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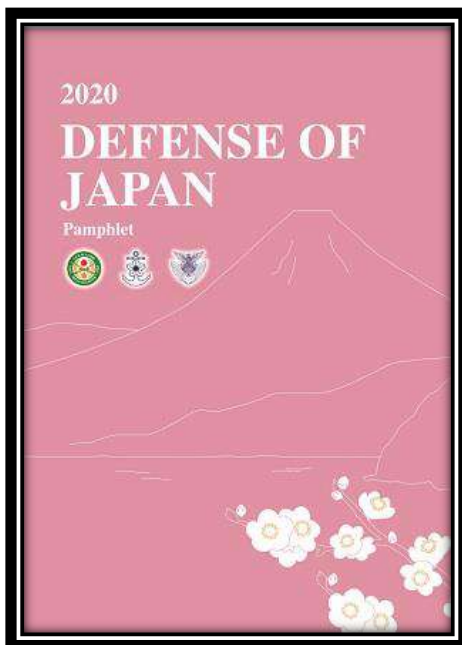
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Japan's Defence White Paper 2020

On July 14, Japan's Ministry of Defence issued its annual white paper titled Defense of Japan 2020. The White Paper highlights the prospect of the COVID-19 pandemic intensifying great power competition over the regional and international orders and draws attention to Chinese "propaganda" and "disinformation" during the pandemic. The document's publication comes in the wake of increased Chinese "grey zone" operations in the East China Sea, changing dynamics in the Korean Peninsula, and the renewed domestic debate on strike capability following Defence Minister Kono Taro's decision to cancel the planned acquisition and deployment of the land-based Aegis Ashore system. The US-Japan alliance, based on the US-Japan Security Treaty, which marked its 60th anniversary in 2020, continues to remain a core pillar of Japan's defence.



Ministry of Defense, Japan

The White Paper expresses Japan's "grave" concern about China's "relentless" unilateral attempts to change the status quo around the contested Senkaku Islands. That Japan's threat perception vis-à-vis China has steadily increased in recent years is evident from the fact that the 2019 white paper expressed "serious security concern", and the 2018 iteration "strong security concerns", while referring to China's attempts to alter the status quo. Japan has also recently witnessed increased Chinese maritime "grey zone" operations in the East China Sea. Its warplanes scrambled 675 times during FY 2019 to intercept Chinese aircraft intruding into Japanese airspace, which represents a 5.8 per cent year-on-year increase. In early July 2020, Chinese patrol ships sailed for 30 hours in the waters around the contested

Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, marking the longest Chinese intrusion in Japanese territorial waters since 2012.

In addition, the White Paper characterises North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities as "grave and imminent threats to Japan's security". Of particular concern is the short range, solid-fuelled, ballistic missiles that Pyongyang has been testing since last year on a lower altitude, which might be able to breach Japanese missile defence networks and which, over time, are likely to be applied to longer range ballistic missiles as well.

Another significant developments highlighted by the White Paper is the emergence of new domains of war, in particular outer space, cyber space and the electromagnetic spectrum and the efforts being undertaken by several countries to attain offensive capabilities that could be unleashed in these domains. The White Paper notes that these developments are likely to dramatically alter the battlefield scenario in the coming years.

Aligning Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" and its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision", the White Paper underscores the significance of cultivating multifaceted and multi-layered defence cooperation with Australia, India, and ASEAN countries. In this regard, Japan's Ministry of Defense is setting up a new post at the level of division chief in the Defense Policy Bureau to advance cooperation with ASEAN, India and Australia. Japan's defence ministry is also strengthening its organisational capacity to bolster coordination with key Indo-Pacific partners.

Tianwen: China's Mission to Mars



Source: China Daily

On 23 July, China successfully launched its Mars Rover Mission. The spacecraft, which includes an orbiter and rover (a combination that had never before launched together toward the Red Planet), was launched from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site located on the coast of the island province of Hainan. China used its largest and the most powerful launch vehicle, the Long March 5 rocket, to carry the spacecraft with a mass of about five tonnes. The rocket will transport the robotic probe to the Earth-Mars transfer trajectory before the spacecraft begins its self-propelled flight

toward the gravity field of the Red Planet.

If the mission succeeds, China will join the club comprising of India, United States, Russia and the European Union, which have already sent missions to Mars. China's previous attempt in 2011 to send an exploratory probe to Mars called Yinghuo-1 on board a Russian spacecraft had failed; shortly after launch, it was declared lost and later burnt up during re-entry.

The new Chinese Mars probe, named Tianwen 1 or Quest for Heavenly Truth 1, has three main objectives: orbit the Red Planet for comprehensive observation, land on Martian soil, and send a rover to explore the landing site. The Rover will

conduct scientific investigations on the planet's soil, geological structure, environment, atmosphere and water.

The probe is expected to reach Martian orbit in February 2021. It will then attempt to deploy the rover to explore the planet for 90 days. The orbiter will use high-resolution cameras to search for a suitable landing site somewhere in the Utopia Planitia region. The Rover weighs around 240 kg and will carry cameras, a subsurface radar, a spectrometer, a magnetometer, and atmospheric sensors.

China's New National Security Law for Hong Kong

The new national security law approved by China's National People's Congress (NPC) for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region came into force on 30 June 2020. Aimed at "preventing secession, subversion and terrorism, and curbing hostile foreign forces," the law has introduced sweeping changes in the police, prosecution and judicial aspects of Hong Kong's internal security administration. There is a broad view that the law has gutted the spirit and substance of the One Country, Two Systems governance model that had been followed since the British handover of Hong Kong. Hong Kong authorities have begun to arrest activists under the new law. Corporates are reported to be contemplating migration. Even Chinese professionals are reportedly considering leaving Hong Kong in the wake of the increase in the tax rate on the global income of Chinese citizens from 15 to 45 per cent.



Source: Twitter

In response to the developments in Hong Kong, President Trump signed an executive order that reverses the special status that the United States had been accorded Hong Kong until now. As Trump stated, Hong Kong would now be treated in the same manner as mainland China, with "no special privileges, no special economic

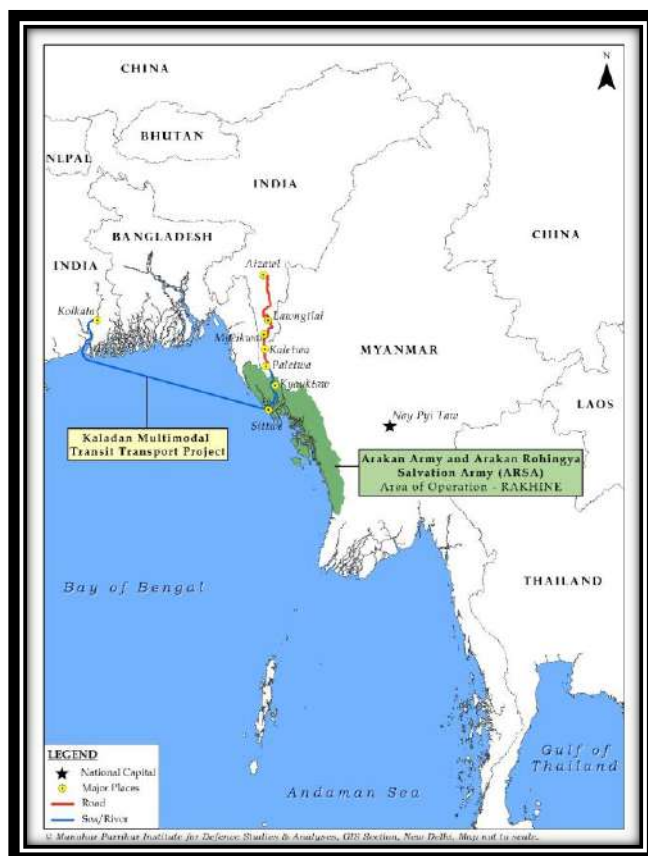
treatment and no export of sensitive technologies". The US has also suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong.

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have also suspended their extradition treaties with Hong Kong. The United Kingdom has offered a "route" out from Hong Kong for around 350,000 UK passport holders and 2.6 million other eligible people. They will be able to go to the UK for five years and "after a further year, they will be able to apply for citizenship." Japan, which has

huge business stakes in Hong Kong, expressed its grave concern at the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy. There is a possibility that the situation in Hong Kong might even affect the prospects of President Xi Jinping's much awaited visit to Japan.

China Arming the Arakan Army in Myanmar

China is reportedly funding and arming the Arakan Army and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army which have been designated as terrorist groups by the government of Myanmar. The Arakan Army's area of operation includes Myanmar's Rakhine and Chin states as well as Northeast India. Chinese support for these groups and uptick in violence in this part of Myanmar are likely to have an adverse impact on India's northeastern states as well as on India's Kaladan multi-modal infrastructure development which is on the verge of being completed.



The Arakan Army (AA) is considered to be the largest armed insurgent group in Myanmar's Rakhine State. It is the armed wing of the United League of Arakan (ULA). The Myanmar government designated both the ULA and AA as terrorist organisations in March 2020. It has been reported that the AA gets 95 per cent of its funding from China. In February 2020, the Myanmar Army intercepted an arms consignment from China to AA, which included 500 assault rifles, 30 universal machine guns, 70,000 rounds of ammunition and a huge stock of grenades. The consignment was transported by sea and was intercepted near the coastal junction of Myanmar and Bangladesh.

China has its own interests in this part of Myanmar including the operationalisation of the China Myanmar Economic Corridor as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, which will help alleviate its Malacca Dilemma and the vulnerability of its sea lines of communication. Myanmar appears to be getting increasingly wary of the economic corridor as well as China's efforts to leverage

Myanmarese ethnic groups in a bid to create disturbance and create a wedge between Delhi and Yangon.

Vietnam-Cambodia Joint Naval Patrol in South China Sea

The navies of Cambodia and Vietnam participated in the 59th joint maritime patrol on June 23-24, 2020. The Vietnam People's Navy sent its Ship 253 from Region 5 and the Royal Cambodian Navy sent its Ship 1144 from the Naval Base. The two navies took part in a coordinated exercise tasked to fight piracy, drug smuggling and trafficking, illegal immigration, arms trade, as well as hand flag and signal lamp training in line with the International Code of Signals (ICS). The aim of the exercise was to contribute to regional peace and stability.

The previous iteration of the patrols, the 58th, had earlier taken place on March 12 and 13. It involved Ship 251 from Region 5 of the Vietnam People's Navy and Ship 1142 from the Naval Base of the Royal Cambodian Navy.



Vietnam and Cambodia share a 700 mile long border. Joint naval patrols have become a regular feature of the relationship and are held annually. The two countries also regularly hold conferences to review the progress of the patrols in terms of operational capability, coordination and performance of the permanent office of joint patrols on either side. Common concerns like illegal fishing and growing Chinese influence are also

discussed. These patrols are particularly significant during this year when Vietnam occupies the ASEAN chair, and contributes to forging and maintaining ASEAN solidarity.