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CHINA

China's Defence Diplomacy in January 2022

With the onset of the New Year, the Chinese Defence Ministry launched multi-directional defence diplomacy involving some of the important allies of the United States (US). On 12 and 13 January China held consecutive virtual meetings with British and French militaries, on the [eighth](#) China-United Kingdom (UK) Defence Strategy Consultation and the [16th](#) China-France Defense Strategy Consultation respectively. In both these meetings, China conveyed to the other party its willingness to maintain high-level communication and strengthen strategic and pragmatic military cooperation. In response to the Chinese proposals, the British delegation [assured](#) continual maintenance of strategic consultations and exchanges on the multilateral security dialogue platforms and the French [expressed](#) hopes of resuming normal exchanges and cooperation once the COVID-19 pandemic ended.

Following the meeting with British and French military officials, China held [virtual consultations](#) with New Zealand on 19 January and with Saudi Arabia on 26 January. The meeting with New Zealand was led by General Li Zuocheng, Chief of the Joint Staff Department under China's Central Military Commission (CMC). During the meeting, he [expressed hopes](#) about the two militaries advancing bilateral ties and contributing to regional peace and stability. Responding to General Li's comments, New Zealand's Secretary of Defence and Chief Executive of the Ministry of Defence, Andrew Brigdman [stated](#) that Wellington is prepared to

maintain dialogue and communication and enhance bilateral coordination in international and regional affairs.

Subsequently, in the [meeting](#) with Saudi Arabia, Chinese Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe [appreciated](#) Riyadh's support on Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan-related issues and suggested bilateral coordination in opposing hegemonic and bullying acts and jointly protecting international fairness and justice. The Saudi Deputy Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman who was representing the Saudi Government [acknowledged](#) the existing robust strategic partnership between Saudi Arabia and China and suggested that the two militaries should further enhance practical cooperation and bilateral ties.

China holds Joint Military Exercises with Iran and Russia

The Chinese, Iranian and Russian navies organized a [three-day](#) joint maritime exercise in the Gulf of Oman from 18 to 20 January. This was the second naval exercise that was jointly conducted by the three countries. Reportedly, China sent its guided-missile destroyer *Urumqi*, the comprehensive supply ship *Taihu*, ship-borne helicopters and 40 members of the Marine Corps of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to participate in the exercise. According to Chinese military sources, the [objective](#) of the exercise was to deepen practical cooperation between the navies of the three countries along with safeguarding maritime security and building a maritime community with a shared future.

In a separate development, Chinese and the Russian naval forces held a joint maritime

[anti-piracy exercise](#) in the northern waters of the Arabian Sea on 24 January. The navies from the two countries participated with their marines and a total of five naval vessels and ship-borne helicopters and [conducted drills](#) of joint manoeuvring, rescuing hijacked ships and airlift evacuation. Following the maritime exercise, the Chinese Defence Ministry hailed the joint endeavour as a major advancement towards [strengthening](#) the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership.

TAIWAN

Taiwan displays naval strength in public event

Amidst increasing Chinese incursions, the Taiwan Navy on 7 January organised a [public event](#) to display the tactical capabilities of its indigenously-built corvettes and mine-laying ships. The two *Tuo Chiang*-class stealth multi-mission corvettes involved in the drill, [conducted](#) tracking and firing simulations using Sea Sword II air-defence missiles, 76 mm naval guns, close-in weapon systems and jamming shells. They also demonstrated impressive manoeuvrability by travelling at a speed of 35 knots in rough waters. Although the mine-laying ships could not participate in the drill due to bad weather, the vessel's mine-laying system was shown publicly for the first time.

It is noteworthy, that apart from exhibiting its [military preparedness](#), Taipei is also making concerted efforts to further enhance its maritime defence capabilities. On 11 January, it [approved](#) an additional defence

budget of USD 8.6 billion that included resources for a coastal anti-ship missile system and installation of combat systems on Coast Guard ships.

JAPAN

US-Japan likely to sign two defence pacts

On 6 January, Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa and Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo [met](#) the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, through a video link, for the 2022 [U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee](#) ("2+2") Meeting. At the meeting, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin underscored the US' and Japan's concerns over China's and North Korea's [coercive military tactics](#) in the Indo-Pacific. He remarked that the meeting was being held in the backdrop of increasing tensions and challenges posed to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region by China's and North Korea's aggressive and coercive behaviour. Thereafter, the two sides agreed to soon sign [two new agreements](#) -- first a five-year agreement on sharing the cost of maintaining US military bases in Japan and second a deal to facilitate close collaboration in research and development of defence-related technologies, including ways to counter threats from hypersonic weapons. It is noteworthy that later that month, on 21 January, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida [virtually met](#) the US President Joe Biden, and they reiterated their intent to "push-back" China's assertive actions in the region, North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and Russia's military build-up near Ukraine.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

South Korea signs record arms export deal with the UAE

South Korea on 16 January signed a **USD 3.5 billion deal** with the United Arab Emirates to export mid-range surface-to-air missiles. This **deal** was signed during a meeting between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Emirati Prime Minister Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in Dubai and is reportedly, the largest arms export deal in South Korea's history. According to the contract, the South Korean defence firm LIG Nex1 will **export** the completed *Cheongung II* KM-SAM to the UAE's Air Force, while another defence firm, Hanwha Defense will build the transporter erector launchers for the weapon and Hanwha Systems will develop its multifunction phased array 3D radar. Besides the defence deal, the two countries also signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to collaborate on defence technologies, including joint development of weapons systems.

North Korea conducts seven missile tests in a month

While the international community is preoccupied with the pandemic and other crises, North Korea conducted **seven tests** in January, exhibiting its growing missile capabilities. The series of missile tests began on 5 January, whereby North Korea tested hypersonic missiles, short-range ballistic missiles (KN-23 and KN-24), long-range cruise missiles and an intermediate-range ballistic missile (*Hwasong-12*). Reportedly, the *Hwasong-12* intermediate-range ballistic missile which was tested on 30 January, has an estimated range of 4,500 km (2,800 miles) and therefore can threaten the US territory of Guam and the far-western tip of Alaska's Aleutian Islands chain. Also, the missile will be able to carry a nuclear warhead. Following the tests, Japan and North Korea condemned them as a threat to regional peace while the US, termed the tests as **destabilising** and urged North Korea to join direct talks.