

Possible Chinese Communist Party War Plan Against Taiwan

Kuo-Cheng Chang

Professor, Center for General Education, Taipei Medical University

Abstract

This article argues that a Chinese campaign against Taiwan would involve a mix of political, intelligence, economic, legal, and military tactics. China could seek to exploit societal divisions, coordinate internal and external actions, showcase force on offshore islands, and target Taiwan's semiconductor sector to undermine resistance and international support. The driving factor behind Beijing's strategy is Xi Jinping's increasing strategic confidence in China's military capabilities, especially advanced airpower and electronic warfare for blockades and port interdiction. Taiwan's current defense — focused on F-16 upgrades, UAVs, anti-ship missiles, reserves, and ground air defenses — is insufficient against the PLA's air superiority. Asymmetric weapons alone offer limited strategic value. Enhancing Taiwan's air-control with fifth-generation jets like the F-35, interoperable with U.S. forces, would improve deterrence, secure sea routes, raise invasion costs, and send a clear deterrent signal. Modernizing airpower and asymmetric defenses should work together as complementary strategies.

Keywords: Taiwan Strait, Coercion, Strategic Confidence, Air Superiority, A2/AD

I. Introduction

In recent years, there have been repeated reports that China could launch an attack on Taiwan before 2027. As early as 2021, then-U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Admiral Phil Davidson pointed out that China could invade Taiwan within six years.¹

1. Mallory Shelbourne, "Davidson: China Could Try to Take Control of Taiwan In 'Next Six Years'," March 9, 2021, *USNI News*, <<https://news.usni.org/2021/03/09/davidson-china-could-try-to-take-control-of-taiwan-in-next-six-years>>.

In 2025, U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Admiral Samuel J. Paparo stated that China's military exercises around Taiwan were not exercises, but rather "rehearsals" for a potential invasion.² In August 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that Xi Jinping had told him that China would not invade Taiwan during his presidency (i.e., before 2028), although such claims have not been confirmed by the Chinese side.

This article does not aim to discuss whether China will invade Taiwan or when it might do so, but rather argues that if China chooses to attack Taiwan, it will inevitably adopt a hybrid warfare strategy, simultaneously operating on multiple fronts — political, economic, diplomatic, and military — before and during the war to weaken Taiwan's resistance as quickly as possible. This strategy shares similarities with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but given Taiwan's unique geopolitical, social, and international environment, China is likely to employ more targeted and distinctive tactics, which may prove more effective.

This article suggests that China's "strategic confidence" is a major factor behind Xi's readiness to attack Taiwan: if he believes victory is attainable and risks are manageable, war could occur. Taiwan's recent military efforts have paid insufficient attention to air superiority, which could enhance China's confidence. Therefore, improving Taiwan's air strength would complement asymmetric warfare measures and send a clear signal of Taiwan's determination to deter conflict to its American partner.

II. China's Hybrid Warfare Tactics

1. Psychological Operations and Public Opinion Manipulation

Similar to Russian tactics in Ukraine, Beijing is expected to use psychological operations and public opinion manipulation to exploit divisions within Taiwan and weaken its unity before conflict. If Taiwan's military shows low morale or loyalty, China may step up intelligence efforts to neutralize critical defenses early. China's influence in Taiwan is enhanced by long-term cultivation of media, economic, and social networks.

2 "China's drills are invasion rehearsals: US admiral," May 22, 2025, *Taipei Times*, <<https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/05/22/2003837302>>.



Figure 1. Scenes of Devastation from the Russo-Ukrainian War

Source: Serhii Nuzhnenko, “Bucha. Faces of War,” March 1, 2022, *Wikipedia*, <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bucha._Faces_of_War._-_Ukraine_War_Photo_Exhibition_2023_\(52703004165\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bucha._Faces_of_War._-_Ukraine_War_Photo_Exhibition_2023_(52703004165).jpg)>.

Taiwan faces additional risks with Kinmen and Matsu, two outlying island archipelagos close to China’s coast and within strike range. China could blockade or seize these areas as initial targets, pressuring residents to surrender and leveraging their capitulation as a tool to further demoralize Taiwan’s society and resistance.

2. Economic Warfare

Unlike Russia’s destruction of Ukraine’s energy and infrastructure during the war, China could directly target Taiwan’s semiconductor industry. Beijing understands that wafer manufacturing is the lifeblood of Taiwan’s economy and a critical link in the global supply chain. If this production capacity is paralyzed, it would not only weaken Taiwan’s ability to sustain the war but also prompt some countries, whose

interests are harmed, to hope that China will stop its actions quickly. As a result, these countries might support or even accept China's ceasefire conditions, while reducing their support for Taiwan to accommodate China. Even if Xi were to destroy only part of Taiwan's semiconductor production capacity, it would severely impact the global economy and increase China's leverage to pressure other countries.

Although the "Silicon Shield" theory argues that Taiwan's core position in the global semiconductor supply chain enhances its strategic value and creates a deterrent effect against China, this argument lacks support in actual policy and international actions, casting doubt on its validity. If major actors such as the United States, the European Union, and Japan truly believe that Taiwan's wafer foundry capacity is indispensable to the global economy, they should take more proactive actions, such



Figure 2. Trump Meets with TSMC Chairman Che-Chia Wei at the White House

Source: Keoni Everington, "Taiwan's TSMC and Trump announce NT\$3.29 trillion additional investment in US," March 4, 2025, *Taiwan News*, <<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6050741>>.

as providing more advanced weapons, strengthening bilateral or multilateral military cooperation mechanisms, and deepening their security commitments to Taiwan through regular joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and military transfers. Such measures, if implemented clearly and frequently, would generate genuine deterrent effects.

However, the reality is that Western countries' military assistance to Taiwan remains largely limited to intermittent arms sales and vague political statements, failing to provide a stable strategic backing. For instance, while the United States has enacted the Taiwan Relations Act, which commits to arms sales to Taiwan, it has consistently maintained a vague stance and exercised high caution regarding higher-level military cooperation, such as joint military exercises and troop deployment guarantees. The European Union and Japan are even more conservative in their military support for Taiwan, offering little more than political statements of support and rarely engaging in sustained, effective military deployments, let alone making concrete commitments to defend Taiwan. Therefore, the core proposition of the "Silicon Shield" — that economic dependence naturally transforms into security guarantees — lacks sufficient empirical support.

The assumption underlying the Silicon Shield will ultimately amount to a one-sided projection of hope if it is not accompanied by corresponding security commitments and institutionalized cooperation. This not only underestimates the realist logic of state interest calculations in geopolitics but may also lead to Taiwan's excessive reliance on external assistance, thereby increasing the risk of strategic miscalculation.

3. Legal Warfare and Evacuation of Foreign Citizens

In terms of diplomacy and legal warfare, China's maneuvers will likely be more sophisticated than Russia's. Beijing possesses vast economic influence and international resources, enabling it to offer political commitments and economic incentives to specific countries before and during a conflict to secure their support. It can also use legal arguments to justify its military actions, thereby weakening the scope and intensity of international sanctions.

More aggressive measures may include using expatriates from various countries in Taiwan as bargaining chips, implying that if countries wish to evacuate their citizens safely, they must maintain neutrality in military and political matters, thereby creating public pressure within the opposing countries — a strategy that was not evident in the Russia-Ukraine war but would have greater room for maneuver in the Taiwan Strait scenario.

III. Xi Jinping's "Strategic Confidence"

China does not need to mobilize domestic politics to "reclaim" Taiwan, because "Taiwan is part of China" has long been China's established policy declaration, fundamentally differing from Russia's formal recognition of Ukraine's independence. What influences Xi's resolve to use force is his political confidence, not comparisons of U.S.-China power that are commonly made by outsiders. This is because the information he receives, including comparisons of the two sides' strengths and China's internal situation, is not the same as what those on the outside receive and use to make their judgments. The key to China's decision to attack Taiwan is a "calculation of strategic confidence," not a simple "sum and comparison of the capabilities of all parties." Whether to attack Taiwan depends on Beijing's belief in the controllability of the outcome — and this belief is often based on incomplete information, strategic miscalculations, and dynamic changes in the internal and external environment. Therefore, understanding China's subjective assessment of the "probability of success" is more predictive than simply calculating the number of missiles or total warship tonnage.

1. Air Superiority as the Main Source of Xi Jinping's "Strategic Confidence"

Numerous factors contribute to Xi's growing confidence in launching a military operation against Taiwan. On the military level, this confidence primarily stems from the significant disparity in air power across the Taiwan Strait. In recent years, as cross-Strait tensions have steadily intensified, much strategic analysis has focused on China's potential use of blockades, missile strikes, and psychological warfare against Taiwan. However, the most consequential transformation lies in the fact that the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) has established a systematized superiority in air combat capabilities over Taiwan.

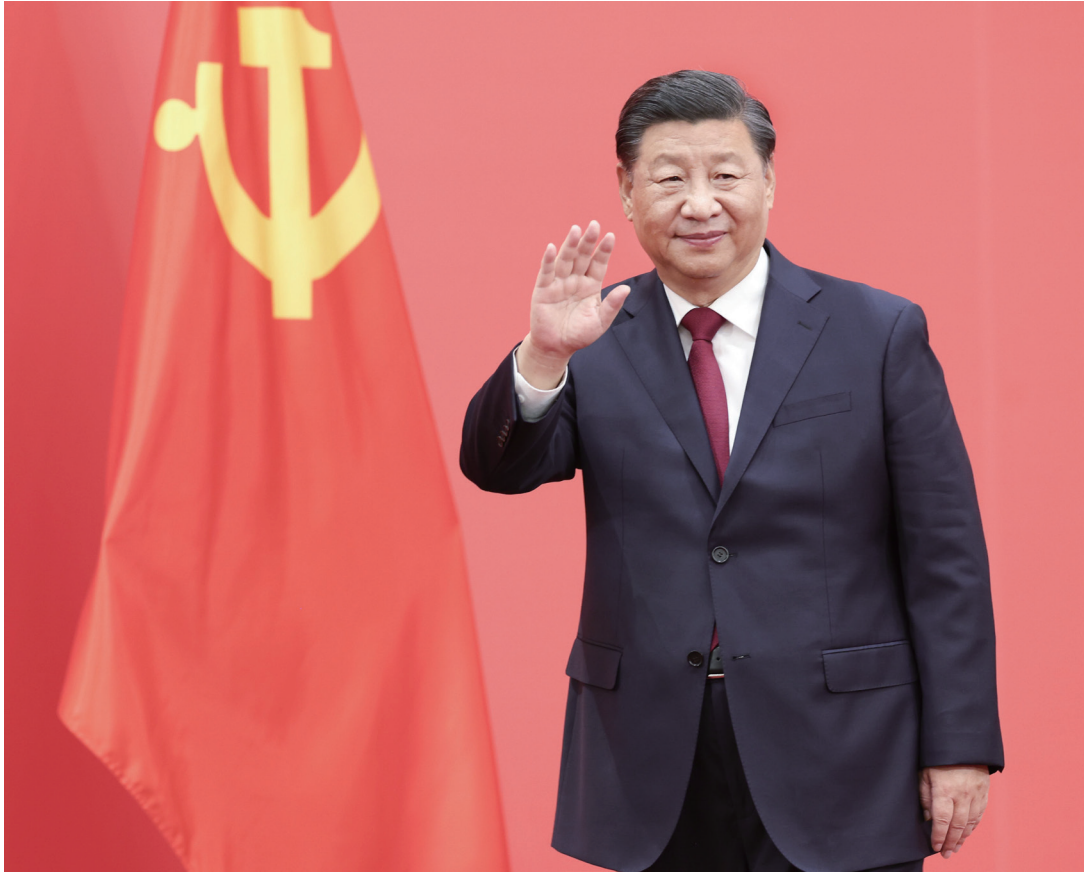


Figure 3. Chinese Leader Xi Jinping

Source: 〈習近平這些話引領奮進新征程〉, October 25, 2022, *People.cn*, <<http://politics.people.com.cn/BIG5/n1/2022/1025/c1001-32551337.html>>.

If Xi orders an attack against Taiwan, China would likely deploy a range of combat aircraft: J-20 stealth fighters for penetration, J-16 and J-10 for air superiority and ground attack, supported by KJ-500 early warning aircraft and Y-20 refueling aircraft. These forces would be coordinated through integrated command systems using satellites, drones, and radar. China's investment in air power could lead Xi to believe that the PLA can secure air dominance over the southeastern coastal areas, including Taiwan, before a major U.S. intervention.

In addition, the J-16D electronic warfare aircraft, together with a large arsenal of missiles such as the HQ-9, would further enable the disruption and destruction of



Figure 4. The Chinese J-20 Fighter Aircraft

Source: 〈殲-20 細節特徵展示五代機本色〉 January 9, 2017, *People.cn*, <<http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0109/c1011-29008555-8.html>>.

adversary radar and communications systems. If these capabilities are introduced into Taiwan's airspace and Taiwan is unable to reestablish air superiority, the dynamics of the conflict are likely to evolve in a manner that disadvantages Taiwan.

Following the establishment of air superiority over Taiwan, China would pose a serious threat to key components of Taiwan's "asymmetric warfare" preparations, including shore-based anti-ship missile systems, fast-attack missile boats, and reserve force mobilization facilities.

As an island without land borders or strategic depth, Taiwan cannot easily receive support or supplies if its ports and airports are blockaded. Air superiority by an adversary could cut off vital trade and military aid, making U.S. intervention difficult to achieve.

If Taiwan focuses solely on defending beachheads and urban areas while neglecting air superiority, it risks losing its semiconductor production, port operations,

and regional integration. This approach discourages international intervention and instead strengthens China's confidence in a rapid victory and its ability to block outside military aid.

2. Air Superiority Increases Xi Jinping's Confidence in a Successful Blockade of Taiwan

Traditionally, blockading Taiwan was considered impractical due to dense maritime traffic that made it difficult for PLA forces to distinguish and intercept vessels headed there. Submarine operations were risky, with high chances of misidentification and international repercussions, making a comprehensive blockade more political rhetoric than military reality.

Recently, improvements in PLA air capabilities — such as the J-16 and J-20 aircraft, as well as drones — have enabled China to maintain a continuous air presence around Taiwan, severely limiting Taiwan's anti-submarine warfare options. With air superiority, PLA submarines can adopt ambush tactics near major Taiwanese ports rather than tracking ships in open water. This approach is consistent with current Chinese military doctrine and reduces the risk of attacking neutral vessels while increasing blockade efficiency.

Combined aerial suppression, port denial, and submarine interdiction could form an effective joint operational strategy, turning the blockade of Taiwan from a theoretical threat into a serious strategic risk that could isolate Taiwan.

The PLA's advances in air power now make an amphibious landing on Taiwan feasible, both militarily and politically. Taiwan's air force mainly relies on F-16A/B combat aircraft upgraded to the V variant, with 66 new F-16Vs expected to be delivered by the end of 2026, along with 60 Mirage 2000s and 130 F-CK-1 Indigenous Defense Fighters. Despite modernization, Taiwan faces clear disadvantages in aircraft quantity and performance. The lack of a fifth-generation stealth fighter makes undermines Taiwan's ability to establish air superiority or to launch counterattacks. The lack of aerial refueling and electronic warfare capabilities also restricts sustained joint air operations.

Despite the comprehensive F-16 upgrade program, the limitations associated with aging airframes continue to affect operational effectiveness. The current force structure has led to strategic rationale including: “Avoiding procurement of new-generation aircraft prevents the escalation of an arms race with China,” and, “Provided the PLA cannot achieve a landing, Xi Jinping is unlikely to initiate hostilities.” In fact, this asymmetry in capabilities underpins Xi’s strategic confidence.

IV. The Strategic Value of the F-35: A Shield for Both Air and Maritime Operations

To date, Taiwan’s armed forces lack combat experience, with officers generally deficient in tactical competence and flexibility. The military bureaucracy is sluggish, organizational structures are rigid, logistical support is weak, and operational



Figure 5. The Taiwanese Army Fires a 105mm Gun

Source: 卓以立,〈十軍團重砲保養射擊 展現防衛能力〉, August 19, 2025, *Military News Agency*, <<https://mna.mnd.gov.tw/news/detail/?UserKey=14618867-3598-4f11-9787-7bfef57f4ee8>>.

concepts remain outdated. Against a modernized and numerically superior PLA, merely strengthening coastal defense, acquiring drones, or reinforcing the reserve force through “asymmetric warfare” tactics will not fundamentally alter the strategic balance. These measures also require extensive structural reform and long-term investment.

Among the military branches, the Republic of China Air Force has a notable technical foundation and operational capability. For Taiwan, acquiring new-generation fighter aircraft — such as the F-35, which is compatible with U.S. forces — may not significantly alter the cross-Strait power balance, but it is considered a practical short-term option to enhance essential capabilities and reduce the risk of losing air superiority if conflict arises. Such an acquisition could improve Taiwan’s defense capability and signal a closer strategic relationship with the United States, serving as a deterrent signal to Beijing.

If Taiwan were equipped with the F-35 aircraft, it could affect the PLA’s ability to achieve air superiority. The F-35’s low observability, excellent situational awareness, and advanced air combat capabilities would potentially constrain high-performance PLA aircraft, thus affecting China’s air superiority objectives. Maintaining partial air control in certain zones could provide Taiwan’s surface fleet and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft with increased operational flexibility. This would require PLA submarines to operate farther from Taiwan, reducing their ability to conduct close ambushes and affecting the efficiency of maritime blockade operations. Under such circumstances, Taiwan could maintain essential port traffic and supply lines, as well as retain the possibility to attempt breakout operations in the event of a blockade.

The F-35’s utility is not limited solely to air-to-air combat; it can also contribute to integrated support for surface operations, which are important for continuing ASW missions, breaking blockades, and sustaining port access. Without effective air cover, it would be challenging for Taiwan to counter joint sea-air blockade efforts.

Even if the United States provides military assistance to Taiwan, establishing air superiority is a prerequisite for effective military operations. If Taiwan loses control of

its airspace, it would be difficult for the U.S. to safely deploy naval and air assets near Taiwan and to conduct follow-on operations such as resupply, electronic warfare, or counter-blockade missions. Consequently, the absence of air superiority could impose significant tactical limitations on any potential intervention.

In this scenario, U.S. forces might rely on airbases in allied nations such as Japan, the Philippines, or northern Australia to deploy fifth-generation fighters for counteroffensive actions. The time required for preparation and coordination among multiple countries could put Taiwan at a strategic disadvantage.

Therefore, maintaining some degree of autonomous air superiority is considered significant for Taiwan, as it could delay an adversary's objectives long enough for possible allied reinforcements. Early procurement and operational integration of the F-35 could, according to some analyses, hinder the completion of adversary air campaigns and provide additional time for external assistance. The goal is not to



Figure 6. The F-35

Source: Lockheed Martin, "F-35 Lightning II," 2025, *Lockheed Martin*, <<https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us/products/f-35.html>>.

achieve numerical parity in aircraft, but to extend survivability and maneuver space for broader national defense strategies.

Since 2016, U.S. strategic research institutions have advised Taiwan to allocate more resources to “asymmetric capabilities,” such as drones, naval mines, mobile anti-ship missiles, and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). These systems are designed to delay landing and breakthrough operations during conflict, providing additional time for outside intervention.

However, this approach has certain limitations. Without air superiority, the effectiveness of asymmetric systems may be reduced, as they could be vulnerable to suppression if control of the air and sea is lost. While these systems may slow PLA advances, they do not guarantee sustained resistance.

Additionally, if an amphibious landing is unsuccessful, a blockade could become the primary strategy. Taiwan relies heavily on imports for energy, food, and critical materials. A prolonged blockade could place significant pressure on its economy and society. Asymmetric weapons may slow the pace of hostilities but may not break a blockade or alleviate longer-term coercion. Moreover, past U.S. recommendations have been fundamentally grounded in a logic of short-term defense, whereas Taiwan faces a long-term political and military standoff. Even if asymmetric capabilities are fully deployed by 2027 and deter a Chinese offensive at that point, it does not mean that China would cease its military preparations thereafter. Consequently, the development of credible air superiority capabilities — though time-consuming — represents the only durable solution.

In this context, the sale of F-35 fighters to Taiwan would, in effect, reduce the operational burden on the United States in the event that it becomes necessary to assist in Taiwan’s defense. It would amount to Taiwanese taxpayers sharing the cost of U.S. efforts to balance China in East Asia. More importantly, it would send the clearest and most potent signal to Beijing.

From a strategic perspective, Taiwan’s current defense posture — if it is interpreted by Beijing as a self-constraining and self-isolating defense plan —



Figure 7. Maritime Forces Take Part in a RIMPAC Exercise

Source: RIMPAC, “26 nations. One shared purpose,” July 29, 2022, *X*, <<https://x.com/RimofthePacific/status/1552923145878659072>>.

becomes the most effective enabler of China’s growing confidence in launching a military operation against Taiwan. It reinforces the PLA’s motivation to proceed and leads the Chinese leadership to underestimate the strategic planning capacity of Taiwan’s decision-makers.

National defense is not a system sustained solely by willpower or urban resistance lines. It must be designed holistically across multiple dimensions: geography, firepower, alliances, communication, and operational tempo. Taiwan’s current approach, however, risks making it difficult for allied forces to intervene meaningfully and fails to instill any sense of strategic deterrence in the adversary.

V. How China Plans for Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)

1. A2/AD Against the U.S.

Any Chinese military operation would consider the possibility of a U.S. intervention in its planning process. China’s Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)

strategy is designed to discourage or impede U.S. and allied forces from participating in a potential Taiwan-related conflict. This approach consists of a multifaceted and cross-domain strategic system, rather than relying on any single weapon or action. The strategy aims to control the battlespace early in a conflict, restrict or delay foreign forces from reaching the First Island Chain, and address the Taiwan situation before focusing on other external challenges.

China's A2/AD strategy is primarily structured around the following components:

- Long-Range Strike: Targeting U.S. and Allied Bases

Dong Feng (DF) missile series (DF-21D, DF-26): Dubbed “carrier killers,” these ballistic missiles are increasingly capable of high mobility and precision targeting. They threaten key U.S. bases beyond the First Island Chain (e.g., Guam) and limit the operational time and space for U.S. aircraft carriers approaching Taiwan.

Cruise and air-launched missiles: Deployed on strategic bombers and submarines, they can strike U.S. and Japanese bases such as Kadena, Okinawa, and Iwakuni.

- Electronic and Space-Based Disruption: Seizing the Advantage in Perception

GPS and satellite jamming: Employing ground-based, airborne, and space-based systems to degrade U.S. navigation and battlefield connectivity.

Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT): China has demonstrated the ability to destroy low-earth orbit satellites, potentially degrading U.S. intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and communications (C4ISR) capabilities in the early stages of conflict.

- Cyberattacks: Targeting U.S. military bases, defense contractors, and allied infrastructure to paralyze critical facilities and intelligence-sharing networks.
- Submarines and Naval Mines: Denying Access to Key Maritime and Aerial Routes



Figure 8. The DF-21D Missile

Source: IceUnshattered, “The DF-21D missile as seen after the military parade on 3 September 2015,” September 3, 2015, *Wikipedia*, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dongfeng_\(missile\)#/media/File:Dongfeng-21D.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dongfeng_(missile)#/media/File:Dongfeng-21D.JPG)>.

Submarine deployment: PLA submarines frequently operate near Taiwan and would likely ambush carrier strike groups and logistical convoys during wartime.

Mine warfare: Rapid minelaying operations could blockade ports and sea lanes around Taiwan, significantly complicating U.S. amphibious operations.

- Air Superiority and Missile Saturation Strikes: Suppress Taiwan, Then Threaten Reinforcement

J-16s, J-20s, and drone swarms: These are aimed at disabling Taiwan’s air force early, while suppressing air defense radars and missile systems.

Rocket Force Saturation Attacks: Employing large volumes of short- and medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles to target Taiwanese airfields, command centers, and logistics nodes. Additionally, attacks on Taiwan's critical industries seek to reduce its role in the global supply chain.

Historically, since World War II, the U.S. military has never — and effectively cannot — conducted successful ground or naval operations without first securing air superiority. From the Korean War and Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan, air dominance has been a prerequisite for all major U.S. campaigns. Without air control, the projection of force and logistical support become operationally unfeasible. This has profound implications for both Taiwan and its potential allies: unless Taiwan can secure even minimal airspace control, U.S. intervention will be practically impossible.

The 2025 Israel–Iran conflict further illustrates this point: the U.S. deployed B-2 bombers only after Israel had already secured localized air superiority over Iranian territory, thus enabling limited American involvement.

2. A2/AD Against Japan

China's anti-access efforts also include the active development of aircraft carrier strike groups. While these groups remain less capable than their U.S. counterparts, they have nonetheless emerged as a strategic force that the U.S. can no longer ignore. In the future, the U.S. will be compelled to allocate additional resources, including more carriers, to deter or contain China's naval power projection.

Although China's carrier strike groups still lack combat-tested credibility, they already pose a serious challenge to regional navies such as Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force — particularly beyond the protective range of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force's fighters. Japan's outer islands face potential risks due to their geographic location. Consequently, the presence of Chinese carrier power may act as a strategic factor influencing Japan's decisions regarding intervention or engagement.

If conflict breaks out over Taiwan, Japan is likely to be a central partner for U.S. military and logistical support. Yet, Japan faces challenges less about capability and

more about its domestic political response to Chinese pressure, despite its strong maritime forces and close security ties with Washington.

Japan comprises over 6,800 islands, more than 400 of which are inhabited. The Nansei Islands — from Kyushu to Yonaguni — form a thousand-kilometer-long “maritime chain.” Most of these islands lack hardened air defense facilities, airports, logistical bases, or garrisoned troops. Japan’s Ground Self-Defense Forces have placed anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles on islands like Ishigaki and Yonaguni, but these measures are limited and mainly defensive against potential Chinese saturation attacks.

Should China launch a surprise assault on one or two of Japan’s outer islands using its carrier groups in coordination with long-range ballistic and cruise missiles (e.g., DF-17, YJ-18), it would induce considerable public panic. Given the current



Figure 9. The Chinese Aircraft Carrier Liaoning

Source: 日本防衛省, “A PLAN Shenyang J-15 carrier-based fighter aircraft is taking off from Chinese aircraft carrier PLANS Liaoning (CV-16),” May 11, 2022, *Wikipedia*, <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_PLAN_Shenyang_J-15_carrier-based_fighter_aircraft_is_taking_off_from_Chinese_aircraft_carrier_PLANS_Liaoning_\(CV-16\)_20220511.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_PLAN_Shenyang_J-15_carrier-based_fighter_aircraft_is_taking_off_from_Chinese_aircraft_carrier_PLANS_Liaoning_(CV-16)_20220511.jpg)>.

distribution of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, it would be difficult to mount a rapid counterstrike or reinforcement operation. This gives China strategic options to seize islands quickly and threaten innocent civilians. With over 4,000 islands from Kyushu to Okinawa, the safety of Japanese citizens living on these islands would compel Tokyo to factor Chinese intimidation into its decision-making.

If China succeeds in signaling that any Japanese assistance to Taiwan will provoke retaliation against Japan's outer islands, this could trigger enormous domestic political pressure in Japan. Japanese voters are highly sensitive to threats against national territory and civilian safety. Even a limited Chinese strike signal directed at Japan's peripheral islands could cause Tokyo to adopt a more cautious position regarding whether to support U.S. military operations.

As a parliamentary democracy, Japan's capacity to make rapid military and diplomatic decisions is heavily dependent on support from the Diet. Under certain circumstances, this institutional structure may significantly hinder swift action:

- (1) Fragile majority governments: When the ruling coalition has a narrow majority, advancing decisions related to military deployment may be challenging due to political constraints.
- (2) Minority or ad hoc coalition governments: These governments often require ongoing negotiation and compromise with opposition parties, which can result in delays or obstacles for strategic policymaking.
- (3) Responses from local governments and public opinion: Governors and elected officials in regions such as Okinawa, Ishigaki, and Yonaguni may oppose decisions that could increase risks for their constituencies due to involvement in Taiwan-related issues.

In these situations, Japan may choose to protect its citizens rather than allow U.S. bases to aid Taiwan. China could leverage this by threatening Japanese islands, discouraging full support for Taiwan — a tactic aligning with its wider A2/AD strategy.

VI. Conclusion

In summary, analyses suggest that China's potential approach to military action regarding Taiwan may incorporate aspects observed in Russia's actions in Ukraine, such as pre-conflict infiltration, targeted strikes, infrastructure disruption, and influence operations. It is also anticipated that there would be a focused effort on areas specific to Taiwan, including the semiconductor industry, legal strategies, and diplomatic engagements involving hostages. This approach encompasses multiple domains — psychological, economic, and international — and extends beyond conventional military engagement.

A central factor influencing Xi's decision-making is China's "strategic confidence." Meanwhile, Taiwan's recent defense planning has paid insufficient attention to securing air superiority. Should Taiwan lose control of its airspace, its existing air defense systems would be highly exposed to stealth aircraft, drone strikes, and electronic disruption — potentially being neutralized before any external assistance arrives. Thereafter, coastal defenses and anti-landing deployments, lacking air cover, would likely be dismantled under sustained aerial suppression. Without air superiority, Taiwan's key military sites and units would be exposed to precise PLA Air Force strikes, making ground defense untenable.

Taiwan's pronounced deficiency in airpower is likely to strengthen Xi's assessment of the feasibility of a military invasion against Taiwan and may reinforce his resolve. Therefore, improving Taiwan's air superiority aligns with and strengthens the principles of asymmetric warfare. For the United States, assisting Taiwan in building and sustaining credible air superiority capabilities would represent an unmistakable signal of resolve — demonstrating a firm commitment to deter war. This could deter the CCP and help prevent conflict.