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## CHINA

### Senior Chinese and American military officials hold virtual talks

On 8 July General Li Zuocheng, member of China's Central Military Commission (CMC) and Chief of the CMC Joint Staff Department **virtually met** General Mark Milley, Chairman of the United States (US) Joint Chiefs of Staff. During the meeting, General Li **reiterated** President Xi Jinping's observations that China and the US should respect each other, co-exist peacefully and cooperate for win-win results. He also conveyed the importance China attaches to the "five assurances" given by the Biden administration and emphasized that China would not **compromise** with its core interests, and any wanton provocation will be met with firm resistance from the Chinese side. According to reports from The Pentagon, General Milley in his conversation with the Chinese General, emphasised the need to **responsibly manage competition** between the two countries. Highlighting the importance of these talks, he also underscored the need of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) engaging in substantive dialogue on improving crisis communications and reducing strategic risks. Reportedly, the two sides agreed that it is in the common interest of both countries to maintain **stable military relations** and avoid triggering conflicts. Further, they exchanged views on maritime and air military security and the Ukraine crisis.

### China and Pakistan conduct joint maritime exercise

The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and the Pakistan Navy (PN) held joint maritime drills at a military port in Wusong, Shanghai from 10 to 13 July. Aimed at enhancing bilateral defence cooperation, the drill, codenamed 'Sea

Guardians-2', is part of an annual military cooperation plan between the two navies. **Reportedly**, the exercise was conducted in two phases—port planning and maritime drills. The first phase included activities such as operation planning and expertise exchange, whereas the second phase comprised anti-submarine operations, tactical manoeuvres, and anti-aircraft and anti-missile operations. The PLA Navy's Rear Admiral Liu Zhigang and Commodore Rashid Mehmood Sheikh of the Pakistan Navy, co-directed the exercise. Liu Wensheng, spokesperson for PLAN, **informed** that the exercise had no relation with any regional situation and did not target any third parties.

### Strengthening the Training of Competent PLA Personnel

The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Commission held a study session to discuss the training of PLA personnel in the Chinese military. Xi Jinping, who **presided** over the study group, urged the military to give "better play" to the talent in the PLA. In order to achieve the centenary goals, the Chinese President stressed that there is need in "practicing the absolute Party leadership over the military throughout all aspects and the whole process of the talent-related work and improving the service personnel supply for war preparedness". In this regard, civil-military integration is also key to the development of military talent in the PLA.

## JAPAN

### Japan publishes Annual Defense White Paper

On 22 July Japan's Defence Ministry released the annual White Paper. The **document** positions Russia's aggression against Ukraine at the centre of its assessment, arguing that 'unilateral changes to the status quo by force should never be

tolerated, as they shake the very foundation of the international order'. It further suggests that 'this defiance of international order is not just Europe's problem', which aligns with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's [narrative](#) 'Ukraine may be East Asia tomorrow'. The White Paper urges to think 'flexibly beyond existing paradigms in order to pre-emptively deter changes to the status quo by force and to also be fully prepared for modern warfare, including information warfare and cyber warfare'. In its threat assessment, the White Paper not only underscores Beijing's coercive unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas, but also the implications of a China-Russia 'strategic alliance' with joint navigations and flights being conducted in the areas surrounding Japan. Additionally, in view of the intensifying strategic competition between the US and China, the White Paper focusses on the stability in the Taiwan Strait, since it is considered critical to Japan's security.

The White Paper also stresses on expanding the scope of national security to include economic security and high-technology in inter-State competition. Priority is also accorded to new domains including space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic spectrum. In order to deal with the severe security situation, the White Paper identifies US-Japan alliance as a 'cornerstone for Japan's security' in addition to effectively building Japan's own national defence capabilities. It also underscores the vitality of supporting a multi-faceted and multi-layered defence cooperation with other Indo-Pacific partners like Australia, India, the UK, France, and Germany not only having shared values but also geographic and historical linkages to the Indo-Pacific region.

## TAIWAN

### Taiwan conducts annual military exercise amidst increasing threat from China

Taiwan held its annual [Han Kuang Exercise](#) at the Tamsui River estuary from 25 to 29 July. The Exercise was conducted to heighten military preparedness to thwart a Chinese aerial attack on the Port of Taipei and the Tamsui River estuary. The military selected these locations for this year's Han Kuang Exercise in view of their [proximity](#) to the capital city of Taipei and their critical importance in Taiwan's war planning against any possible Chinese attack. In the Exercise, the military simulated an attack by Chinese helicopters and fighter bombers. Traditionally, the focus of the Han Kuang Exercise has been on improving asymmetric warfare, cognitive warfare, information and electronic warfare, reserve combat capacity, and overall mobilizable civilian resources. Although, the Exercise had its focus on the Tamsui River estuary, it was [spread out](#) across Taiwan in which "warships, fighter planes, armoured vehicles, artillery, and missiles integrated with regular and reserve forces in towns and on beaches" were deployed.

In a separate development, the media [reported](#) that Taiwanese military "fired flares at a Chinese drone [UAV] to warn it away as it flew over the outer island of Dongyin." The incident took place on 28 July. Taiwan's Ministry of Defence [suspected](#) that it was "dispatched to probe the island's defenses and see what reaction it elicited."

### Japan expands coverage on Taiwan in its Annual Defense White Paper

In its latest Defense White Paper, Japan attributed [significant attention](#) to Taiwan, describing stability in the Taiwan Strait as

critical to Japanese security. The document informs about Tokyo's intent of keeping a close watch over developments in the Taiwan Strait and termed Taiwan to be an extremely important partner. Further, the document also cautions against the increasing military power asymmetry between Taiwan and China and calls for greater vigilance and monitoring of trends like strengthening of Chinese and Taiwanese forces, the sale of weapons to Taiwan by the US and Taiwan's development of its own military equipment.

Incidentally, one week later, following the publication of the Defense White Paper, a [multi-party delegation](#) from the Japanese Diet visited Taiwan and conferred with President Tsai Ing-wen. Speaking to the Press, President Tsai informed that Japan and Taiwan will be collaborating across a wide spectrum of areas and that a semiconductor factory is scheduled to be set up in Kumamoto Prefecture by Hsinchu City-headquartered Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. and Tokyo-based Sony Group Corporation.

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

**DPRK's Supreme Leader proclaims country "fully ready for any military confrontation."**

North Korea's President Kim Jong-un [proclaimed](#) at the commemoration ceremony of the 69th anniversary of the Korean Armistice, that Pyongyang was "fully ready for any military confrontation." Reportedly, in the same event, he denounced South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol's military tactics as "suicidal" and added that in view of nuclear threats from the US, North Korea should achieve the historical task of strengthening the country's defence. According to observers Kim's remarks came in response to the Republic of Korea's vociferous emphasis

on the "Kill Chain" strategy that allows pre-emptive strikes to deter DPRK's nuclear attacks. Further, Pyongyang could also be preparing for another nuclear test.

### **Launch of South Korea's first 8200-ton Aegis destroyer, *Jeongjo the Great***

A new 8,200-ton destroyer with a missile interception platform and improved anti-submarine capabilities was launched by South Korea on 28 July. The ceremony for the destroyer, *Jeongjo the Great*, which bears the name of a visionary Joseon Dynasty ruler, was held at Hyundai Heavy Industries Co.'s shipyard in Ulsan. President Yoon Suk-yeol travelled to the port city to take part in a ceremony commemorating the launch. He [praised](#) the destroyer and referred to it as a national strategic asset built with a cutting-edge combat system capable of detecting, tracking, *and intercepting ballistic missiles*.

*Jeongjo the Great* is the first warship constructed as part of Seoul's acquisition programme, code-named Gwanggaeto-III Batch-II, under which, the nation hopes to acquire three cutting-edge destroyers. The Navy is expected to get it in the latter half of 2024. According to [Yonhap News Agency](#) reports, the 170-meter-long, 21-meter-wide destroyer is outfitted with radar-evading features and the most recent Aegis combat system, which is capable of both detecting and intercepting ballistic missiles. The vessel will also be armed with long-range ship-to-air guided missiles, ship-to-ground guided ballistic missiles, and a locally-designed advanced sonar system that can target enemy submarines and underwater weapons like torpedoes. The nation intends to begin introducing MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopters in 2024, and the destroyer will be equipped to accommodate them.