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CHINA

China conducts large-scale military exercises around Taiwan

Soon after Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives landed in Taiwan on 2 August, China conducted joint blockade, sea assault, land and air combat training in the maritime and the air space around Taiwan. According to a [Global Times](#) report, the exercises featured J-20 stealth fighter jets and DF-17 hypersonic missiles. The same day, Xinhua reported that military exercises would be conducted from 4 to 7 August in six major maritime areas and airspace around Taiwan. However, later the exercises were extended for two more days. On 3 August, the Eastern Theatre Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), declared in a press release that they had organized joint combat training exercises involving troops from the Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force and Logistic Support Force under the Eastern Theatre Command in the northern, south-western and south-eastern waters and airspace off Taiwan. As per the press release, the exercises focussed on joint blockade, sea target assault, strike on ground targets, and airspace control operation. The joint combat capabilities of the troops were tested in the military operations. Further reports from Xinhua published on 8 August, informed that the exercises involved testing the capabilities of using joint fires to strike land targets and striking long-range air targets. The air force deployed multiple types of warplanes, including early warning aircraft, bombers, jamming aircraft, fighter-bombers and fighter jets, to conduct drills on joint reconnaissance, airspace control operation, strikes on ground targets, and air

support and cover. Multiple bomber formations flew across the Taiwan Strait from north to south and from south to north, while several fighter jets conducted joint drills with destroyers and frigates. More importantly, the operation successfully tested the tactics of systems warfare under information-based conditions, and the capabilities to destroy crucial island targets with precision strikes. Finally, on 10 August, China concluded the military exercises and added that the PLA Eastern Theatre Command will continue to organise regular combat readiness patrols in the Taiwan Straits.

Responding to the military drills, the US termed Chinese actions as provocative and irresponsible while Japan called for immediate cancellation of the military drills. In a bid to put more pressure on China, the foreign ministers of the US, Australia and Japan also issued a joint statement on 7 August, urging China to halt military exercises. Taiwan, appearing alarmed, launched live-fire exercises on 9 August, but stated that the drills were not a response to Chinese activity.

China adopts a series of countermeasures after the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit

Angered by Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, Beijing cancelled key events with the US. In a press statement released on 5 August, the Chinese foreign ministry announced that as a countermeasure to Pelosi's visit China was cancelling the China-US Theatre Commanders' Talks, the China-US Defence Policy Coordination Talks (DPCT), the China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA), and suspending China-US cooperation on the repatriation of illegal immigrants, legal

assistance in criminal matters, transnational crimes, counter-narcotics cooperation and China-US talks on climate change. Addressing a [press conference](#) on 8 August, Chinese defence ministry spokesperson Wu Qian stated that “the current tensions across the Taiwan Strait has been a result of provocative acts single-handedly created by the US side, for which they must be held accountable and bear full responsibility.” The spokesperson stressed that these actions are a necessary warning against “the provocations made by the US and the Taiwan secessionist forces”, and is a legitimate defence of China’s national sovereignty. Besides cancelling and suspending key dialogue mechanisms, China also imposed [unspecified sanctions](#) against Nancy Pelosi.

JAPAN

Japan’s Defence Budget

Continuing the northward trend in its defence budget for straight 11 years, the Japanese defense ministry requested a [¥5.59 trillion yen](#) (\$40.4 billion) budget for FY 2023 on 31 August. The budget request will be examined by the finance ministry and finalised in December. Since Japan is currently revising key security and defence documents due to be released later this year, the defense ministry for now has just listed defence-related requests without revealing specific costs. Reports indicate that the final budget would stand around ¥6 trillion once the specific costs of items are decided. Domestic discussions concerning devoting 2 per cent of the GDP on defence underscore a general trend towards fundamentally reinforcing defence capabilities within the next five years.

Accordingly, the budget request is focussed on ‘stand-off defence capabilities’

including production of longer-range missiles; ‘comprehensive air and missile defense capabilities’; ‘unmanned asset defense capabilities’; ‘cross-domain operational capabilities’ encompassing space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic domains; ‘command and control and intelligence-related functions’; and ‘sustainability and resiliency’. As Japan aims to increase the range of its standoff missiles, the budget requested funds for production of an extended-range version of Type 12 Surface-to-Ship Missile in FY 2023. The defense ministry also requested funds in order to continue research on Hyper-Velocity Gliding Projectile and hypersonic missiles. Additionally, [reports](#) indicate that the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force intends to purchase six more F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters and six more F-35B Lightning multirole fighter aircraft. Besides, proposals have also been made to acquire six 1,920 tonne-class next-generation offshore patrol vessels with the goal of stepping up surveillance.

Chinese missiles in Japanese EEZ

As tensions rose following the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to the region and Chinese military exercises, the Japanese defense ministry [confirmed](#) on 4 August that [five ballistic missiles](#) landed in Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), making it the first time that Chinese missiles have fallen into Japan’s EEZ. During Pelosi’s visit to Japan, Prime Minister Kishida held a breakfast meeting with former where Prime Minister Kishida [underscored](#) that Tokyo and Washington ‘will continue to work closely together to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait’. He stressed that ‘China’s launch of ballistic missiles into the sea close to Japan, including its EEZ, is a serious

issue concerning Japan's security and the safety of Japanese people, and that Japan strongly condemned China and lodged a protest'. Meanwhile, China has argued that 'since China and Japan have not yet carried out maritime delimitation in relevant waters, China does not accept the notion of so-called Japanese EEZ'.

TAIWAN

Taiwan extends warm welcome to the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

The US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was warmly welcomed in Taiwan when she reached the island on 2 August. Taipei hailed the visit symbolically significant. President Tsai Ing-wen [presented the speaker](#) with the Order of Propitious Clouds with Special Grand Cordon while Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Wang Ting-yu stated that the visit had [special meaning](#) for Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific. He added that the visit marked a high point in Taiwan-US relations and reinforced the US credibility in the region. The visit was also seen as a [great foreign policy success](#) of President Tsai as legislators across party lines welcomed Speaker Pelosi's stopover. Addressing a [joint conference](#) with US Speaker Pelosi, President Tsai declared that she was committed to working with the US over security in the Taiwan Straits and the wider Indo-Pacific and will also enhance economic cooperation with the US. Speaker Pelosi on her part expressed that she was dedicated to supporting global peace and deepening economic cooperation with Taiwan.

Taiwan fires at Chinese drones

For the first time, the [Taiwanese military](#) perceiving threat, "fired flares at two

Chinese unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)" in Taiwan's Kinmen County's airspace on 3 August, a day after Pelosi's visit. The Kinmen Defense Command informed that "unidentified aircraft had been spotted ... at an altitude of about 2,000 meters," which was determined as UAVs. The UAVs had come to the county's airspace for the first time. In a separate development, the media reported that Taiwan signed "[a six-year contract](#)" worth NT\$1.36 billion (\$45.16 million) with the US "for parts and ammunition for Apache and Black Hawk helicopters." This contract will be valid from July 2022 to December 2028. However, the deal is not "thought to be related to the new weapons deal, but is designed to help the effectiveness of Taiwan's helicopters survive a Chinese blockade as long as possible."

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

North Korea fires cruise missiles into the West Sea

After a month-long lull in missile tests, Pyongyang on 17 August [ordered](#) the firing of two cruise missiles into the West Sea from Onchon, South Pyongyang province. The missile test coincided with Yoon Suk-yeol's 100th day in office, who had publicly expressed his willingness to provide economic aid to North Korea if Pyongyang started the denuclearisation process. Yoon also asserted that his government had no plans of nuclearisation and called for more diplomacy. This declaration came a day after the conclusion of the four-day long preliminary joint drill to prepare for US-South Korea's Ulchi Freedom Shield.

It is noteworthy that despite facing international sanctions, North Korea until August 2022, has carried out several missile

tests, including an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test. Consequently, there are speculations that Pyongyang is preparing for its first nuclear weapons test since 2017.

South Korea's Navy participates in US-led maritime drills

The Republic of Korea's (RoK) Navy participated in the [Pacific Vanguard Exercise](#) near Guam to enhance combined operational capabilities. The US-led multinational maritime exercise took place from 21 to 29 August, involving naval forces from South Korea, the US, Australia, Canada and Japan. According to the [Yonhap News Agency](#), the Korean Navy sent the 7,600-ton destroyer *Sejong the Great* and the 4,400-ton destroyer *Munmu the Great* to the exercise. These vessels participated in a variety of manoeuvres, including an anti-submarine operation and a simulated battle. Earlier, the South Korean Navy had taken part in the exercise in 2019. This year, the Navy participated in a [variety of maritime activities](#) during the exercise that included replenishment at sea, air warfare, live-fire missile exercises and anti-submarine warfare.

The same month, South Korea also organised the Ulchi Freedom Shield Exercises with the US to improve combat preparedness amidst a rising threat from North Korea's nuclear missile programme. The joint military drill which continued from 22 August to 1 September, was also their largest military exercise in the past five years. [Reportedly](#), this year's drill marked the two allies' return to full-scale field training after a halt in 2017. The participating navies rehearsed scenarios, such as responding to North Korea's attacks on key industrial facilities including an

airport, a semiconductor factory or a nuclear power plant. Fighter jets, warships, tanks, and possibly tens of thousands of soldiers were involved in the exercise. As a critical step towards conditions-based transfer of wartime operational control from Washington to Seoul, 13 combined field training programmes and a thorough operational capacity assessment were made. According to [The Korea Times](#), the Ministry of Defense's report to the National Assembly revealed that many of the actual combat conditions faced in Ukraine reflected in their training script.

It is noteworthy that the exercises took place just days after North Korea rejected an offer from South Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions gradually in exchange for a number of economic benefits.