

## Takeaways from China's Taiwan Drills

### What is the issue?

The recently concluded military drills by People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Taiwan Strait reveal a great deal about the nature of military capabilities of China.

To know about US-China's tussle on Taiwan, click [here](#)

### What is the overview of China's capabilities?

- Chinese capabilities in three areas
  - Air assault capabilities
  - Missile capabilities
  - PLA's Joint Logistic Support Force (PLAJLSF)
- China's Eastern Theater Command (ETC) is responsible for planning and executing any potential invasion of Taiwan
- The Southern Theater Command (STC) is also in an advanced state of alert for the drills.

### How about China's air power?

- The Chinese have made substantial progress in the development and operation of rotary and fixed wing aircraft for dedicated assault missions against Taiwan.
- People's Liberation Army's latest helicopters are almost as advanced as their American variants.
- The comprehensive reorganisation of the PLA into group armies has enabled the Chinese to significantly operationalise their rotary wing aircraft.
- An aviation brigade is part of each of the PLAA's group armies and the group armies deployed in Xinjiang and Tibet.
- There are two specialised air assault brigades that are directly geared for an air assault mission against Taiwan.

### How about the missile strength of PLA?

- The PLA fired several long-range missiles of the **Dong-Feng (DF)** class to test whether the PLA's missile brigades could coordinate missile strikes and carry out post-attack battle damage assessment.
- The PLA likely gained information about Taiwan's missile defence capabilities covering the island's missile radar tracking capabilities.
- The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) which carried out tests likely assessed the rapidity and precision with which Taiwanese defences could be suppressed.

## What about the area of precision logistics?

- It is a core weakness of the PLA because without logistics, a full-scale invasion of Taiwan is impossible.
- China's amphibious assault capabilities are a key weakness and can only succeed if the PLA has a highly developed logistics support system.
- Relying heavily on its **BeiDou** Satellite Navigation System, the PLA is trying to ensure communications and coordination between spread out mobile units on the battlefield.
- Crucial factors for effective military mission across the Taiwan Strait:
  - Timely combat support centred on supplies
  - Reinforcements and repairs
  - Evacuation
  - Medical assistance to dispersed air and amphibious assault units
- The PLA is deficient in amphibious vessels, and has an inadequate number of personnel trained for complex logistics missions and military transport aircraft.

## What do the China's military drills signify?

- Beijing issued a new white paper on Taiwan in which it withdrew an earlier commitment not to deploy troops or base administrative personnel in Taiwan after reunification.
- The military drills conducted by the PRC were only a partial demonstration of the PLA's military prowess.
- The PLA has still some distance to traverse before it gains the confidence and the requisite proficiency for combined arms warfare that is crucial to the invasion of Taiwan.

*The phrase "salami slicing" (A divide-and-conquer tactic used to dominate opposition territory, piece by piece) has been used to describe the actions of both sides in this conflict.*

## References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/the-big-picture-takeaways-from-china-taiwan-drills/article65839446.ece>
2. <https://www.grid.news/story/global/2022/08/10/the-big-taiwan-question-as-china-issues-warnings-and-holds-military-drills-is-a-chinese-invasion-imminent/>