

Bimonthly
Newsletter

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2019



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave,

Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi - 110010

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

Volume 2 Issue 1 January-February 2019

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EDITOR'S NOTE

2019 heralded various developments in the Korean peninsula, having significant impact on not just East Asia but around the world. Lately, inter-Korean relations seem to have improved well along different dimensions, mostly in enhancing confidence-building measures - by the removal of landmines, propaganda broadcasts, border guard posts and the reinstallation of a bilateral military hotline and ship-to-ship communication. They have also agreed to arrange various cultural and social events together - family reunions and inter-Korean liaison offices being a few instances. However, none of these hold relevance security-wise if North Korea and the United States cannot work out a deal on North Korea's complete denuclearisation. Failure of the Hanoi Summit has shown how difficult and long-drawn the process might be. Though the first US-DPRK summit in Singapore provided a good kick-start in negotiating North Korea's denuclearisation, the following summit was expected to be more outcome-oriented. As both countries are seeking to ensure security guarantees, finding a long-term settlement might witness a few complications and derailments. With all eyes now on the United States, the two Koreas as well as China, the way these countries maneuver their foreign and security strategy will be an interesting space to watch out for.

In the midst of rising tension - an increasingly assertive China, nuclear-armed North Korea and an unpredictable ally, the United States - Japan, which previously only maintained a Self Defence Force, is in the process of making military longstanding changes. Shinzo Abe is facing international scrutiny and domestic polarization over whether Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, that stipulates the military to a strict only self-defense policy, should be modified or not. In this regard, Dr. Brendon Cannon and Dr. Ash Rossiter's analysis of Japan's military development featured here is very topical.

The following issue also carries a thorough mapping of various military developments that took place over the past two months in the East Asia region. As the region is facing tumultuous times ahead, it remains to be seen how China and the United States can negotiate a better trade deal and how peace can possibly resume in the Korean peninsula.

We look forward to comments and suggestions from our readers.

Atmaja Gohain Baruah

EXPERT COMMENTARY

OFFENSIVE OR DEFENSIVE: THE DEBATE OVER JAPAN'S 'AIRCRAFT CARRIER' UPGRADE



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Japan's ongoing redirection towards a more muscular military posture has elicited considerable opprobrium from some of the country's neighbors in recent months, and most spectacularly from Beijing. In response to Japan's new five-year defense plan, published in December 2018, and which calls for, among other things, the upgrade of two existing helicopter carriers to enable them to launch jet fighters, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying spoke of Beijing's "strong dissatisfaction and opposition" and said China urges Japan "to adhere to a purely defensive policy".¹ In short, China is publicly denouncing Japan for acquiring what it considers to be offensive weapons.

Domestically, there has also been a small storm created by these developments. The lead editorial in late November 2018 by Japanese daily *Asahi Shimbun* called the move "unacceptable," since it represented in their eyes, "a clear break from Japan's strictly defensive postwar security policy."² A month later, an opinion piece by the same newspaper argued that Japan's new posture was proof that the country had moved "from 'shield' to 'shield and halberd'" and that its new defense policy showed an alarming rush to "militarization."³ Japanese government officials have been at great pains to make clear that these plans did not represent a shift away from the country's long-standing focus on defense. According to Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya, "The Izumo-class destroyers will continue to serve as multi-function, multi-purpose destroyers. This mode of operation falls within the realm of an exclusively defense-oriented policy."⁴

The current controversy over Japan's stated aim of converting the two Izumo-class destroyers into aircraft carriers focuses renewed attention on an old question: can weapons of war ever be considered purely offensive? Most commentary and analyses on the military posture of a state is typically a performance in gauging the offensive/defensive balance of its armed forces. This is more often than not carried out by thinking of equipment or capabilities as inherently defensive or offensive. Evaluating military posture this way is flawed on two counts. Firstly, it employs a false dichotomy to mark weapons out as one or the other. Secondly, it places too much attention on particular equipment or capabilities and infers from these alone whether the country has an offensive tilt or is more defensively minded.

1. "Useless and provocative": Japan will deploy its first post-war aircraft carriers but it's a deeply controversial move," AFP, 19 December 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2178610/useless-and-provocative-japan-getting-its-first-post-war>.
2. "EDITORIAL: Japan should draw the line at possessing an aircraft carrier," Asahi Shimbun, 30 November 2018, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201811300025.html>.
3. "EDITORIAL: New defense policy shows alarming rush to militarization," Asahi Shimbun, 19 December 2018, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201812190033.html>.
4. "Useless and provocative": Japan will deploy its first post-war aircraft carriers but it's a deeply controversial move," AFP, 19 December 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2178610/useless-and-provocative-japan-getting-its-first-post-war>.

We make the argument that weapons are only *practically* offensive when (a) their end-users – soldiers, sailors and aviators – develop and test doctrine to use them in an offensive manner, and (b) when the state possessing the weapon also acquires the corresponding requisite infrastructure in order to pursue an offensively orientated strategy. Neither criterion is met by recent developments in Japan, nor is this likely to change in foreseeable future. This is particularly the case with aircraft carriers.

Past qualitative assessments of offensive nature of certain land weapons cite mobility as a key characteristic. But attempts to apply such a principal to naval warfare fall down on the territorial differences between land and sea. Navies by their nature are mobile but they can engage in a range of aggressive and passive operations. Although, aircraft carriers perform a variety of roles and come in different sizes,⁵ in popular imagination, they serve as “airfields at sea,” chiefly supporting ground fights ashore or conducting continuous air campaigns in overseas territory. The association of the carrier with this power projection capability is why they are perceived as offensive weapons. But to be employed in this floating airbase role outside of a state’s territorial waters requires tremendous support architecture. There are also considerable training requirements for crews and aviators to operate in this way. Japan’s current plans to refit its two *Izumo*-class ships include neither the development nor testing of offensive doctrine. Nor has Japan signaled it will procure the necessary infrastructure – in particular support vessels – to make the pursuance of an offensively orientated strategy possible.

As helicopter-carrying destroyers, the two *Izumo*-class ships, the JS *Kaga* and the JS *Izumo*, were built for defensive operations: mainly for anti-submarine warfare, but they are also ideal command-and-control ships, and good for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). But both ships will need major overhauls, to include handling aviation fuel and weapons storage along with the Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) computer system that supports F35Bs.⁶ A thermoresistant coating, however, has already reportedly been applied to the aviation flight decks of both ships because of the extreme heat issued by the F-35B’s engine nozzle during landings and takeoffs.⁷

Additionally, the Phalanx close-in weapon system currently on the bows of both ships will need to be moved so as to maintain adequate fire to defend the ships but not impede flight operations. According to one report, Japan may install a ski ramp which would allow the F-35Bs to take off with heavier loads of fuel and weapons.⁸ However, should Japan eventually convert these ships to operate the F-35B, it does not automatically turn them from defensive to offensive weapons. Given their offensive deficiencies (the aircraft’s short range) as well as the lack of support architecture to support offensive deployments of any useful length, both aircraft and carrier vessel will be used in an air defense role, likely as part of Japan’s scheme to protect its Southwest Island chain.

In conclusion, even if Japan’s new aircraft carriers possess potential striking power abroad, this does not automatically mean that Japan has adopted a national military strategy that is any more offensive than it was before. Nor has it erected the necessary architecture to support offensive maneuvers. As Jack Levy wrote: “What is important [...] is not the characteristics of an individual weapon, but rather the aggregate impact of all weapons systems in a given arsenal.”⁹

5. Robert C. Rubel, “The Future of Aircraft Carriers,” *Naval War College Review* Vol. 64, No. 4 (2011), pp. 12-27.
6. Yasmin Tadjdeh, “F-35 Logistics System Faces Challenges,” *National Defense*, 08 March 2018, <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2018/3/8/f-35-logistics-system-faces-challenges>.
7. Franz Stefan-Gady, “Japan to Convert Izumo-Class Into F-35-Carrying Aircraft Carrier,” *The Diplomat*, 12 December 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/japan-to-convert-izumo-class-into-f-35-carrying-aircraft-carrier/>.
8. Kyle Mizokami, “Japan Clears Way for First Aircraft Carriers in 70 Years,” *Popular Mechanics*, 28 November 2018, <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/navy-ships/a25310407/japan-clears-way-for-first-aircraft-carriers-in-70-years/>.
9. Jack S. Levy, “The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28 (1984), p. 226.

MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

China eyeing to develop Sixth Generation Fighter Aircrafts

As per leading Chinese fighter jet specialist Wang Haifeng, the chief architect at Chengdu Aircraft Research and Design Institute, China will be developing its own sixth-generation fighter jets and this will come into being by 2035 or earlier. Mr. Wang was also involved in the development of the J-20 and J-10.

The sixth-generation fighter jet could include the ability to command drones, artificial intelligence and even higher stealth capability through aerodynamic design. New technologies, such as laser, adaptive engines, hypersonic weapons and swarm warfare, might also be part on the new aircraft, based on the PLAAF operational requirements.

“China’s tradition is to have one generation in service, a new one in development and a next-generation under study. Now that the J-20 is already in service, the development for a new aircraft is also underway,” the expert forecast. To achieve the same China has constructed a 6,620-ton, 17,000-cubic-meter FL-62 continuous transonic wind tunnel that will be critical in “shaping China’s future fighter jet.” China today is working with unambiguous focus to develop niche technologies to ensure military superiority. (Global Times 12 February 2019)

China will build four nuclear air carriers in a drive to catch up with US Navy

Beijing is expected to have six air craft carriers by 2035, of which four could be nuclear powered, equipped with electromagnetic aircraft launch catapults (EMLAS). This, as per known defence experts, is to close the gap with US military, the leading super power of military technology. These nuclear powered aircraft carriers are expected to join the PLAN by 2035, bringing the total number of carriers to at least six. As per defence experts, four are likely to get deployed while two may remain under maintenance. Operational deployment of these four aircraft carrier could be one in the Western Pacific, South China Sea, one in Indian Ocean Region and one may remain in Southern naval base in China.

China has one aircraft carrier Liaoning, currently in service which was commissioned in 2012, while the indigenous Type 001A, the first carrier built in the country, is still being tested. This has already undergone four sea trials and is likely to join PLAN by mid-2019. Beijing is keen to expand its aircraft carrier battle groups to fulfil its global naval ambitions and also to defend its growing overseas interests. Construction of its next conventional diesel-powered aircraft carrier, the Type 002 – the first equipped with the electromagnetic catapults began last year.

Wang Yunfei, a retired Chinese naval officer, commented that, as China expands its military might with new aircraft carriers, advanced fighter jets and other world-class weaponry, questions have been raised about whether the People’s Liberation Army can compete with other advanced forces. He pointed out that the size was only one determining factor in modern warfare, and hardware could only answer part of the question as China raced to catch up with leading powers like the US and its top allies. Doubling the number of our warships would not make our military twice as strong strategically, it is the people who use these weapons that count, and that essentially boils down to our level of training. President Xi Jinping also in a speech in December 2018 reminded the top brass that strengthening the training and preparation for war would be the top priorities for the PLA in 2019.

China’s Rocket Force conducts mock ICBM strike exercise

The People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) conducted a simulated intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) strike mission from an underground bunker against an imaginary enemy on 21 January 2019, as reported by CGTN. PLARF remains the core of China’s strategic deterrence, hence the survival training in closed

environments has become routine for the troops to ensure counterattack capability in case an unprecedented war. PLA missile technologies has witnessed multiple weapon upgrades, and today China's arsenal boasts of longer range, better accuracy and lethality and multiple warheads. Song Zhongping, China's defense expert told Global Times that the three generations of ICBMs includes DF-5, DF-31 and DF-41, all of which are capable of striking targets more than 10,000 kilometers away with CEP (Circular Error of Probability) of few dozen meters, carrying single or multiple thermonuclear warheads. DF-41 remains most advanced and potent ICBM, bedrock of deterrence.

China has a stated policy of no first use of nuclear weapon and will only use it for second strike or for counterattack. To ensure second strike and survival against the first wave of hostile nuclear strike, storage facilities of these strategic missiles assumes tremendous importance. To this effect, China has developed fortified underground bunkers at multiple locations. And it has honored the academician Qian Qihu with China's highest science and technology award for 2018, for his contribution towards fortifying these nuclear defense facilities.

China factor on the suspension of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty by the United States

On 2 February 2019, the US administration finally announced the suspension of the INF Treaty, signed with the Soviet Union in 1987. The Treaty used to prohibit the United States and Russia from retaining ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with a range of 500 and 5000 kilometers.¹ However, violation of the treaty by Russia led the United States to suspend it. Additionally, threat from China has also substantially influenced the suspension the treaty. President Donald Trump, while declaring the reason for suspension, stated "Unless Russia comes to us and China comes to us and says, 'let's really get smart and let's none of us develop those weapons.'"²

Particularly from the last two decades, the United States is apprehensive about Chinese missiles development. According to US officials, if China were a signatory, approximately 95 percent of its missile development would have violated the INF Treaty. Former Russian Security Council Secretary Andrey Kokoshin in an interview with leading Russian media *Sputnik*, argued, "Evidently, the main target of the United States in connection with their withdrawal from this treaty is China," wherein according to an US estimation, China has "set up a system of medium and short-ranges missiles of more than a thousand units aimed at the waters of the South China Sea and the East China Sea."³

Meanwhile reacting to US suspension of INF Treaty, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's affirmed, "China is opposed to the US withdrawal and urges the US and the Russia to properly resolve differences through constructive dialogue." With regards to whether China will enter into a new multilateral treaty on arms control in place of the INF Treaty, the Chinese spokesperson stated, "China opposes the multilateralization of this Treaty. What is imperative at the moment is to uphold and implement the existing treaty instead of creating a new one."⁴

¹ China's Missile Program and US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. 4 February 2019. *US-China Economic and Security Review Commission*. Washington, D.C.

² How China plays into Trump's decision to pull out of INF treaty with Russia. *The Washington Post*, 23 October, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/10/23/how-china-plays-into-trumps-decision-pull-out-inf-treaty-with-russia/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9321bea9cc4a.

³ Chinese Missiles are Behind US pullout from INF: Russian Ex-Security Official. *Sputnik*, 1 February, 2019, <https://sputniknews.com/world/201902011072022088-china-missiles-us-russia-inf/>

⁴ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Remarks on the US Suspending INF Treaty Obligations and Beginning Withdrawal Process. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, 2 February 2019, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/t1635268.shtml

Chinese Naval Ship in Multinational Exercise ‘AMAN 2019’

With respect to conducting military exercises with different countries, the Pakistan Navy hosted another multinational maritime exercise in Karachi from 8 to 12 February, 2019. More than 40 countries participated in the exercise, which include Australia, China, Japan, Italy, Turkey, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and the United States. The objective of this exercise, as Pakistan Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi deliberated, is to “quest for collaborative security” in the region which has immense strategic importance.⁵ The five day joint maritime exercise was conducted in two phases: the harbor phase and the sea phase. Meanwhile, speaking at the International Maritime Conference which was being held on the sidelines of the AMAN exercise, Pakistani Defence Minister, Mr. Pervez Khattak stated, “With the progress of CPEC and the Gwadar Port, maritime activities would increase manifold, especially in the western Indian Ocean. The responsibilities of Pakistan navy would also increase for maintaining a secure maritime environment for smooth flow of sea trade.”⁶ Moreover, Commander of the PLA Navy 998 Fleet, Shao Shuguang affirmed, “the exercise had strengthened mutual understanding and trust between the participating navies.”⁷

General Fang Fenghui receives Life Imprisonment

In a significant development, Fang Fenghui, former chief of the Central Military Commission’s Joint Staff Department, has been “sentenced to life in prison at a military court...for taking and giving bribes, as well as possessing a large amount of property with unidentified sources.” The media reported that the verdict “revoked his political rights” and “confiscated all personal property.”⁸ General Fang was purged from his post under corruption charges in August 2017 during the height of the Doklam military crisis. It has been speculated that even though the reported charges were corruption-related, he may have been actually removed because of his role during the crisis.

New Overseas Military Bases Possible

Speaking at a news conference held by the State Council Information Office, Lieutenant General He Lei, former vice-president of the PLA Academy of Military Science, remarked, “China will consider setting up new overseas support bases for its military if there are such needs.” He said this will depend on “whether a new base is needed to help China better fulfill missions given by the United Nations” and whether it has the approval “of the nation where a new base should be located.” If “these two preconditions” are met, building new overseas support bases are possible. He argued that since “the main role of a Chinese overseas base is to provide logistical support to Chinese units operating overseas, and not to field Chinese military forces in other countries, people should not over interpret this matter.” Separately, Senior Captain Zhang Junshe, a senior researcher at the PLA Naval Research Academy, also remarked at the press conference that the country needed “at least three carriers,” and that it would “gradually develop its carrier force in accordance with its road map.” As of now, the PLA Navy “has one

⁵ Press Release No. PR-PN-24/2019-ISPR. Available at: <https://ispr.gov.pk/press-release-detail.php?id=5192>

⁶ “Current maritime threats, emerging geo-strategic situation posing new challenges: Khattak”, *Radio Pakistan*, 11 February 2019, <http://www.radio.gov.pk/11-02-2019/current-maritime-threats-emerging-geo-strategic-situation-posing-new-challenges-khattak>

⁷ “Pakistan and China build friendship ties at AMAN-19 multinational naval exercise but no room for India on the guest list” *South China Morning Post*, 14 February 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/2186181/pakistan-and-china-build-friendship-ties-aman-19-multinational>

⁸ “Fang Fenghui Sentenced to Life in Prison,” *China Daily*, 20 February 2019, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201902/20/WS5c6d2ec4a3106c65c34ea687.html>

carrier in active service and is testing a second one, which is expected to soon be commissioned. A new carrier, larger than the previous two, is reportedly being built.”⁹

China Builds Advanced Warships for Pakistan

Recently, China State Shipbuilding Corp informed that it has started building an export “version of the Chinese Navy’s most advanced guided missile frigate.” However, it did not specify its type. The ship, under construction at Hudong-Zhonghua shipyard in Shanghai, “will be equipped with modern detection and weapon systems and will be capable of anti-ship, anti-submarine and air-defense operations.” As per the information released by the Pakistani Navy, “the ship’s class is Type 054AP, which means it is based on the Type 054A of the People’s Liberation Army Navy... Once constructed, the warship will be one of the largest and technologically advanced platforms of Pakistan’s Navy.” The Chinese media stated that it will “strengthen the country’s capability to respond to ... maintain peace and stability and the balance of power in the Indian Ocean region” ... and “support the Pakistani Navy’s initiative of securing sea lanes for international shipping by patrolling distant waters.” The media claimed the Type 054A to be the best frigate in service with the PLA Navy, which “has a fully loaded displacement of about 4,000 metric tons and is equipped with advanced radars and missiles. About 30 Type 054As are in service with the PLA Navy.” The media quoted Cao Weidong, a senior researcher at the PLA’s Naval Military Studies Research Institute, as saying, “in the past, the Pakistani Navy would ask its Chinese contractors to use Western radars or weapons on ships constructed by Chinese shipbuilders because it believed Western naval technologies were better than Chinese ones.” However, “it seems that all weapons and radars on the new ship will be Chinese products, which reflects our progress in the industry and the Pakistani Navy’s confidence in our technology and capability, Cao remarked. He was further quoted as saying, “I believe the reason they chose our type is that ours is one of the few that can carry out all of the air-defense, anti-ship and anti-submarine tasks.” The media also reported, “the ship is the largest and most powerful combat vessel China has ever exported ... Based on pictures circulating on the internet, the ship will have vertical launch cells that can fire Chinese HQ-16 air-defense missiles and other kinds of missiles. Vertical launch cells will bring flexibility to the user in terms of weapons portfolio, thus giving it a stronger fighting capability... The service of Type 054APs will double the combat power of the Pakistani Navy’s surface fleet.”¹⁰

The Yearly Round-Up

Giving the yearly round-up of activities and developments, the Ministry of National Defence informed that the PLA commissioned “a new type of tank, the type 15 lightweight tank.” The Ministry spokesperson informed that China had “conducted nearly 40 joint drills and training sessions with over 30 countries, deepening friendship and mutual trust with other militaries” in 2018. He also provided the data about China’s naval escort missions that “over the past 10 years, China has sent 31 fleets and over 26,000 officers and soldiers, escorting more than 6,600 Chinese and foreign ships and successfully rescuing or aiding over 70 ships.” These fleets evacuated “Chinese nationals from war zones”, participated in “the search for the missing flight MH370,” and supplied “fresh water to Maldives.”¹¹

⁹ Zhao Lei, “Additional Overseas PLA Bases ‘Possible,’” *China Daily*, 10 January 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/10/WS5c368814a3106c65c34e390b.html>

¹⁰ Zhao Lei, “Construction of Warship for Pakistan Underway”, *China Daily*, 2 January 2019, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/02/WS5c2c0e5aa310d91214051fba.html>.

¹¹ Xinhua, “China’s Type 15 Lightweight Tank Commissioned,” *China Daily*, 28 December 2018, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201812/28/WS5c2575daa310d91214051630.html> (3 March 2019).

Veteran Affairs

Recently, unrest among the PLA veterans made news. It seems that the Chinese government has focused on this issue considerably. Following the central government's policies, several local governments have initiated various policies. The recently set up Beijing Municipal Bureau of Veterans Affairs held "a job fair on Tuesday for employers and veterans in the capital" in which "more than 270 State-owned enterprises and private companies" participated. The fair offered around 1,000 jobs. Earlier, in October 2018, the municipal government had organized a similar job fair. Similarly, in November 2018, Zhejiang province "published a set of 23 guidelines to help veterans find jobs or start their own businesses," offering free vocational training, reservation in state-owned companies and encouraging government organizations "to employ more veterans", and government subsidies to "veterans who start a business or who hire at least three other military retirees for up to three years."¹² In December 2018, "a new set of criteria for assessing veterans for job placement" was introduced "putting more weight on military personnel's performance and contribution in war preparation and combat." The Ministry of Veterans Affairs and the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission jointly issued this regulation. Performance in combat, training level and war preparedness, length of service, living conditions of their service location, and military rank are some of the criteria.¹³ Later, in January 2019, it was reported that China's Ministry of Veterans Affairs had circulated a draft law on veterans' welfare to "relevant departments at the central and provincial governments and the military for opinions and will be open to the public for comments in due time".¹⁴ In fact, this ministry itself was established in April 2018. Its spokesperson informed that "local governments provided more than 80,000 former military officers with civilian jobs and helped over 400,000 retired soldiers resettle," and "China's 123 centrally-administered state-owned enterprises have mobilized and offered around 15,000 job positions to veterans" in 2018.¹⁵ Recently, in February 2019, a national service center "to provide better services and safeguard veteran's welfare" was set up under the newly formed ministry to help "veterans find jobs or start businesses, providing preferential treatment and assistance, as well as arranging visits to ex-servicemen."¹⁶

JAPAN

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivers the last policy speech of the Heisei period to the 198th Session of the Diet

On January 28 2019, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered the last policy speech of the Heisei period to the 198th Session of the Diet. Listing out the priorities of his administration, Abe stressed on addressing the economic challenges posed by a declining birth-rate and aging population and indicated strengthening the cycle of economic growth and distribution, making early childhood education free for children between the ages of three and five, reforming the social security system, increasing the consumption tax rate, dispelling the deflationary mind-set

¹² Zhai Lei, "Nation Helps Veterans Find Civilian Jobs," *China Daily*, 18 December 2018, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201812/18/WS5c1845c5a3107d4c3a001563.html> (Accessed 3 March 2019).

¹³ Xinhua, "China Modifies Criteria for Assessing Veterans for Job Placement," *China Daily*, 22 December 2018, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201812/22/WS5c1dcbdba3107d4c3a002402.html> (Accessed 3 March 2019).

¹⁴ Xinhua, "China to Solicit Public Opinions on Draft Law of Veterans' welfare," *China Daily*, 23 January 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/23/WS5c4804d9a3106c65c34e6115.html>

¹⁵ Xinhua, "China Introduces More Supportive Measures for Veterans," *China Daily*, 23 January 2017, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/23/WS5c486baaa3106c65c34e6227.html> (3 March 2019).

¹⁶ Xinhua, "China Unveils National Service Center for Veterans," *China Daily*, 26 February 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201902/26/WS5c74d67da3106c65c34eb787.html>

and called for focusing on the Fourth Industrial Revolution since artificial intelligence (AI), Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), and robotics will be renew the Japanese economy. At the global level, Prime Minister Abe emphasised the need for creating fair economic rules and said it is Japan's "mission is to expand an open and fair economic zone to the world". Japan in 2019 will work towards advancing trade negotiations with the US, reform the WTO, and finalise Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations, which will create a huge economic zone, an ambitious agreement.

On security and foreign policy matters, Abe said that the security environment surrounding Japan is becoming increasingly uncertain and more severe since the evolution of technology is fundamentally changing the paradigm of national security with competition in new domains such as cyberspace and outer space. Thus it is necessary to strengthen the foundation of Japan's national security under the policy of Proactive Contribution to Peace, together with the international community. He urged the Commissions on the Constitution of both houses of the Diet will deepen discussions and chart a clear path for the future of Japan. Furthering Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision, he underscored that "Japan-US alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy and security". In addition, he articulated that Japan-China relations will move from "competition to collaboration under the international standards" and "not being threats to each other" and "developing together a free and fair trade system". With Russia, he highlighted resolving the territorial issue and concluding a peace treaty. With North Korea, he prioritised abduction issue, normalisation of relations with North Korea, denuclearisation and seeking summit meeting with Chairman Kim Jong-un. Japan will be hosting TICAD VII and G20 Summit.¹⁷

Liberal Democratic Party's annual convention reflects on Constitutional revision

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's annual convention was hosted in Tokyo as Japan prepares for a nationwide local government elections and the Upper House election in 2019. Besides discussing key issues including economics, the annual convention deliberated on the goal of revising Japan's pacifist Constitution as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe restated his determination to amend Article 9 in order to clarify the status of the Self-Defence Forces (SDF). This is aimed at bringing to an end the academic debate over SDF's constitutionality. The objective is to generate public debate in shaping the amendment of the Constitution so that it conforms to the present challenges. Given the divisive nature of the issue, no specific timeframe was mentioned during the convention. LDP failed to offer its own proposal to the commissions on the Constitution in the two houses of the Diet during an extra parliamentary session in 2018. At present, the pro-constitutional reform parties enjoy two-thirds majorities in both the chambers of the Diet chambers. However, garnering a majority in the national referendum, which is a requirement to amend the constitution may prove difficult.¹⁸

Developments strengthening India-Japan Strategic Cooperation

The 10th India-Japan Strategic Dialogue was held on January 7 marking the beginning for a series of high-level bilateral exchanges in 2019 to further strengthen the Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj reaffirmed the shared universal values and held discussions on the expanding latitude of bilateral cooperation in areas, for instance regional connectivity, economic partnership, new and digital technologies, healthcare, renewable energy, defence cooperation, and

¹⁷ Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 198th Session of the Diet, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, January 28, 2019, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201801/_00003.html.

¹⁸ LDP OKs terse plan to revise Constitution as it seeks to avoid divisive issue ahead of coming elections KYODO, JIJI, February 10, 2019 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/02/10/national/politics-diplomacy/ldp-oks-terse-plan-revise-constitution-seeks-avoid-decisive-issues-ahead-coming-elections/#.XHkfYugzBIU>.

maritime security. In addition, both sides discussed several regional and global issues of common interest including prospects of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

The India-Japan Defence Industry Business Forum was held in February on side-lines of Aero India Show with the objective of promoting defence equipment and technology cooperation between the two countries. During the meeting, Commissioner Nobuaki Miyama of Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA) discussed with his Indian counterparts the opportunities and challenges of deepening India-Japan defence equipment and technology cooperation. Meanwhile, the Third India-Japan Cyber Dialogue was held in Tokyo on February 27 with the goal of realising an open, free, secure and stable cyber space. Both sides exchanged views on respective domestic cyber security strategies and policies and discussed bilateral cooperation in the field of international cooperation and capacity building.

Developments in China-Japan security cooperation

China-Japan held discussions regarding establishment of a direct hotline under the Maritime and Air Liaison Mechanism in Tokyo in February. The objective is to reinforce security cooperation based on the understanding reached by both sides to strengthen exchanges and communication between the defence departments, appropriately manage differences, and improve security and mutual trust so as to generate a favourable atmosphere for achieving new development of the China-Japan relationship in the new historical period and contribute to regional peace and stability. Since 2018, China and Japan have been actively engaging to strengthen cooperation and instituted the Maritime and Air Liaison Mechanism with the goal of averting miscalculation and guarding peace and stability in the East China Sea.¹⁹

Meanwhile, in early February, Japan has registered strong diplomatic protests with Chinese authorities for continued deployment of a drilling ship at the disputed East China Sea gas field calling it “unilateral development activity”. China has reportedly built 16 structures on the Chinese side of the proposed median line in the East China Sea.²⁰

Okinawa referendum and the issue of US base relocation

A referendum on national government’s preparation to relocate the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from Ginowan to Henoko was held in Okinawa. With a 52 per cent turnout, around 71 per cent of the voters opposed the planned relocation. According to 2011 data, Okinawa hosts 70 per cent of the US bases and almost half of the 47,000 US troops in Japan. Following the non-binding referendum, governor Denny Tamaki has requested for trilateral talks involving the US with the goal of reviewing the relocation plans. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abe has indicated that Tokyo will pursue the planned relocation despite the local opposition witnessed during the referendum since the government believes that the relocation is the “only solution” for addressing the challenges posed by the Futenma base without undermining the US-Japan alliance. The plan to relocate the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from Ginowan to Henoko is in discussion since 1996. Governor Tamaki argued that it is important to respect the decision of the local people and urged Prime Minister Abe to suspend the construction work.²¹

¹⁹ Li Jiayao, Defense Ministry’s Regular Press Conference on February, 28, Ministry of National Defence, February 28, 2019 http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2019-02/28/content_4836995.htm.

²⁰ Japan protests Chinese development work in East China Sea gas field, Kyodo, February 7, 2019 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/02/07/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-protests-chinese-development-work-east-china-sea-gas-field/#.xhobcogzbiu>.

²¹ Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki requests three-way talks with Tokyo and U.S. after Futenma ‘no’ vote, Kyodo, March 1, 2019 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/03/01/national/politics-diplomacy/okinawas-denny-tamaki-requests-three-way-talks-tokyo-us-henoko-plan-no-vote/#.XHofSogzBIU>.

Meanwhile, there are discussions on the revision of the guideline of the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The Ministry of Defence have said that discussions are ongoing with the US and Japanese foreign ministry concerning the status of responses in case of accidents caused by aircraft operated by American forces, the subject of who has authorization to enter regulated areas at the scenes of accidents, etc.²²

Developments in Japan-Russia relations

Prime Minister Abe met with President Putin in Moscow on January 21. Both leaders discussed the prospects for concluding a peace treaty based on the 1956 Joint Declaration of the Soviet Union and Japan but it has proved to be a “long and painstaking work ahead to create proper conditions for reaching mutually acceptable solutions”.²³ Prior to the January meeting, both leaders met in November and December 2018 in Singapore on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit and in Buenos Aires at the G20 summit. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s efforts to conclude a peace treaty with Russia has suffered since deep differences remain on both sides. Russia insists that Japan should recognise Moscow’s sovereignty over the four islands as the outcome of the Second World War but Japan argues that these islands were illegally taken over by Soviet Union after Japan’s surrender in 1945. Subsequently, in February during the Foreign Ministers meeting, Sergey Lavrov underscored that unlike Japan, Russia does not have any specific timeframe for agreeing on a peace treaty with Japan. Russia’s decision may also be shaped by its apprehensions that if the territories are returned, US military forces in Japan may gain a strategic advantage. In addition, Lavrov underlined that there may be a link between the contested Kuril Islands and US withdrawal from Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.²⁴

KOREAN PENINSULA

Second US-North Korea summit held in Hanoi

The second US-North Korea summit meeting hosted in Hanoi on 27-28 February ended without an agreement as sequencing of denuclearisation and easing of United Nations Security Council sanctions continued to remain the key hurdles during the negotiations between both sides. During the Hanoi meeting, there were discussions on contentious issues including dismantling of the Yongbyon reactor complex, listing of the weapons, facilities and fissile material North Korea has produced, lifting of sanctions in their entirety, and a peace declaration. Following the deadlock, President Trump stressed that his administration will continue to engage in constructive dialogue with the North Koreans and hoped that further testing of missiles will continue to remain suspended from the North Korean side. In addition, he underscored the willingness of the US along with other partners like South Korea and Japan to help Pyongyang economically if it complies with its commitment towards denuclearisation.²⁵

Regional stakeholders urged for reinforcing the progress made on Korean Peninsula matters in 2018, specially the negotiations following the Singapore summit in June. Chinese foreign ministry stressed that “dialogue and

²² Press Conference by the Defense Minister, February 8, 2019 <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/conference/2019/02/08a.html>.

²³ Press statements following talks with Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe, January 22, 2019, The Kremlin, Moscow <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59714>.

²⁴ Russia refuses to rush Japan peace treaty in blow to Abe, Kyodo, JIJI, Bloomberg, February 19, 2019 [HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/NEWS/2019/02/17/NATIONAL/POLITICS-DIPLOMACY/RUSSIA-REFUSES-RUSH-JAPAN-PEACE-TREATY-BLOW-ABE/#.XHOQ_4GZBIU](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/02/17/national/politics-diplomacy/russia-refuses-rush-japan-peace-treaty-blow-abe/#.XHOQ_4GZBIU).

²⁵ Press Conference With President Trump in Hanoi, Vietnam, US Department of State, February 28, 2019 <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2019/02/289776.htm>.

consultation is the only way out, and only by meeting each other half way can ensure steady progress on the right course”. China urged for the US and North Korea to “accommodate each other’s legitimate concerns and jointly promote denuclearisation and the establishment of a peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula”.²⁶ Before the Hanoi summit, Chairman Kim Jong-un visited China in January 2019 and discussed issues related to the developments in the Korean Peninsula. Meanwhile, South Korea extended its support for the US and North Korea to maintain momentum for dialogue and indicated that “the fact that President Trump unveiled his intentions to lift or alleviate the sanctions on North Korea in accordance with its denuclearisation measures shows that the discussions between North Korea and the United States have been raised to a new level”.²⁷ Japan has supported President Trump’s decision “not make any concession easily and at the same time continue constructive discussions and urge North Korea to take concrete actions”.²⁸

Developments in South Korea-Japan relations

Tensions escalated between South Korea and Japan following a demand made by National Assembly Speaker Moon Hee-sang when he asked for an apology from Japanese Emperor Akihito before his abdication for the atrocities committed by Imperial Japan. Meanwhile Japan has launched a strong diplomatic protest and urged for an apology and retraction of such comments from South Korea.²⁹ These developments came in the backdrop of growing tensions between two sides over a South Korean destroyer locking its fire-control radar multiple times on the P-1 patrol plane and the subsequent development of a low-altitude flight by a Japanese patrol plane during a rescue operation by a South Korean Navy ship. Japanese and South Korean officials met in Singapore in mid-January but failed to resolve the differences over the radar incident. Additionally, in January, Foreign Minister Taro Kono met his South Korean counterpart Kang Kyung-wha in Davos but both leaders failed to deescalate the growing tensions in the bilateral relations. Meanwhile, Japan has raised concerns over the decision to liquidate assets seized from Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Metal following a South Korean court ruling that it was responsible for compensating the Koreans forced to work during the War. Japan indicated that it may be forced to act in case the asset sale moves forward.

India-South Korea strengthen strategic cooperation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Seoul from February 21-22 to hold a bilateral summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Both leaders underscored the strategic convergence between India’s Act East Policy and Korea’s New Southern Policy, thus giving a strong platform to further deepen and strengthen India-South Korea Special Strategic Partnership. Both leaders expressed their desire to deepen bilateral cooperation in shaping an inclusive Indo-Pacific, underpinned by ASEAN’s centrality and the shared vision of People, Peace and Prosperity. Addressing the menace of terrorism, they emphasised the need to strengthen bilateral and international cooperation and coordination against terrorism. An MoU to this end has been concluded between India’s Home Ministry and

²⁶ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang’s Regular Press Conference on February 28, 2019, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1641847.shtml.

²⁷ Statement from Presidential Spokesperson on Second North Korea-U.S. Summit, CheongWaDae, February 28, 2019 <http://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Briefings/387>.

²⁸ Press Conference on the Summit Telephone Talk with President Trump of the United States, Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet, February 28, 2019 https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/actions/201902/_00039.html.

²⁹ Japan demands South Korean speaker retract call for Emperor’s apology to ‘comfort women’, Bloomberg, Kyodo, February 12, 2019 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/02/12/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-demands-south-korean-speaker-retract-call-emperors-apology-comfort-women/#.XHohaYgzbIV>.

the National Police Agency of Korea to bolster counter-terrorism cooperation. Identifying Korea as a valuable partner in India's economic transformation, Prime Minister Modi focused on the prospects of cooperation in the defence sector, for instance the addition of the K-9 "Vajra" artillery gun in the Indian Army. India and South Korea have decided to create a roadmap for defence technology and co-production with the involvement of Korean companies in defence industrial corridors³⁰ in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Prime Minister Modi has extended India's full cooperation for lasting peace in the Korean Peninsula and deeply appreciated President Moon Jae-in's efforts towards resolution of the denuclearisation issue in the Peninsula.

The US and South Korea reached a Special Measures Agreement

The US and South Korea have reached an agreement in principle on a new Special Measures Agreement that oversees each parties contributions to the upkeep of 28,500 U.S. forces in South Korea. Following several rounds of discussions, the US accepted South Korea's proposal to contribute less than US\$1 billion in 2019 as part of a one-year contract, as opposed to the previous five-year deal, which expired at the end of 2018 and required Seoul to pay about US\$ 848 million annually.³¹

³⁰ Translation of Press statement by Prime Minister during the visit of Republic of Korea, Ministry of External Affairs, February 22, 2019. https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/31078/Translation_of_Press_statement_by_Prime_Minister_during_the_visit_of_Republic_of_Korea_February_22_2019.

³¹ Gabriel Dominguez, Seoul, Washington agree 'in principle' to cost-sharing agreement, Jane's Defence Weekly, 06 February 2019 <https://www.janes.com/article/86184/seoul-washington-agree-in-principle-to-cost-sharing-agreement>.

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We appreciate the support of the Center Coordinator Dr Jagannath P Panda.

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

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