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## CHINA

### China-Russia Conduct Joint Air-Patrol

On the sidelines of the Quad meeting, China and Russia **conducted** a joint aerial strategic patrol over the Sea of Japan, East China Sea, and the western Pacific Ocean on 24 May. Reportedly, the patrol **included** Chinese H-6K Bomber and Russian TU-95MS Bomber, escorted by Chinese J-16 fighter jets carrying PL-10 close-range combat missiles and Russian SU-30SM fighter jets. As the military exercise coincided with the Quad Joint Leader's Summit, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, **termed** the exercise a "show of force" against Japan, adding that actions that heighten tensions in East Asia cannot be overlooked. Responding to the concerns expressed by the neighbouring countries, Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesman of China's Ministry of National Defense (MND), **remarked** in a press-briefing on 27 May, that the patrol was aimed at improving the interoperability between the air forces of the two countries and that it did not target any third party.

Notwithstanding the statements from China, speculations are rife within the international strategic community that the joint exercise was conducted to demonstrate to the Quad countries, China's and Russia's military preparedness because previously, such exercises were **held** in the latter half of the year. Further, the scheduling of exercise in the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has also triggered suspicion regarding China's intentions.

### Face-Off between Chinese and Australian Jets over South China Sea

Reportedly, on 26 May one of People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) fighter jets "dangerously intercepted" an Australian P-8 surveillance aircraft during its routine maritime surveillance activity. While the Australian Defence Ministry **claimed** that the aircraft was in the international

airspace, the Chinese sources **asserted** that it was flying over the South China Sea region that Beijing considers within its sovereign jurisdiction. According to Chinese media sources, Chinese analysts **added** that PLA's retaliation was probably triggered due to the P-8 aircraft's attempt to approach Chinese airspace and that Australian aircraft in the past have made dangerous approaches when Chinese vessels sailed in international waters. Incidentally, prior to Australia's accusations, the Canadian military also **claimed** Chinese warplanes "harassing" its pilots during United Nations (UN) patrols along the border with North Korea to monitor evasions of sanctions. With regard to both these allegations, China **charged** back by stating that the PLA was forced to intervene as the Australian and Canadian surveillance planes were conducting close-in reconnaissance and provocative manoeuvres in the South China Sea and East China Sea respectively.

### Chinese Armoured Vehicle at Plateau Regions

The PLA announced in late May that it **conducted** exercises at the Xinjiang Military Command in the Karakoram Mountain reaches, featuring a new type of armoured recovery vehicle. According to a *Global Times* report, these exercises were aimed at "realistic" combat training, where the drills involved rescue and recovery operations of missile-hit tanks by the latest armoured recovery vehicle. China used the Type 15 light tank in these drills and given the ongoing crisis between Ukraine and Russia, various types of realistic training have been incorporated in these drills.

## TAIWAN

### Taiwan scrambles planes after Chinese jets approach ADIZ

On 30 May, Taiwan **scrambled** its fighter jets and deployed air defence missile systems in response to Chinese military aircraft entering the Air Defence

Identification Zone (ADIZ) near Pratas Islands controlled by Taiwan. Reportedly, this is the [largest incursion](#) by Chinese fighter jets since January 2022. According to Taiwanese Defence Ministry claims, around thirty Chinese military aircraft entered the southwestern part of its ADIZ, of which twenty-two were fighter jets. The planes did not cross over into Taiwan's [airspace](#) as that would have been considered an act of hostility. The incursion came days after United States (US) President Joe Biden warned China against invading Taiwan. Incidentally, US officials were visiting Taiwan to discuss security issues with its leaders on the same day. Following this incident, Taiwan's President Tsai-Ing-wen declared that Taipei and Washington are exploring avenues of cooperation between the Taiwanese military and the US National Guard.

Earlier in May, Taiwanese media had reported another incident of Chinese incursion, whereby China had sent seventeen fighter jets. In recent years, frequent incursions by Chinese military aircraft into Taiwan's airspace have intensified tensions between China-Taiwan and the US. Further, they have also led Taipei to contemplate strengthening its military cooperation with the US.

### **Taiwan shifts its Fighter Jets to Penghu Islands**

In view of incessant and ever-increasing [intrusions](#) into its ADIZ by the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), Taiwan has reportedly stationed its Indigenous Defense Fighters (IDF) and Mirage 2000 jets at Penghu Islands in the Taiwan Strait and at Taitung City on its east coast. Besides conveying a message of alertness to the challenge of continuous violations of Taiwan's ADIZ, this deployment is also important in terms of military preparedness.

The deployment occurred in the backdrop of concerns that instead of targeting the main Taiwan Island, the PLA might strike

Taiwan's smaller islands that lie in the Taiwan Strait between Taiwan and China as they are much closer to the Chinese coast and the possibility of any concerted international response to such a move would be very low. Similarly, Taiwan is aware of the need to spruce up the security of its eastern coast. It has been pointed out that even though Taiwan's western coast faces the Chinese coast and hence is more vulnerable, Taiwan cannot be complacent about [the security of its mountainous eastern coast](#). Incidentally, Taiwanese parliamentarians from the Foreign and National Defense Committee visited the Zhihang Air Force Base in Taitung to inspect the Base in May. It has been noted that the PLAAF intrusions have generally taken place southwest of Taiwan's ADIZ. The south-eastern sector of the ADIZ has seen comparatively fewer intrusions.

## **JAPAN**

### **Japan's Defence Minister and US Defense Secretary meet at The Pentagon**

In early May, Japan's Minister of Defence Nobuo Kishi [met](#) his American counterpart Lloyd Austin at The Pentagon to [coordinate](#) the two countries' security strategies and discuss cooperation to manage China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. The two leaders discussed the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and conferred that Russia's aggression towards Ukraine constituted a threat to the rules-based order and could influence events in the Indo-Pacific region as well. Reportedly, at the meeting, Austin re-affirmed Washington's commitment to Japan's defence which includes extended deterrence backed by the US conventional and non-conventional weapons. Minister Kishi on his part conveyed Japan's resolve to boost its defence capabilities and [bolster](#) cooperation with the US on issues of mutual interest.

### **Japan boosts ties with Europe**

Japan has stepped up its engagement with Europe in recent months. On 12 May, the

28<sup>th</sup> Japan-EU Summit was held in Tokyo between the President of the European Council, Charles Michel and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. Developments in Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific region were discussed. The leaders agreed to provide coordinated political, financial, material and humanitarian support to Ukraine. Japan is closely cooperating with the G-7 to impose sanctions on Russia. With the goal of advancing cooperation, the [Japan-EU Digital Partnership](#) was launched during the summit. Through this partnership the countries are likely to cooperate on “Data Free Flow with Trust” in order to ease secure cross-border data flow, augmenting security and privacy. Earlier in May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Italy and the UK. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Japanese counterpart agreed in principle on a [defence cooperation pact](#). It is reported that when a reciprocal access agreement is signed, it would permit faster deployment of troops and joint training and disaster relief efforts.

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

### North Korea conducts missile tests amidst Covid outbreak

Just hours after North Korea confirmed its first case of coronavirus since the onset of the pandemic, Pyongyang fired three short-range missiles towards the sea on 12 May. Elaborating on the missile tests South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff informed in a statement that the missiles were [launched](#) from North Korea’s capital region and flew towards the water off the eastern coast. Accordingly, South Korea’s military boosted its readiness and surveillance while closely coordinating with the US on the same. The tests were also [detected](#) by Japan. Reportedly, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida instructed officials to ensure safety of the military vehicles in the area and prepare for possible emergencies. Later, the same month North Korea again [fired](#) three ballistic missiles a day after US President

Joe Biden’s completion of Asia trip where he had pledged to strengthen policy measures to deter Pyongyang.

### RoK and US strengthen Defence Cooperation

In the wake of a series of [missiles tests by North Korea](#) in May, South Korea and the US reiterated their defence cooperation. On 18 May, South Korea’s Minister of National Defence Lee Jong-sup [held](#) his first telephonic conversation with his US counterpart, Lloyd J. Austin since assuming office. The two leaders acknowledged the existing ‘firm alliance’ between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the US. Reportedly, the American Defense Secretary also reaffirmed Washington’s “airtight security commitment to the defence of the RoK.” Minister Lee Jong-sup on his part contended that the [security situation](#) in the Korean Peninsula has turned ‘very grave’ owing to North Korea’s missile tests. However, RoK is maintaining a strong defence posture to respond proactively to omni-directional security threats on the back of the firm alliance between the RoK and the US.

Meanwhile, the South Korean and American air forces also conducted their regular air force drill called “Korea Flying Training” (KFT) from 9 to 23 May. The Air Forces [used](#) F-35A and F-15K fighter jets as well as the E-737 “Peace Eye” airborne early warning and control system for the drill. Among the US assets involved, only those in South Korea took part in the exercise. Reportedly, the size of this year’s training was similar to those of previous years. According to the [Yonhap News Agency](#), the training was a scaled-down version of the large-scale ‘Max Thunder’ exercise that the two countries have conducted in the past with massive mobilization of assets and service members. Apparently, the mobilization of the F-35A warplanes was a demonstration of strength against North Korea.