Justice mission 2025 of China – Military Drills around Taiwan

Mains: *GS II – International issues*

Why in News?

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted large-scale military exercises around Taiwan on December 29–30, 2025, codenamed "Justice Mission-2025."

What is the Justice mission 2025 of China?

- **Justice mission 2025** – These drills mark the second major exercise of the year and represent one of the most intense displays of military pressure on Taiwan to date.
- Officially framed as measures to safeguard China's sovereignty and national unity, the drills were also intended to warn against Taiwanese separatism and foreign interference.
- **Nature and Scope of "Justice Mission-2025"** – The Justice Mission-2025 exercise was notable for its scale, proximity, and operational objectives.
- According to China's Ministry of National Defence (MND), the drills focused on:
  - Comprehensive combat readiness
  - Blockade of key ports and territories
  - Achieving sea and air superiority
  - Three-dimensional deterrence involving land, sea, and air forces
- **Air Superiority and Tactical Signalling** – On the first day, the PLA conducted 130 air sorties, of which 90 crossed the Taiwan Strait's centreline—a tacit boundary that China has increasingly sought to normalise crossing.
- These sorties demonstrated China's intent to erode Taiwan's air defence comfort zone and assert military dominance in the strait.
- **Missile and Rocket Deterrence** – The second day focused on long-range rocket firing, with 10 rockets landing in Taiwan's contiguous zone, the closest such strikes have ever occurred.
- This move signals China's ability to conduct precision strikes and maritime denial operations, stopping short of direct territorial violation but pushing psychological and strategic limits.
- China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the mission as a deterrent against "separatist forces," reinforcing Beijing's long-standing claim that Taiwan is a breakaway province.

What is the Historical pattern of military drills around Taiwan?

- **Pelosi Visit and Strategic Shock, 2022**– Following U.S. Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, China conducted unprecedented drills involving:
  - Aircraft carrier groups
  - Nuclear submarines
  - Launch of 11 missiles into waters surrounding Taiwan
- This marked a turning point, with China using military exercises as strategic punishment for perceived political provocations.
- **Responses to Diplomatic Engagements, 2023**
  - **April 2023** – Drills followed Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with U.S. Speaker Kevin McCarthy.
  - **August 2023** – Smaller exercises were conducted after Vice President William Lai Ching-te's diplomatic tour of the Americas.
- **Electoral Outcomes and Sustained Pressure, 2024–25** – After William Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won Taiwan's presidential election, China conducted large-scale exercises in the East China Sea, signalling displeasure with pro-independence leadership.
- In April 2025, the "Strait Thunder–2025A" drill emphasised advancing, deterrence, closure, destruction, and paralysis—terms indicative of full-spectrum conflict planning.
- Justice Mission-2025 thus fits into a continuum of coercive diplomacy rather than being an isolated event.
- **Role of U.S.–**Taiwan Military Cooperation – A key trigger for Justice Mission-2025 appears to be the proposed $11-billion U.S. arms sale to Taiwan, announced under the Trump administration.
- The package—awaiting Congressional approval—includes:
  - Self-propelled howitzers
  - Advanced rocket launch systems
  - Missile platforms
- From China's perspective, such arms sales violate the One-China principle and embolden Taiwan's defence posture.
- The drills thus serve as a counter-signal, warning both Taipei and Washington against altering the military balance in the Taiwan Strait.

What is the Taiwan's Response?

- **Official Reaction** – Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council condemned the drills as "provocative and coercive military actions."
- Taiwan has continued to monitor PLA movements and maintain defensive readiness without direct escalation.
- **Military Modernisation** – Taiwan has proposed a multi-layered air defence system, known as the 'T-Dome,' aimed at countering missile and aerial threats.
- However, progress has been slow and uneven.
- **Internal Political Challenges** – Taiwan's defence preparedness is hampered by domestic political divisions:
  - The DPP, which supports stronger defence and safeguards sovereignty, controls the Executive Yuan.

    - The Legislative Yuan is dominated by the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People's Party (TPP).
- This split has led to legislative gridlock, with defence-related bills frequently stalled, limiting Taiwan's ability to rapidly upgrade its military infrastructure.

What are the responses of external actors?

- **United States** – The U.S. has publicly underplayed the drills, consistent with its approach of avoiding rhetorical escalation while continuing material support to Taiwan.
- However, the arms sale deal underscores Washington's commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act.
- **European Union** – The EU Commission expressed concern, noting that such military activities increase cross-strait tensions and threaten regional and international stability.
- **Japan** – Tensions were further heightened by comments from Japan's newly elected Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, who stated that a Chinese attack on Taiwan would constitute a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan.
- China condemned the remarks as interference in its internal affairs and demanded a retraction.
- Japan's position reflects growing recognition that Taiwan's security is closely linked to Japan's own maritime and strategic interests, particularly in the East China Sea.

What are the strategic objectives behind the drills?

- **Deterrence** – Signalling high costs for Taiwanese independence moves.
- **Normalisation** – Making frequent centreline crossings and near-zone strikes routine.
- **Testing Responses** – Gauging Taiwan's military readiness and external reactions.
- **Domestic Messaging** – Reinforcing nationalist credentials of the Chinese leadership.
- **Countering Foreign Influence** – Warning the U.S. and allies against deeper involvement.
- **Regional and Global Implications**
    - Increased militarisation of the Taiwan Strait
    - Risk of miscalculation or accidental escalation
    - Greater alignment among U.S. allies such as Japan
    - Challenges to freedom of navigation in a critical global trade route
    - For the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan remains a flashpoint where great-power competition intersects with regional security.

What lies ahead?

- China's Justice Mission-2025 military drills are not merely routine exercises but a strategic demonstration of coercive capability and intent.
- They reflect Beijing's determination to deter Taiwanese independence, counter foreign involvement, and reshape the status quo without triggering open conflict.
- At the same time, Taiwan's constrained political environment, increasing U.S. military support, and Japan's sharper rhetoric point to a more polarised and volatile regional order.

- Managing this tension without escalation will remain one of the most critical challenges for Indo-Pacific stability in the years ahead.

Reference

The Hindu| China’s Military Drill around Taiwan

