “Xi stresses braving challenges in fighting floods to ensure safety of people's lives property” Ministry of Water Resources, The People's Republic of China, July 13, 2020 at http://www.mwr.gov.cn/english/national/202007/t20200713_1415489.html (Accessed on August 21, 2020).

³ “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defence on July 30”, Ministry of National Defense, The People's Republic of China, August 1, 2020 at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2020-08/01/content_4869055.htm (Accessed on August 21, 2020).

⁴ “Sri Lanka-China bonds enhanced by military university alumni association” *China Military*, August 1, 2020 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-08/01/content_9871818.htm (Accessed on August 23, 2020).

⁵ “Sri Lanka-China bonds enhanced by military university alumni association” *China Military*, August 1, 2020 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-08/01/content_9871818.htm (Accessed on August 23, 2020).

hailed the association as an opportunity to “strengthen strategic communication between the two countries and militaries... and make greater contributions to build the community with a shared future of mankind.”⁶

Chinese Military Officials attend ASEAN Defense Meeting

- Chinese military officials participated in the video conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defense Officials’ Meeting Plus and the ASEAN Regional Forum Security Policy Conference (ASPC) held on July 7-8. During the two-day meeting, as stated by Senior Col. Ren Guoqiang the spokesperson of the MND, the two sides exchanged ideas on the role of militaries in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and the current international and regional security situation and also exchanged views on strengthening coordination between the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).⁷ Col. Ren further emphasized that in future, “Chinese military will, as always, strengthen pragmatic cooperation with all parties in the fields of anti-pandemic efforts, joint exercise and training, humanitarian relief and disaster reduction” in order to maintain regional security and stability.⁸

China holds naval exercises in the South China Sea

- This week, the PLA has planned holding simultaneous live-fire drills and three naval exercises, including in the disputed regions of the South China Sea. It has been reported that the exercises may occur around Paracel Islands as China has warned outside vessels to stay away from the drill area by five nautical miles. Notably, these drills and exercises began just a day after Taiwan commemorated an anniversary of the 1958 Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, which was also joined by the US. These exercises come after reports and allegations of repeated military aggression by Beijing in the South China Sea and the East China Sea littorals for several months now.⁹

Countries suspend extradition treaty with China over Hong Kong

- The US, France, Germany, New Zealand, Canada and Australia have suspended extradition treaties with Hong Kong as a response to national security legislation that gives Beijing more powers over Hong Kong’s internal security management. These nations have criticized China by stating that its legislative measures not only violate the Hong Kong Basic Law but also the autonomy that the city was promised under the principle of ‘One Country, Two systems’. These developments come amidst China’s efforts to stifle freedom of speech and pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong. China has criticized the extradition decisions as a

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on July 30”, *Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China*, August 1, 2020 at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2020-08/01/content_4869055.htm (Accessed on August 24, 2020).

⁸ “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on July 30”, *Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China*, August 1, 2020 at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2020-08/01/content_4869055.htm (Accessed on August 24, 2020).

⁹ Drake Long, “China Holds Trio of Military Drills, Including in South China Sea,” *Radio Free Asia*, August 24, 2020 at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/drills-08242020201748.html> (Accessed on August 26, 2020).

violation of international law, and consequently, Hong Kong reciprocated the measures by suspending extradition with all these countries, except the US, until now; it is expected that Hong Kong will return the courtesy to the US too anytime soon.¹⁰

China's Army Day Celebrations

- China has celebrated its Army Day, the 93rd Anniversary of the founding of the PLA by first having a flag raising ceremony in the Tiananmen Square on August 1, 2020. To prepare for the military parade, the troops had trained at the Zhurihe training base in Inner Mongolia. With regard to the celebrations, Xi Jinping had carried out various visits such as barracks, reviewed troops, and warships. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, this year, the activities has been more subdued compared to previous years. One such important visit by Xi was the drone technology laboratory at the Aviation University of Air Force in Jilin province and made emphasis “on strengthening research into unmanned combat, enhancing drone education as a discipline, stepping up training in real combat conditions, and cultivating professionals who can use drones and take command in such warfare”.¹¹ The Chinese leadership also led a public relations effort in posting in many of the embassies around the world on the PLA's 93rd anniversary stressing that it stands for world peace and a defensive national policy.¹²

China-India Clash at the Galwan Valley

- The Indian Army and People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered into a clash on June 15, 2020, at Galwan Valley situated across the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The clash, reported to be the deadliest since 1967, resulted in death of 20 Indian soldiers; though India has claimed to have inflicted significant damage on PLA personnel, Chinese side has officially not informed the extent of casualties on its side. The clashes are seen as a consequence of a series of serious border transgressions at LAC by PLA beginning from early-May 2020. Reportedly, around 1,000 sq. km. of area in Ladakh is under Chinese occupation, which includes patrolling point 10-13 in Depsang Plains, Finger 4-8 near Pangong Tso lake, parts of Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Chushul. Amidst claims, counter-claims and blame-game leading up to the situation, the militaries from both sides decided to continue corps commander-level talks — that began on June 6, 2020 — with an

¹⁰ Ben Westcott, “US suspends extradition treaty with Hong Kong due to concerns over city's eroding autonomy,” *CNN*, August 20, 2020, at <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/19/asia/us-hong-kong-extradition-treaty-intl-hnk/index.html> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

“Hong Kong security law: China hits back in extradition row,” *BBC*, July 28, 2020, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53562437#:~:text=China%20has%20said%20Hong%20Kong,territory's%20controversial%20new%20security%20law.&text=The%20law%20reduces%20the%20city's,it%20easier%20to%20punish%20protesters> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

“Hong Kong suspends extradition agreements with France and Germany,” *France24*, August 12, 2020, at <https://www.france24.com/en/20200812-hong-kong-suspends-extradition-agreements-with-france-and-germany> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

Yew Lun Tian, “China says Hong Kong suspends extradition agreement with New Zealand,” *Reuters*, August 3, 2020, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-security-china-new-zealand-idUSKBN24Z0S0> (Accessed on August 26, 2020).

¹¹ “Xi Inspects PLA Aviation University Ahead of Army Day,” *Xinhua*, July 23, 2020, at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/23/c_139235690_2.htm (Accessed on August 3, 2020)

¹² “China's Defence Attache to the UK: PLA Unswervingly Promotes World Peace and Development,” *Chinese-embassy.uk*, July 28, 2020, at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2020-07/28/content_4868716.htm (Accessed on August 3, 2020); Also see “Chinese Military Remains a Staunch Force for World Peace”, *PLA Daily*, July 31, 2020, at http://english.pladaily.com.cn/view/2020-07/31/content_9871427.htm (Accessed on August 3, 2020)

intention to cool down the situation and negotiate the modes of engagement across the LAC. The talks remained inconclusive even during the sixth round of such talks on September 22, 2020; the fifth round of talks took place on August 2, 2020. Simultaneously, there have been reports of mobilisation of thousands of troops and resources by India at the LAC in response to Chinese actions, which indicates the potential long over-haul of the tension into the upcoming winter.¹³

TAIWAN

Two Views on the National Defence Budget

- Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (parliament) has "approved NT\$358 billion (US\$ 12.1 billion) for national defence spending across fiscal 2020." The budget shows "a 3.47 percent increase compared with last year." However, the media reported about an intense debate among the Taiwanese national defence experts whether this budget provides enough to meet address the security concerns posed by China, which has a military budget that is "more than 15 times that of Taiwan." The media quoted Su Tzu-yun, a senior researcher at Institute of National Defense and Security Research as saying, "regardless of whether the government adopts a zero-based budgeting method for national defence spending — in which all expenses are justified and approved each period — it should consider attenuating that spending toward realizing strategic and policy goals." He was reported as saying that "despite the large figure, Taiwan's military spending, compared with fiscal 1995 and adjusted for inflation based on the consumer price index, has only increased by 4 percent." The media quoted another expert Chieh Jung, affiliated with the Association of Strategic Foresight as research fellow, as arguing that "the Ministry of National Defense was, in essence, already applying a zero-based budgeting model. The Ministry's budget process is to collect estimates from every department, add it up and send it to the Directorate-General of Budgeting, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). The DGBAS, in accordance with the annual revenue estimate and other guiding principles set forth by the Executive Yuan, responds with a projected budget ceiling, which the Ministry fine-tunes to meet its estimates." Thus, "there is little room to fine-tune its estimates."¹⁴

¹³ Press Trust of India, "India, China hold fifth round of commander-level talks on further disengagement in eastern Ladakh," *Firstpost*, August 2, 2020, at <https://www.firstpost.com/india/india-china-hold-fifth-round-of-commander-level-talks-on-further-disengagement-in-eastern-ladakh-8665571.html#:~:text=It%20is%20the%20fifth%20round,eastern%20Ladakh%20on%205%20May> (Accessed on October 7, 2020); "India-China meeting of Army Commanders on June 06, 2020," *MEA India*, June 7, 2020, at https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/32746/IndiaChina_meeting_of_Army_Commanders_on_June_06_2020 (Accessed on October 7, 2020); Vijaita Singh, "China controls 1,000 sq. km of area in Ladakh," *The Hindu*, August 31, 2020, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/china-controls-1000-sq-km-of-area-in-ladakh-say-intelligence-inputs/article32490453.ece> (Accessed on October 7, 2020); ANI, "India-China sixth Corps Commander-level meeting concludes after 13-hour marathon talks," *DNA*, September 22, 2020, at <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-india-china-border-tensions-corps-commander-meeting-talks-13-hours-conclude-ladakh-lac-galwan-valley-stand-off-war-beijing-new-delhi-2844459> (Accessed on October 7, 2020); "India-China border clash dispute timeline – 23 September," *Army Technology*, September 23, 2020, at <https://www.army-technology.com/news/india-china-border-clash-dispute/> (Accessed on October 7, 2020).

¹⁴ Wu Su-wei and Jake Chung, "Experts Disagree on National Defense", *Taipei Times*, July 11, 2020 at <https://taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/11/2003739737> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

Military Exercises

- On July 16, Taiwan's combined arms battalions "participated in the annual live-fire Han Kuang military exercises for the first time." A total of "22 combined arms battalions, capable of operating independently in the battlefield" were established in September 2019. The media reported that "soldiers and officers from different branches of the military, along with snipers, unmanned aerial vehicles and missile operators" form a combined arm. The media informed that "Taiwan's Indigenous Defense Fighters (IDF) and F-16V fighter jets, alongside the Army's CM-33/CM-34 indigenous "Clouded Leopard" armoured vehicles, as well as other land-based artillery... squadrons of AH-64E Apache and AH-1 Super Cobra attack helicopters" took part in the drill. In a new development, Taiwan's reserve forces "were recalled to operational duty". They "for the first time" fired "105 mm M101A1 howitzers, artillery used by the military to support frontline infantry units." Around 8,000 personnel from the three services carried out this exercise.¹⁵ The drill also saw the firing of the live "heavyweight Surface and Underwater Target (SUT) torpedo". The live torpedo was fired during a military drill for the first time in last 13 years.¹⁶ This year, Han Kuang exercises conducted drills in "three main areas": "a test of Taiwan's armed forces ability to repel the enemy in the first wave of an attack", "fighting to defeat the enemy in nearshore zones", and "the neutralization of any remaining enemy forces on beaches and in other landing areas."¹⁷ Han Kuang were conducted from July 13-17, 2020.
- In early July, a Taiwanese Air Force fleet of F-16 fighters conducted a drill with live MK-84 bombs at Hualien Jiashan Air Base. The exercise simulated an air-action against "attacking enemy ships seeking to reach the shore." The bombs, "nicknamed [as] the hammer", are US-made and are said to be "the most powerful in the MK-80 series."¹⁸
- An Army Special Forces division held a 15-day training program that included "a 350-kilometer march." This training mission began on June 8 and took place in Taoyuan and Hsinchu in Northern Taiwan. The training was reportedly "different from the past practice of marching in the mountains and is more diversified because it is also supported by other army divisions, both on the ground and in the air." Helicopters such as the Boeing AH-64, the UH-60 Black Hawk and the OH-58D were used in this training.¹⁹

Promoting Domestic Defence Production in Taiwan

- Recently, Taiwan's Navy launched "Taiwan's first domestically-built rapid mine-laying ship." It also held "a keel-laying ceremony for the second of four minelayers." These four minelayers are "part of the government's indigenous ship-building project." This project points to "the expansion of the military's swift underwater

¹⁵ Chen Yun-yu, Matt Yu and Ko Lin, "New Military Units Join Annual Wargames for First Time", *Focus Taiwan*, July 16, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007160008> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹⁶ Matt Yu and Joseph Yeh, "Taiwan Navy Fires Live Torpedo during Drill for First Time in 13 Years", *Focus Taiwan*, July 15, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007150015> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹⁷ Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, "Taiwan Annual War Games Start with Deployment of Reserve Forces", *Focus Taiwan*, July 13, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007130007> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹⁸ Staff Writer, "Air force conducts live bomb exercise off Hualien's coast", *Taipei Times*, July 2, 2020 at <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/02/2003739230> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

¹⁹ Matt Yu and Kay Liu, "Army Special Forces Conducting 15-day Training in Northern Taiwan", *Focus Taiwan*, July 21, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202006210017> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

minelaying and joint defence capabilities.” The construction of the rapid minelaying ships began in 2019. The third and fourth minelaying ships will be delivered to the Navy “by the end of 2021.” All the “vessels will be equipped with T-75 20-millimeter automatic cannons and T-74 machine guns...[and] a newly-developed automatic minelaying system and propulsion equipment that allows them to lay mines speedily and precisely.”²⁰

- The media wrote about “the first public test flight of a new locally designed and made advanced jet trainer”, which is being developed as part of Tsai Ing-wen government’s plan to boost defence manufacturing in Taiwan. Taiwan mainly relies on the US for its military platforms. However, the Tsai government has emphasised having “an advanced home-grown defence industry.” The media reported that “new AT-5 Brave Eagle, made...with a budget of T\$68.6 billion (\$2.32 billion), is the first jet made domestically since the F-CK-1 Ching-kuo fighter”, which was produced “more than three decades ago.”²¹

Tsai Ing-wen’s Vision for Building Taiwan’s Military Reserve

- President Tsai Ing-wen announced her government’s intention “to make Taiwan’s military reserve force a more reliable backup for the regular forces in protecting the country amid increased military movements around Taiwan.” She underlined “building a reserve force that has similar combat capabilities to the regular Armed Forces by having them carry the same weapons and gear as full-time military members.” She stressed, “synchronizing the mobilization of manpower and strategic resources and establishing closer collaboration between the reserve force and different government departments and agencies.” According to her, “these measures are expected to help the country effectively respond to natural disasters during peacetime and improve the ability of different agencies and units to operate cohesively during wartime.”²²

Taiwan at Diplomatic Front

- On July 29, the US and Australia reaffirmed “Taiwan’s important role in the Indo-Pacific region and their intent to maintain strong unofficial ties with Taiwan” in their joint statement “issued at the 30th Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN 2020)”. The Consultations were held in Washington “to discuss issues concerning the China challenge, Indo-Pacific security, and regional cooperation.” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper from the US side and Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne and Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds from the Australian side conducted the Consultations.²³

²⁰ Chen Yun-yu and Elizabeth Hsu, “Taiwan Navy Launches First Locally-built Rapid Mine-laying Vessel”, *Focus Taiwan*, August 4, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202008040023> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²¹ Ann Wang, “Taiwan Boosts Domestic Defence Development Plan with New Jet”, *Reuters*, June 22, 2020 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-defence/taiwan-boosts-domestic-defence-development-plan-with-new-jet-idUSKBN23T0DC> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²² Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, “President Announces Measures to Strengthen Military Reserves”, *Focus Taiwan*, June 29, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202006290024> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²³ Stacy Hsu and Elizabeth Hsu, “Taiwan Thanks US, Australia for Their Support of Regional Role”, *Focus Taiwan*, July 29, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007290009> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

- In a major development for Taiwan, which has faced poaching of its diplomatic allies by China since President Tsai Ing-wen came to power in 2016, Taiwan and Somaliland, Somalia's breakaway region, have "agreed to establish representative offices in each other's capitals." The development came to light through Somaliland President Musa Bihi Abdi's tweet: "The bilateral relationship of Somaliland and Taiwan is built upon shared values and mutual respect."²⁴ Somaliland appointed Mohamed Omar Hagi Mohamoud "as the envoy to Taiwan."²⁵ In Africa, Eswatini is the last country left that has diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Considering the strategic significance of the African region (Horn of Africa) where Somaliland is located, this development needs to be carefully followed.
- Taiwan has appointed career diplomat Paul Chen as the head of Taiwan's representative office in Guam. The importance of this appointment lies in the fact that the office in Guam was closed in 2017 due to financial constraints. The Taiwanese government has reopened this office, which will be Taiwan's 13th office in the US. Oddis Tsai, a researcher at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR), opines: "In the near future, Guam could become a hub of 'strategic intelligence exchange' for Taiwan, Japan and the US"²⁶ Incidentally, National Taiwan University's Institute of Oceanography would also lead Taiwan's "newest research vessel, R/V *New Ocean Researcher 1*" to Guam this year in December. The media reported that this new "2,155-tonne vessel" and the R/V *New Ocean Researcher 2*, the R/V *New Ocean Researcher 3* and the R/V *Legend* form "a national research fleet."²⁷
- Taiwan and the US held "an international conference under the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)" in Guatemala. The two countries set up this cooperation mechanism in 2015. The GCTF was held in Latin America and the Caribbean for the first time. This cooperation format "encompasses digital economy, COVID-19 prevention, digital infrastructure development, Internet security, women's empowerment and 5G communications technology, among other topics." In the last year or so, many first-of-their-kind instances of Taiwan-US cooperation that involve a country that still recognises the Republic of China, have been witnessed.²⁸

²⁴ Ben Blanchard, "Outflanked by China in Africa, Taiwan Eyes Unrecognised Somaliland", Reuters, July 1, 2020 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-somaliland/outflanked-by-china-in-africa-taiwan-eyes-unrecognised-somaliland-idUSKBN2424UI> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²⁵ Chen Yun-yu and Emerson Lim, "Somaliland Appoints First Envoy to Taiwan", *Focus Taiwan*, July 5, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007050008> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²⁶ Chen Yun-yu and Emerson Lim, "Taiwan Names Head of Future Representative Office in Guam", *Focus Taiwan*, August 4, 2020, at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202008040010> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²⁷ Lin Chia-nan, "Feature: Scientists Excited about Guam Return", *Taipei Times*, July 16, 2020 at <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/16/2003740018> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

²⁸ Staff Writer, "Taiwan, US plan event in Latin America, Caribbean", *Taipei Times*, July 17, 2020 at <https://taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/07/17/2003740076> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

- Recent years have seen many private initiatives by parliamentarians, the civil-society and individuals. In keeping with this trend, the Belgian parliament's Chamber of Representatives "passed a Resolution that called on the country's government to support Taiwan's democratic development and its meaningful participation in international organizations." The Resolution contained "several proposals urging support for Taiwan" and was approved by an overwhelming majority of 130 votes in support with no votes in opposition and 13 abstentions. Similarly, a Japanese scholar has moved a petition to appeal to "the Japanese Ministry of Defense to redact a White Paper listing Taiwan as part of China". As per the last report, the petition had "garnered more than half of its goal of 2,500 signatures."²⁹ On the other hand, two parliamentary friendship groups to foster relations between Taiwanese parliamentarians and their counterparts in Latin America and Africa have been established. The initiative came from Chiu Chih-wei, a parliamentarian from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Generating support for "support Taiwan's bid to participate in international organizations and treaties, such as the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)" is a stated purpose of the two groups.³⁰
- At a government press conference on July 10, a German reporter pointed out and raised the issue of the German Foreign Office's Taiwan introduction page that did not show either the Republic of China flag or Taiwan's formal name. On the same website, while the introduction page of other countries displayed their flag as well as the formal name of the country, Taiwan's page was blank just displaying the word "Taiwan." The Taiwan government "described [it] as "unacceptable."³¹

Significance of the DPP's Victory in the Kaohsiung By-election

- Former Vice-Premier Chen Chi-mai from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won against his rival Li Mei-jhen from Kuomintang (KMT) by a big margin in the Mayoral by-election in Kaohsiung City. This is a significant political development. The by-election was necessitated by a recall vote against Kaohsiung's Mayor, Han Kuo-yu. He had brought the Kaohsiung City government to the KMT in November 2018 after ending the DPP's 20-year long control on the city government. Later, Han ran for presidency against the current President Tsai Ing-wen in January 2020. Then, he was considered a rising star of the KMT and China's bet. However, soon after, some DPP-affiliated civil-society groups and persons initiated a recall vote charging him of betraying people's trust and failing in his duty towards the city for his personal political ambitions. He was defeated in the recall vote, and the DPP's resounding comeback followed. Thus, Taiwan is witnessing the DPP's ascendancy and its determination to vanquish the KMT. Since China accuses the DPP of being a pro-independence party and sees some reassurance in the KMT's belief in eventual reunification, this development should increase China's discomfort.³²

²⁹ Tang Pei-chun and Ko Lin, "Belgian Parliament Passes Resolution Calling for Support for Taiwan", *Focus Taiwan*, July 17, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007170004> (Accessed on September 11, 2020); Peng Wan-hsin and William Hetherington, "Petition Calls to Change Taiwan's Status in White Paper", *Taipei Times*, August 9, 2020 at <https://taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/08/09/2003741377> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

³⁰ Emerson Lim, "Legislative Friendship Groups for Latin America and Africa Formed", *Focus Taiwan*, June 29, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202006290018> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

³¹ Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, "Differential Treatment of Taiwan by Germany 'Unacceptable': MOFA", *Focus Taiwan*, July 13, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202007130017> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

³² Chen Chao-fu, Yang Ssu-jui, Kuo Chu-chen and Frances Huang, "DPP's Chen Chi-mai Wins Kaohsiung By-election by Wide Margin (update)", *Focus Taiwan*, August 15, 2020 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202008150014> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).

JAPAN

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo resigns

- On August 28, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo announced his resignation owing to health concerns arising from ulcerative colitis. He will continue to stay on as prime minister until the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) decides upon the new leader. He assumed office in December 2012 and served the office for seven years and eight months. At the press conference, Abe expressed “regret” concerning the unfinished business of resolving the abductions issue with the North Korea, concluding a peace treaty with Russia, and amending the Constitution.³³ As the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) opts for the next leader, three emerging contenders include Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, LDP policy chief and former foreign minister Kishida Fumio, and former LDP Secretary-General and former defense minister Ishiba Shigeru.³⁴

India-Japan Summit likely in September

- A virtual India-Japan Summit is scheduled on September 10, 2020.³⁵ Last year, the annual summit scheduled in Guwahati in December was postponed. This will be the last summit between Prime Minister Modi and his Japanese counterpart as Abe Shinzo departs from office following health concerns. The signing of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) is expected which will enable reciprocal support for logistics, supplies and services. Additionally, enabling Japanese manufacturers in India will be a priority. There are reports that Japan has identified India along with Bangladesh and other Southeast Asian nations to diversify manufacturing. Manufacturers are supported by subsidies as the government tries to diversify the supply chain’s over-reliance on China. The supplementary budget for FY 2020 reserved US\$ 221 million for businesses that are shifting production to Southeast Asia.³⁶

³³ “Press Conference by the Prime Minister”, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, August 28, 2020 at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/202008/_00004.html (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

³⁴ “Candidates gear up for LDP leadership race”, NHK, September 3, 2020 at https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20200903_22/ (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

³⁵ Shishir Gupta, “Modi-Abe summit likely in early Sept”, *Hindustan Times*, August 18, 2020 at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/modi-abe-summit-likely-in-early-sept/story-NczOyZXJHLL60rZaefTWBO.html> (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

³⁶ “Japan to offer incentives to companies shifting base from China to India: Nikkei”, *The Economic Times*, September 5, 2020 at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/japan-to-offer-incentives-to-companies-shifting-base-from-china-to-india-nikkei/articleshow/77943780.cms>, (Accessed on September 6, 2020).

US-Japan-Australia Defence Ministers' Meeting

- The US-Japan-Australia Defence Ministers' Meeting was held on July 7, 2020. Discussions focussed on strengthening security in the Indo-Pacific amidst the pandemic. Regarding the South China Sea, the leaders “expressed serious concern” about developments including the militarisation of disputed features and the use of “maritime militia” and expressed opposition to the use of force in altering the status quo.³⁷ The leaders underscored the significance of abiding by international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Furthermore, they stated that any Code of Conduct in the South China Sea should be consistent with prevailing international law. Additionally, there was strong opposition to any destabilizing or coercive unilateral actions in the East China Sea. Also, the leaders voiced deep concerns regarding the implications of national security law upon Hong Kong. Later in the month, Japan along with the US and Australia have done a trilateral passage exercise in the Philippine Sea³⁸ on the way to participate in Exercise Rim of the Pacific in Hawaii.

Japan's next-generation multi-role fighter aircraft

- The Defence Ministry has indicated that the series-production of the next-generation multirole fighter aircraft to replace Mitsubishi F-2 should start in 2031.³⁹ The prototype production will reportedly start in 2024, and flight tests will be done from 2028 followed by mass production in 2031. Japan will deploy the new aircraft around 2035. The focus remains on stealth and electronic warfare capabilities, advanced sensors and interoperability with the American military. The Ministry has stressed that it will follow a Japan-led development of the new fighter with the option of international collaboration. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) is most likely to lead with engagement on propulsion by IHI Corporation.

³⁷ “Australia-Japan-United States Defense Ministers’ Meeting Joint Statement”, US Department of Defense, July 7, 2020 at [https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2266901/australia-japan-united-states-defense-ministers-meeting-jointstatement/#:~:text=Australia%2DJapan%2DUnited%20States%20Defense%20Ministers%20Meeting%20Joint%20Statement,July%207%2C%202020&text=Australian%20Minister%20for%20Defence%20Linda,on%20July%207%20\(Washington\),](https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2266901/australia-japan-united-states-defense-ministers-meeting-jointstatement/#:~:text=Australia%2DJapan%2DUnited%20States%20Defense%20Ministers%20Meeting%20Joint%20Statement,July%207%2C%202020&text=Australian%20Minister%20for%20Defence%20Linda,on%20July%207%20(Washington),) (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

³⁸ “Australia, Japan, Join U.S. for Trilateral Naval Exercise”, US Indo-Pacific Command, July 21, 2020 at <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2281941/australia-japan-join-us-for-trilateral-naval-exercise/>, (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

³⁹ Kosuke Takahashi, “Japan aiming to start production of new fighter aircraft in FY 2031”, *Janes*, July 8, 2020 at [https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japan-aiming-to-start-production-of-new-fighter-aircraft-in-fy-2031#:~:text=The%20Japan%20Ministry%20of%20Defense,year%202031%20\(FY%202031\),](https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japan-aiming-to-start-production-of-new-fighter-aircraft-in-fy-2031#:~:text=The%20Japan%20Ministry%20of%20Defense,year%202031%20(FY%202031),) (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

Japan requests India not to hike tariff on Chinese inputs

- The Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has requested India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) not to increase import tariffs or enforce limits on intermediate products obtained from China by Japanese firms, including manufacturing automobiles and consumer durables, since it would adversely affect production activities in India. Japan's External Trade Organisation (JETRO) has reportedly made a list of 990 items such as electronics, bolts, nuts, air conditioner compressors, integrated circuits, condensers, batteries, LED and inductors that Japan wants India to exempt from possible import restrictions.⁴⁰

Australia-India-Japan supply chain resilience

- Australia-India-Japan agreed on developing a trilateral supply chain resilience initiative to attain the goal of providing a "free, fair, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment and in keeping their markets open".⁴¹ India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal argued that India unequivocally approves the idea of working together to ensure a "trustworthy, dependable and reliable supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region". Amidst the pandemic, India has demonstrated its credibility and reliability as a partner with regard to supply of critical medical products.

Prime Minister Abe attends the National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead

- On the 75th anniversary of the end of the War, Prime Minister Abe said on August 15 that Japan has unswervingly values peace and "must never again repeat the devastation of war. We will continue to remain committed to this resolute pledge."⁴² Japan, he reiterated, is resolute in joining forces with the international community to perform a better role in solving the numerous security challenges.

Japan pushes for joining 'Five Eyes' intelligence group

- There has been a strong buzz that Japan has been seriously contemplating joining the 'Five Eyes' group, an intelligence-sharing alliance between the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The news got further strengthened by Japanese Defence Minister Tara Kono's call for *de-facto* 'Six Eyes' intelligence status for Japan some days ago, which has been highly debated among Japanese and global strategic scholars. The

⁴⁰ Amiti Sen, "Japan to India: Don't increase tariff on Chinese inputs used by Japanese firms", *The Hindu Business Line*, July 27, 2020 at [https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/japan-to-india-dont-increase-tariff-on-chinese-inputs-used-by-japanese-firms/article32204508.ece#:~:text=Japan%20has%20asked%20India%20not,manufacturing%20automobiles%20and%20consumer%20durables,\(Accessed on September 1, 2020\).](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/japan-to-india-dont-increase-tariff-on-chinese-inputs-used-by-japanese-firms/article32204508.ece#:~:text=Japan%20has%20asked%20India%20not,manufacturing%20automobiles%20and%20consumer%20durables,(Accessed on September 1, 2020).)

⁴¹ "Australia-India-Japan Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Supply Chains Resilience", Ministry of Commerce & Industry, September 1, 2020 at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1650387> (Accessed on September 6, 2020).

⁴² "Address by the Prime Minister at the Seventy-Fifth National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead", Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, August 15, 2020 at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/202008/_00003.html, (Accessed on September 1, 2020).

discussion is taking place amidst Japanese concerns of China's growing aggression in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and prevalent threat of nuclear proliferation in the Korean Peninsula. Along with other non-member countries, Japan has been already working with the 'Five Eyes' team since the last few years. Also, Japan seeking this status comes on the back of continuing bitter-sweet relations with Seoul due to the South Korean court-directed controversy over Japanese colonial era reparations, as both countries share the intelligence-sharing agreement, GSOMIA, that also involves the US. Seoul has threatened to move out of GSOMIA multiple times due to the fluid situation. While it remains to be seen if South Korea will show similar interest for 'Five Eyes' membership, the US strategic community would accept Seoul joining the group, as the US Congressional Report in December 2019 had called for bringing South Korea, Japan and India on par with 'Five Eyes' for peace in the Indo-Pacific.⁴³

Japan debates broadening defensive strike options as it suspends Aegis Ashore deployment

- After a month-long debate from late-June to late-July this year to consider broadening the defensive strike capability of the Japanese military, the Japanese ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party, has given its approval. The recommendations by LDP members called for developing capabilities “to head off missile threats in enemy territory”, however, it did not “specifically mention striking enemy bases”. This debate comes on the back of Shinzo Abe administration's decision to suspend deployment of Aegis Ashore, the land-based missile defence system from the US. The ruling party emphasized that Tokyo needs “integrated air and missile defence” systems with the capability to protect the whole of Japan at once, which Aegis Ashore cannot do. This debate — that has been on in public discourse for some years now — assumes significance due to constitutional provisions, specifically Article 9, restricting the use of Japanese military owing to the nation's peculiar history.⁴⁴

⁴³ Daishi Abe and Rieko Miki, “Japan wants de facto ‘Six Eyes’ intelligence status: defense chief,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, August 14, 2020 at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Japan-wants-de-facto-Six-Eyes-intelligence-status-defense-chief> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

Brad Glosserman, “From ‘Five Eyes’ to six — a good idea, but not the best,” *The Japan Times*, August 24, 2020 at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/08/24/commentary/japan-commentary/japan-five-eyes-intelligence-alliance/#.X0VaVMgzZPY> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

Julian Ryall, “Is Japan more interested in being a ‘Sixth Eye’ than sharing intelligence with South Korea?,” *South China Morning Post*, August 25, 2020 at <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3098806/japan-more-interested-being-sixth-eye-sharing-intelligence-south> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

PTI, “US committee wants India, Japan and South Korea to share military & human intelligence,” *The Print*, December 14, 2019 at <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/us-committee-wants-india-japan-and-south-korea-to-share-military-human-intelligence/335153/> (Accessed on August 26, 2020).

⁴⁴ Daishi Abe and Oki Nagai, “Japan's ruling party broadens vision for defensive strike option,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, July 31, 2020 at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-s-ruling-party-broadens-vision-for-defensive-strike-option> (Accessed on August 26, 2020);

Jiji, “LDP starts talks on Japan enemy base attack capability,” *The Japan Times*, June 30, 2020 at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/30/national/ldp-starts-talks-enemy-base-attack-capability/#.X0VYjMgzZPY> (Accessed on August 26, 2020).

Japan's 2020 Defence White Paper

- Japan's 2020 Defense White Paper strategizes and prioritizes enhancement of Japan's military capabilities to provide for the changes in its security environment. The White Paper emphasises on cross-domain operations to be undertaken, including space, cyberspace and the electro-magnetic spectrum⁴⁵. Improvement of the military shipping lines is envisaged while protecting its infrastructure, enhancing its technology and the military industrial base. Japan's Ballistic missile Defense (BMD) is a specifically tiered defence system where Aegis carries destroyers and the Patriot PAC-3, further coordinated by the Japan Aerospace Defense Ground Environment (JADGE).⁴⁶
- The Defense White Paper also mentions that the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) will receive three Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, seven Mitsubishi SH-60K helicopters, two destroyers, a submarine and a minesweeper.⁴⁷ The Ministry of Defense (MOD) also gave evidence of the *JS Izumo*, one of its two Izumo-class multi-purpose destroyers being refitted to support F-35B operations, while at the same time,⁴⁸ a new type of small unmanned underwater vehicle will aid underwater defence.

KOREAN PENINSULA

The US-South Korea military exercise

- The US-South Korea annual summertime exercise, focussing on computer-simulated Combined Command Post Training, took place from August 18-28.⁴⁹ The objective was to prepare for different scenarios vis-a-vis North Korea. However, this year's exercise was performed on a reduced scale owing to the pandemic. Earlier, the springtime exercise was shelved given the outbreak of COVID-19.

⁴⁵ 2020 Defense of Japan, Ministry of Defense (MOD), Japan at https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/wp2020/DOJ2020_Digest_EN.pdf (September 1,2020)

⁴⁶ Gurjit Singh, 'Japan's Defense White Paper 2020: An enhanced role emerging?' July 27, 2020, *Observer Research Foundation* at <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/japans-defence-white-paper-2020-an-enhanced-role-emerging/> (September 2,2020)

⁴⁷ Jr Ng, 'Japan's White Paper highlights regional threats and planned procurements', July 16, 2020, *Asian Military Review* at <https://asianmilitaryreview.com/2020/07/japans-white-paper-highlights-regional-threats-and-planned-procurements/> (September 2,2020)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "S. Korea, US kick off joint summertime exercise amid COVID-19 concern", Yonhap News Agency, August 18, 2020 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200818000087>, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

- While the US-South Korea alliance remains a lynchpin for regional security, the alliance under President Trump's 'America First' policy is undergoing difficult negotiations over renewing the Special Measures Agreements (SMA), and has witnessed occasional threats of US forces downsizing in the Peninsula. The cost-sharing negotiations have exposed the fault lines between Washington and Seoul. Reports indicate that the negotiators demanded US\$ 5 billion⁵⁰ from Seoul in order to cover the expenditure of deployment of personnel, equipment and exercises. Subsequently, Seoul offered a 13 per cent hike amounting to US\$ 875 million which was not acceptable to Washington. The US reportedly asked for US\$ 1.3 billion annually.⁵¹ It is important to note that South Korea is one of the biggest customers for US Foreign Military Sales (FMS), with contracts amounting to US\$ 15.7 billion from 2008-2016.⁵²
- Meanwhile, the regional security situation has remained fluid as the goal of complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Peninsula made little progress. The US-North Korea dialogue process got caught up in the debate on sequencing of denuclearisation and easing of economic sanctions. An interim UN report in August indicated that North Korea is continuing its nuclear programme, along with production of highly-enriched uranium and building of experimental light water reactor.⁵³ Meanwhile, inter-Korea relations have also hit a rocky patch with North Korea blowing up the inter-Korean joint liaison office in Kaesong in June.⁵⁴ Despite efforts from South Korean President Moon Jae-in, the progress made in inter-Korea relations with the Panmunjom and Pyongyang Declarations of 2018 seems to be wearing down.

US and South Korea agree to revise missile guidelines

- Following months of serious consultation, Deputy National Security Advisor Kim Hyun-chong on July 28 confirmed that Washington and Seoul have decided to revise the missile guidelines, allowing easing of limitations on Seoul's use of solid fuels for space launch vehicles. The statement stated that all private companies, research institutions and citizens in South Korea can undertake research, and develop, produce and possess different forms of space launch vehicles with not only liquid fuels, but also solid and hybrid variants. Deputy National Security Advisor Kim further emphasised that "with the establishment of space infrastructures, a new route for the Korean New Deal's expansion to space has emerged. This may be a chance for us to develop our own version of Space X."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Min Joo Kim, "U.S. breaks off talks with South Korea over costs of military alliance", *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2019 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/us-breaks-off-talks-with-south-korea-over-costs-of-military-alliance/2019/11/19/949773d8-0a9b-11ea-8054-289aef6e38a3_story.html, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

⁵¹ Ahn Sung-mi, "Seoul, Washington resume defense cost talks with little progress", *The Korea Herald*, August 20, 2020 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200820000561>, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

⁵² "U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, June 23, 2020. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11388>, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

⁵³ Michelle Nichols, "North Korea has 'probably' developed nuclear devices to fit ballistic missiles, U.N. report says", Reuters, August 3, 2020 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-sanctions-un/north-korea-has-probably-developed-nuclear-devices-to-fit-ballistic-missiles-un-report-says-idUSKCN24Z2PO>, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

⁵⁴ "(7th LD) N. Korea blows up joint liaison office in Kaesong", Yonhap News Agency, June 16, 2020 at <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200616008258325>, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

⁵⁵ "Republic of Korea, United States agree to revise missile guidelines: all restrictions on Seoul's use of solid fuels for space launch vehicles lifted", Ministry of National Defense, August 18, 2020 at https://www.mnd.go.kr/user/boardList.action?command=view&page=1&boardId=O_47261&boardSeq=O_252518&titleId=null&siteId=mndEN&cid=mndEN_02010000000&column=null&search=null, (Accessed on August 25, 2020).

More power delegated to Kim Jong-un's sister Kim Yo-jong

- The National Intelligence Service (NIS) in a briefing indicated that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has given more authority to his younger sister Kim Yo-jong, reportedly making her the second in command. It is suggested that she as the first vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers Party is at present managing overall affairs of the state in aid of her brother Kim Jong-un. Furthermore, it is assumed that this move is undertaken to relieve Kim Jong-un of some of the pressure he experienced since he took charge of the regime in 2011. But it is important to note that Kim Jong-un will continue to hold absolute power. In addition to Kim Jong-un's sister Kim Yo-jong, others are also given greater responsibility for instance, Pak Pong-ju, vice chairman of the State Affairs Commission, and Premier Kim Tok-hun, will have to manage the economy; Choe Pu-il has to look after policing and security; and Ri Pyong-chol, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, has to manage military matters.⁵⁶

Tension in Japan-South Korea relations

- In latest developments over the comfort women issue, a statue reportedly resembling Prime Minister Abe bowing to a comfort women, has been erected at the private Botanic Garden in Pyeongchang.⁵⁷ It will open for public viewing from August 10. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide indicated that this will "decisively impact" bilateral relations which have suffered in recent years over historical issues of forced wartime labour.

South Korea-India Defence Cooperation

- In July 2020, South Korea and India decided to enhance cooperation in the field of defence technology and promote related industries⁵⁸. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also spoke to Jeong Kyeong-doo, Minister of National Defence, ROK, regarding cooperation in defence technology. The two leaders committed to promote defence cooperation engagements between the two armed forces. "It was also agreed to take forward the agreements in the field of defence industry and defence technology cooperation between the two countries," said the Defence Ministry.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Kang Seung-woo, "North Korean leader partially delegates power to sister, says spy agency", *The Korea Times*, August 20, 2020. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/08/103_294711.html, accessed on August 25, 2020.

⁵⁷ "Japan warns new 'comfort women' statue may hurt ties with South Korea", *The Japan Times*, July 28, 2020. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/07/28/national/statues-comfort-woman-man-said-resemble-japans-abe-stir-debate-south-korea/> Accessed on September 1, 2020.

⁵⁸ 'India, South Korea to enhance defence technology cooperation', *Outlook India*, July 10, 2020 at <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/india-south-korea-to-enhance-defence-technology-cooperation/1891648> (September 3, 2020)

⁵⁹ 'Rajnath Singh talks to South Korean counterpart to strengthen defence ties', July 10, 2020, *The Print* at <https://theprint.in/india/rajnath-singh-talks-to-south-korean-counterpart-to-strengthen-defence-ties/458234/> (September 3, 2020)

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