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# MAPPING EAST ASIA

## CHINA

### **Type 055 Destroyer *Lhasa* Commissioned to PLA Navy**

On 2 March, the Type 055 Guided-Missile Destroyer *Lhasa*, (Hull Number 102) completed the manufacturing and sea trials and was commissioned into the PLA Navy. According to Colonel Ren Guoqiang, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defense, this type of ship is a 10,000-ton-class destroyer independently developed by China, which marks a milestone in the PLA Navy's strategic transformation and development with key technological breakthroughs in the fields of overall design, information integration and assembly of large vessels. He also added that with new weapons in air defense, anti-missile, anti-ship and anti-submarine, the Type 055 destroyer boasts strong capabilities in information perception, air defense and anti-missile operations, and anti-surface strike.<sup>1</sup>

### **China-Arab States Data Security Pact**

In a landmark agreement between China and the League of Arab States (LAS), 'The Initiative on China-Arab Data Cooperation' was signed on 29 March. The pact was signed between China's Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu and the Assistant Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Hossam Zaki. The objective of the agreement is the keep data and production chains afloat in the digital economy era.<sup>2</sup>

On this significant development between China and the Arab states, the spokesperson of China Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying affirmed that, "The release of the initiative demonstrates the height of the strategic cooperation between China and the LAS always standing together with a shared future." Further, she added: that "it will not only bring about more fruitful data cooperation between the two sides, but will also promote the sound development of digital economy and the building of a community with a shared future in cyberspace by injecting the wisdom and strength of developing countries into global digital governance."<sup>3</sup>

### **China's First Chief Designer of Nuclear Submarines Passes Away**

China's first nuclear submarine designer, Peng Shilu died on 22 March in Beijing. In the 1960s, Peng presided over the whole-process development of China's nuclear-powered submarine manufacturing plant, including the demonstration, design, testing, and operation, and participated in the debugging and sea trials of the first nuclear submarine. In the early 1980s, Peng sorted out three controlling elements, namely, investment, schedule and quality, for the construction of the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant. Besides, at the Qinshan Nuclear Power Plant, in its second-phase project, he proposed the principle of "China taking the initiative while cooperating with foreign countries." He personally calculated the main parameters, and outlined the schedule and investment, providing a reliable scientific basis for constructing the second-phase project at Qinshan.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Type 055 Destroyer *Lhasa* commissioned to PLA Navy: Defense Spokesperson", *China Military*, March 25, 2021 at [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/25/content\\_10010836.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/25/content_10010836.htm) (Accessed on May 28, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> "China-League of Arab States Cooperation Initiative on Data Security", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, March 29 2021 at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/t1865098.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1865098.shtml) (Accessed on May 28, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on March 30", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, March 30, 2021 at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/t1865539.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1865539.shtml) (Accessed on May 29, 2021)

<sup>4</sup> "First chief designer of China's nuclear submarine dies at 96" *China Military*, March 3, 2021 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/24/content\\_10010111.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/24/content_10010111.htm) (Accessed on May 15, 2021)

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Born on 18 November 1925, Peng Shilu completed his graduation from the Moscow Institute of Chemical Engineering in 1956 and later went on to study nuclear power at the Moscow Power Institute.

### **China's Defence Officials' Meeting: Japan and Vietnam**

On 29 March, the Chinese and Japanese defence officials held the third annual meeting of maritime and air liaison mechanism and the fifth round of working-level consultations on defence affairs. In the meeting, both sides exchanged views on issues such as maritime and aerial security policies, regional security situation, operation of the maritime and air liaison mechanism, and defence exchanges.

At the meeting, the Chinese side reiterated that the Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands belong to China and this fact cannot be changed. It also urged the Japanese side to stop provoking China on the Diaoyu Island issue. Moreover, the Chinese side also stressed that the formulation of the Coast Guard Law is a normal legislative move, which conforms to the international law and international norms.<sup>5</sup>

On 24 April, the sixth China-Vietnam Border Defense Friendship Exchange was held in Dongxing City, China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Binh Lieu district, Vietnam's Northern Province of Quang Ninh.

Chinese State Councilor and Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe and Vietnamese Vice-Secretary of the Central Military Commission and Defence Minister, Sen. Lieut. Gen. Phan Van Giang led delegations to participate in the event. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on deepening 'China-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership', the Belt and Road Initiative and the promotion of 'Two Corridors, One Economic Circle.'<sup>6</sup>

### **China's Reaction to NATO Naval warship in South China Sea**

Subsequent to an announcement by some NATO member states to dispatch naval warships to the South China Sea, Senior Col. Ren Guoqiang, the spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defence, declared that China is monitoring the development very closely and believes that "relevant countries can make more constructive efforts to maintain regional peace and stability, instead of making troubles." Further, the spokesperson reiterated that, "China always respects the freedom of navigation and overflight enjoyed by all countries in the South China Sea in accordance with international law, but strongly opposes any attempt to take it as an excuse and harm the sovereignty and security of littoral countries."<sup>7</sup>

In March 2021, it was reported that a German frigate will set sail for Asia in August, and on its return journey will become the first German

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<sup>5</sup> "China, Japan hold defense consultation: Defense spokesperson", *Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China*, 31 March 2021 at: [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-03/31/content\\_4882309.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-03/31/content_4882309.htm) (Accessed on May 29, 2021)

<sup>6</sup> "China, Vietnam hold sixth border defense friendship exchange", *China Military*, March 25, 2021 at [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-04/25/content\\_10028606.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-04/25/content_10028606.htm) (Accessed on May 29, 2021)

<sup>7</sup> "Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on March 25", *Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China*, March 28, 2021 at [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-03/28/content\\_4882173.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-03/28/content_4882173.htm) (Accessed on May 29, 2021)

warship to cross the South China Sea since 2002. However, the ship will not pass within what officials called the “12 nautical-mile”. UK also announced that it will dispatch *HMS Queen Elizabeth* for its maiden voyage within this year.<sup>8</sup>

### **China’s Defence Minister’s Visit to East European Countries: Serbia, Hungary, Greece and North Macedonia**

From 24-31 March, the Chinese Defence Minister, General Wei Fenghe visited four East European states — Serbia, Hungary, Greece and North Macedonia. The purpose of the visit, as stated by Senior Col. Ren Guoqiang the spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defence of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), was to promote the traditional friendship and pragmatic cooperation with the defence departments and militaries of the two countries, and advance the healthy and steady development of the military-to-military relationship.<sup>9</sup>

During a meeting with the visiting Chinese minister, the Hungarian President Janos Ader appreciated the vaccine assistance from China saying that it bought hope to Hungary’s fight against the pandemic and hoped that the two countries will continue to strengthen cooperation in the areas of fighting the pandemic, economy and trade, tourism and military, pushing forward in-depth development of the Hungary-China

comprehensive strategic partnership. Meanwhile, Wei also briefed Ader of the real situations of social and economic development in Xinjiang. The Chinese side appreciated Hungary’s firm support for China on issues concerning its core interests including Xinjiang and upholding justice.<sup>10</sup>

In Belgrade, Serbia’s President Aleksandar Vucic during the meeting with General Wei Fenghe assured firm support to Chinese Government’s positions in safeguarding China’s core interests including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Xinjiang and the ‘One Belt And One Road’ initiative.<sup>11</sup>

In Athens, Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou ascribed the importance of China’s position in international affairs and appreciated China’s achievements in economic and social development and its great progress in human rights. Besides, the President assured to the visiting Chinese Defence Minister about Greece’s willingness to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative and the cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries.<sup>12</sup>

In Skopje, North Macedonia firmly supports the One-China policy and assured full cooperation in efforts to build the Belt and Road Initiative with China. Meanwhile, the Chinese Defence Minister affirmed that China was ready to work with North Macedonia to make full use of the Belt and Road Initiative and ‘17+1 Cooperation’ (Cooperation

<sup>8</sup> “German warship to cross South China Sea for first time since 2002”, *Al Jazeera*, March 4, 2021 at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/4/german-warship-to-sail-through-south-china-sea> (Accessed on May 29, 2021)

<sup>9</sup> “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on March 25”, *Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China*, March 28, 2021 at [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-03/28/content\\_4882173.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-03/28/content_4882173.htm)(Accessed on May 15, 2021)

<sup>10</sup> “Hungarian President meets Chinese Defense Minister” *China Military*, March, 24 2021 at: [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/25/content\\_10010938.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/25/content_10010938.htm) (Accessed on May 27, 2021)

<sup>11</sup> “Serbian President meets Chinese Defense Minister”, *China Military* March 27, 2021 at [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/27/content\\_10011720.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/27/content_10011720.htm) (Accessed on May 27, 2021)

<sup>12</sup> “Greek President meets with Chinese Defense Minister” *China Military* March 30 2021 at [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/30/content\\_10013490.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/30/content_10013490.htm)(Accessed on May 27, 2021)

between China and Central and Eastern European Countries) to deepen practical cooperation and achieve mutual benefit and common development.<sup>13</sup>

## TAIWAN

### The PLA's Readiness in the Taiwan Strait

On 26 April, a Y-8 tactical reconnaissance plane reportedly flew over Taiwan's southwest air defence identification zone "at an altitude as low as 30 metres (100ft)... to test [Taiwan's] radar response and gather intelligence."<sup>14</sup> Earlier, after Taiwan's National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology (NCSIST) announced that "it would hold two missile tests at Jioupeng Military Base in Pingtung County, from April 7 to 9 and April 13 to 16", two Chinese military vessels were spotted undertaking reconnaissance and surveillance near Orchid Island, the test site.<sup>15</sup> Besides, a Chinese carrier group conducted an exercise near Taiwan and the PLA Navy maintained that "such drills will become regular."<sup>16</sup>

### The PLA in Taiwan's ADIZ

On 30 April, five PLA aircraft violated Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ). The media reported that during the month of April, the PLA intruded in Taiwan's ADIZ for the total number of 22 days.<sup>17</sup> Earlier on 20 April, the media reported that nine PLA planes violated Taiwan's ADIZ. That day, it was sixth consecutive day of similar violations.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in the beginning of the month, on 7 April, 15 Chinese military aircraft, out of which 12 were fighter jets, had violated Taiwan's ADIZ for the fifth consecutive day. J-16 multirole fighters, J-10 multirole fighters, and Y-8 anti-submarine warfare planes were involved in these violations.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, Chinese drones were spotted near Taiwan-controlled Pratas (Dongsha) Islands in the South China Sea. Taiwan has warned that if they came too close (in the restricted areas), it "may shoot them down."<sup>20</sup> Taiwan has also resumed work on "a long-stalled runway upgrade project" on the island that "should be completed by February 2022."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "North Macedonian leaders meet Chinese Defense Chief" *China Military*, March 31, 2021 at [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/31/content\\_10013961.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-03/31/content_10013961.htm) (Accessed on May 27, 2021)

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Chung, "Chinese Military Tests Taiwan's Radar System with Surface-level Incursion into Air Defence Zone", *South China Morning Post*, April 26, 2021 at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3131164/chinese-military-tests-taiwans-radar-system-surface-level> (30 April 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Lu Tai-cheng and Teng Pei-ju, "Chinese Military Vessels Detected near Taiwan Missile Test Areas", *Focus Taiwan*, April 07, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202104070013> (30 April 2021).

<sup>16</sup> "China Says its Carrier Group Exercising near Taiwan, Drills will Become Regular", Reuters, April 06, 2021 at <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/china-says-carrier-group-exercising-near-taiwan-drills-will-become-regular-2021-04-06/> (30 April 2021).

<sup>17</sup> Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, "Five Chinese Military Aircraft Enter Taiwan's ADIZ", *Focus Taiwan*, April 30, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202104300015> (30 April 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, "Nine PLA Planes Enter Taiwan's ADIZ", *Focus Taiwan*, April 20, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202104200029> (30 April 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Yeh and Chung Yu-chen, "PLA Warplanes Enter Taiwan's ADIZ for Fifth Consecutive Day in April", *Focus Taiwan*, April 07, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202104070021> (30 April 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Yimou Lee, "Taiwan Says may Shoot Down Chinese Drones in South China Sea", Reuters, April 07, 2021 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN2BU1CV> (30 April 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Matt Yu and Joseph Yeh, "Runway Upgrade at Taiwan-held South China Sea Island Back on Track", *Focus Taiwan*, April 12, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202104120011> (30 April 2021).

## Taiwanese Preparedness

In April, Taiwan conducted its Han Kuang annual exercises. The cyber portion of the exercises began on 23 April that tested “Taiwan’s defense strategies and tactics against a possible military attack by China.” The exercises, begun in 1984, are “Taiwan’s largest annual war games and involve all branches of its armed forces.” The war games include “the table top drills and live-fire drills.” The table top drills went for the longest ever eight days this year. However, only around 300 military personnel could participate in the table top drills due to COVID-19 norms.<sup>22</sup> Also, Taiwanese military conducted “an intensive [two day] military exercise” in southern Taiwan “to assess the joint operational capabilities” on 14-15 April.<sup>23</sup>

## Taiwan’s Augmentation of its Capabilities and its Indigenization Programme

During the period under review, Taiwan launched “a 4,000-tonne-class coast guard ship, named the Chiayi.” The ship is “a 4,000-tonne-class vessel” and “has almost 5,044 tonnes of displacement, and could sail for 10,000 nautical miles (18,520 km) before needing to refuel.” It is “designed as a mobile seaborne field hospital... that would enable it to perform humanitarian relief and search-and-rescue missions.” Rotary-wing aircraft can land and take off from it.<sup>24</sup> Earlier, Taiwan also launched Taiwan Navy’s Yu Shan amphibious transport dock.<sup>25</sup>

It has been reported that Taiwan is developing “a new generation of indigenous fighter jets is currently.” Its engine and design is likely “to be finalized in 2024.” The Government is investing US\$ 309.5 million (NT\$ 8.8 billion) “to develop the new engines” and US\$ 61.40 million (NT\$ 1.7 billion) in the design. At present, Taiwan’s two other indigenous projects, the Indigenous Defense Fighter (IDF) and Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT, Brave Eagle) are in the testing phase. Taiwan’s Aerospace Industrial Development Corp. (AIDC) is developing them.<sup>26</sup>

In the meantime, the media noted that “Taiwan has completed the upgrade of 42 of its 141 F-16A/Bs fighter jets to F-16Vs.” These jets that can “detect enemies earlier and have a longer striking range” will be part of the Fourth Tactical Fighter Wing, which will be the only unit to have only F-16V aircraft.<sup>27</sup>

## The US Naval Transit through the Taiwan Strait Continues

The *USS John S. McCain* (DDG 56), an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, sailed through the Taiwan Strait on 7 April. This transit is “the fourth by a U.S. battleship” since January 2021, when Joe Biden assumed presidency. The US Seventh Fleet to which the destroyer belongs, informed, “The ship’s transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free

<sup>22</sup> Matt Yu and Emerson Lim, “Taiwan Launches Computer-simulated War Games amid Rising Tensions”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 23, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202104230017> (30 April 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Chung Yu-chen and Ko Lin, “Taiwan Holds Military Drill to Test Joint Operations Capabilities”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 16, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202104160010> (30 April 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Hung Chen-hung and Jake Chung, “Tsai Presides over Launch of Domestic Ship ‘Chiayi’”, *Taipei Times*, April 30, 2021 at <https://taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2021/04/30/2003756581> (30 April 2021).

<sup>25</sup> Matt Yu and Joseph Yeh, “Taiwan’s 1st Indigenous Landing Platform Dock a National Milestone: Tsai”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 13, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202104130011> (30 April 2021).

<sup>26</sup> Matt Yu and Matthew Mazzetta, “New Indigenous Fighter Jet under Development”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 15, 2012 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202104150012> (30 April 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Wang Cheng-chung, Chung Yu-chen and Emerson Lim, “Taiwan Air Force Completes Upgrade of 42 F-16A/B Fighter Jets to F-16Vs”, *Focus Taiwan*, March 17, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202103170025> (30 April 2021).

and open Indo-Pacific. The United States military will continue to fly, sail, and operate anywhere international law allows.”<sup>28</sup> Separately, Taiwan and the US signed a memorandum of understanding that covers wide ranging maritime cooperation.<sup>29</sup>

### **Espionage Case**

The CEO of China Innovation Investment Ltd., Xiang Xin and his wife Kung Ching, who were arrested at Taoyuan International Airport while leaving for China on 24 November 2019 under espionage charges, have been “indicted on charges of money laundering.” They have been publicly mentioned by Wang William Liqiang, “a self-proclaimed Chinese spy”, who had fled to Australia. He was formerly an employee at Xin’s company. He claimed that the company “was a front for efforts by Chinese intelligence to target the democracy movement in Hong Kong and elections in Taiwan.”<sup>30</sup>

## **JAPAN**

### **Japan, Indonesia sign Arms Transfer Pact**

On 30 March 2021, Japan and Indonesia signed a pact that allows the transfer of Japanese defence technology to Indonesia. This move came amidst China’s increasing influence in the region and its constant territorial claims in East and South China seas.

The agreement was signed during the “two plus two” security talks between the defence and foreign

ministers of these countries. They also agreed on active participation in multinational military exercises in the future and on jointly developing the remote islands.

## **KOREAN PENINSULA**

### **India, South Korea Agree on Joint Production and Export of Military Hardware**

In a significant move, South Korea and India have agreed to jointly produce and export military hardware. The decision was taken during the South Korean Defence Minister’s three-day visit to India from 25 March, 2021.

The visit focused on boosting bilateral defence cooperation. The two sides decided to focus on joint research, production and export of industrial defence. South Korean Defence minister also showed interest in the two defence corridors, by investing in joint ventures, which the Indian government is working on setting up in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, under the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ initiative.

### **Posco C&C announces end of Joint Venture with Myanmar Military-back venture**

South Korean firm POSCO Coated & Color Steel Co Ltd (POSCO C&C) issued a statement on 9 April 2021, that it will end its joint venture with Myanmar Economic Holdings Public Co Ltd (MEHL), a firm that is controlled by the military which took control of the country in February.

<sup>28</sup> Chung Yu-chen and Joseph Yeh, “U.S. Navy Makes Fourth Transit through Taiwan Strait under Biden”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 07, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202104070022> (30 April 2021).

<sup>29</sup> Hung Chen-hung, Jake Chung and Staff Writer, “Tsai Presides over Launch of Domestic Ship ‘Chiayi’”, *Taipei Times*, April 30, 2021 at <https://taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2021/04/30/2003756581> (30 April 2021).

<sup>30</sup> Hsiao Po-wen and Matthew Mazzetta, “Alleged Chinese Spies Indicted in Taiwan for Money Laundering”, *Focus Taiwan*, April 08, 2021 at <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202104080013> (30 April 2021).



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The firm announced that it is in talks with MEHL to buy their 30 per cent share and run the firm with full ownership. According to the spokesperson of the South Korean firm, the move to terminate this partnership is a result of the pressure from activist groups to end all ties with Myanmar entities that are linked to the military. POCSO C&C is among the few foreign firms that are still in direct business with the military-linked entities after the coup.

### **North Korea Tests Missiles**

North Korea fired two missiles off its west coast on 21 March 2021. These are the first publicly known tests after Joe Biden took over the

administration as US President. According to US officials, the tests did not involve weapon systems that are covered by the UN Security Council testing bans.

According to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, North Korea fired two cruise missiles off its west coast. “What they fired were cruise missiles, not ballistic missiles and they were detected by our assets,” the Yonhap news agency reported, quoting a source in the defence ministry.

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

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