

JANUARY 2024

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A Report of the CSIS China Power Project

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# Contents

Executive Summary	1
<i>Background</i>	1
<i>The Survey</i>	2
<i>Key Takeaways</i>	2
China’s Capabilities	5
<i>Assessing China’s Capabilities</i>	5
<i>The Efficacy of a Blockade</i>	7
<i>Significance of Xi’s 2027 Modernization Deadline</i>	7
Factors Affecting Beijing’s Use of Force	9
<i>Beijing’s Varying Strategic Objectives</i>	9
<i>Ability and Willingness to Fight</i>	13
U.S. and Allied Approaches	16
<i>Confidence in U.S. Intervention</i>	16
<i>Confidence in Intervention by U.S. Allies and Partners</i>	18
Implications of Geopolitical Developments	21
<i>The 2024 Taiwan Presidential Election</i>	21
<i>Likelihood of a 2024 Taiwan Strait Crisis</i>	24
<i>Implications of a Chinese Economic Slowdown</i>	26
About the Authors	28
Appendix A: Survey Participants	30
Appendix B: The Survey	31
<i>Definitions 定義</i>	32
<i>China’s Capabilities 中國的能力</i>	32
<i>Factors Affecting Beijing’s Use of Force 影響北京使用武力的因素</i>	34
<i>U.S. and Allied Approaches 美國及其盟國的做法</i>	38
<i>Implications of Geopolitical Developments 地緣政治發展的影響</i>	41
Endnotes	45

# Executive Summary

## Background

The year 2024 will be crucial for Taiwan, cross-strait relations, and U.S.-Taiwan relations. On January 13, 2024, Taiwan elected its current vice president William Lai to be its next president. When he is inaugurated in May, he will usher in an unprecedented third consecutive term of Democratic Progress Party (DPP) rule. Beijing is opposed to the DPP and the current Tsai Ing-wen administration. China has spent the last eight years refusing to engage with the Tsai administration, and it has sought to isolate and punish the DPP-led government at every opportunity. Beijing is even more concerned about William Lai, viewing him as a more ardent supporter of independence than Tsai Ing-wen. His election—and how Beijing responds—will have immense implications for the future of security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

The Taiwan elections took place against the backdrop of mounting cross-strait tensions. In the wake of then U.S. speaker of the house Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, China provoked the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis when it held unprecedented military exercises around Taiwan and canceled or suspended eight key avenues of U.S.-China dialogue.<sup>2</sup> Beijing again escalated against Taiwan in April 2023 with major military exercises and significant diplomatic measures after president Tsai Ing-wen transited through the United States and met with then U.S. speaker of the house Kevin McCarthy.<sup>3</sup>

Taiwan has been at the epicenter of worsening U.S.-China tensions. Chinese president Xi Jinping and other senior People's Republic of China (PRC) officials have repeatedly stated that “the Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests” and have urged Washington to “honor its

commitment of not supporting ‘Taiwan independence,’ stop arming Taiwan, and support China’s peaceful unification.’<sup>4</sup>

Around mid-2023, Beijing and Washington began taking steps to stabilize the relationship. Several meetings between senior U.S. and Chinese officials culminated in a summit between U.S. president Joe Biden and Chinese president Xi in San Francisco in November 2023, where both countries agreed on measures to restart areas of cooperation and dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

The stabilizing effects of these efforts are fragile. Beijing’s response to the January 2024 Taiwan elections—and the course of the U.S. elections in November 2024—threaten to spark a new downward spiral.

As the world looks to 2024 and beyond, there are critical questions about what kind of actions China might take to coerce Taiwan or force unification. Might China quarantine or blockade Taiwan, or would Beijing invade? Under what conditions would Beijing take various actions, and how capable is China? What approach should Taiwan, the United States, and its allies pursue? How do certain geopolitical developments change Beijing’s calculus?

## The Survey

To make sense of these questions and better understand key trends in China’s approach to Taiwan, the CSIS China Power Project conducted a survey of 52 leading U.S. experts and 35 leading experts from Taiwan from November 28, 2023, to December 15, 2023. All U.S. participants either have substantial experience serving in the U.S. government or are experts from academia or think tanks who have testified before the U.S. Congress. In selecting Taiwan participants, the CSIS China Power Project partnered with the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR), a think tank in Taiwan, to identify and invite leading Taiwan scholars. Respondents covered the political spectrum, with major U.S. and Taiwan political parties represented. For a list of respondents, see Appendix A.

The survey is divided into four key areas: (1) China’s capabilities, (2) key factors shaping China’s use of force, (3) U.S. and allied approaches, and (4) implications of geopolitical developments. For the full text of the survey, see Appendix B.

## Key Takeaways

The results of this survey provide valuable insights into areas of convergence and divergence in how U.S. and Taiwan experts evaluate China’s approach to Taiwan. Key takeaways are summarized below.

### **QUARANTINE OR BLOCKADE MORE LIKELY THAN INVASION IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS**

- Most U.S. and Taiwan experts agreed that China currently has the capabilities to execute a law enforcement-led quarantine and a People’s Liberation Army (PLA)-led blockade of Taiwan. However, most did not think China could effectively execute an invasion.

- Nearly half of the experts from Taiwan believed a quarantine is a flexible option (i.e., Beijing could quarantine Taiwan to increase significant pressure on the island and to prepare for an imminent blockade or invasion). In contrast, most U.S. experts believed Beijing would only execute a quarantine if it wanted to increase pressure on the island but did not want a kinetic conflict.
- Most respondents believed a blockade alone would not be sufficient to force Taiwan's unification. A third of the experts from Taiwan worried a blockade would likely escalate into an invasion.
- Surveyed experts believed that in the next five years, if China seeks to coerce Taiwan, Beijing's most likely course of action would be a law enforcement-led quarantine of Taiwan.
- If China's goal is to force immediate unification in the next five years, a PLA-led highly kinetic joint blockade was deemed the most likely scenario, with 80 percent of experts assessing it to be likely.
- Most U.S. and Taiwan experts did not believe Taiwan could resist a PRC blockade for more than three months if there is no or very limited U.S. intervention.
- Only 13 percent of U.S. experts and 6 percent of Taiwan experts believed China's 2027 military modernization goals would impact Beijing's decision to quarantine, blockade, or invade Taiwan.

#### **LOWER OVERALL TAIWAN THREAT PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA**

- Compared to U.S. experts, Taiwan experts viewed China as less militarily capable of executing a quarantine, blockade, or invasion of Taiwan.
- Whereas 71 percent of U.S. experts believed China would be willing to sustain a high-intensity conflict for at least one year, only 51 percent of surveyed experts from Taiwan believed China could sustain such kinetic operations for more than one year.
- About 44 percent of U.S. experts believed China would be willing to detonate nuclear weapons against U.S. or coalition forces in a Taiwan conflict; only 11 percent of Taiwan experts thought the same.

#### **LOWER TAIWAN CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED STATES OR U.S. ALLIES AND PARTNERS**

- Virtually all U.S. experts were completely confident or moderately confident the United States would intervene militarily to defend Taiwan from a PLA invasion. Both U.S. and Taiwan experts were confident of U.S. intervention at the high end of conflict (e.g., a blockade or invasion) but were not as confident of U.S. intervention in the event of a quarantine.
- Compared to U.S. experts, Taiwan experts were less confident in U.S. intervention and had even lower confidence that U.S. allies and partners would defend Taiwan. A slim majority of Taiwan experts were confident U.S. allies and partners would intervene militarily in only two out of seven scenarios: if China invaded or if China blockaded Taiwan after a failed invasion.



## **DYNAMICS AFTER TAIWAN ELECTIONS**

- Most respondents did not believe recent efforts to manage U.S.-China tensions have changed the likelihood of a Taiwan Strait crisis. About 67 percent of U.S. experts and 57 percent of Taiwan experts believed a Taiwan Strait crisis is likely in 2024.
- If Chinese leaders perceive the Taiwan presidential election results to be unfavorable, only about 40 percent of experts believed Beijing would wait to act based on the new president's policies. Over 50 percent of U.S. and Taiwan experts believed China would not wait, but they disagreed over whether China's most escalatory actions would come before or after the president's inauguration in May 2024.
- Nearly half of the experts from Taiwan believed if Beijing views the election results as unfavorable, the most escalatory option China would take against Taiwan before the end of 2024 would be coercive nonmilitary action. In contrast, most U.S. experts worried about the potential of a large-scale military exercise encircling Taiwan, but few thought China would quarantine, blockade, or invade the island.
- Over 80 percent of U.S. and Taiwan experts believed that if Beijing perceives the Taiwan election results as favorable to China, Beijing would seek to improve cross-strait ties. More Taiwan experts assessed that Beijing would shift its approach unilaterally, whereas more U.S. experts believed Beijing would act only after the new Taiwan leader showcases goodwill toward Beijing.
- Most U.S. and Taiwan experts believed a prolonged PRC economic downturn would either decrease or not change the likelihood of PRC use of force against Taiwan.

# China's Capabilities

Beijing's approach to Taiwan will be driven, above all else, by political and strategic factors, but Chinese decisionmakers will have to take into consideration the capabilities at their disposal.

## Assessing China's Capabilities

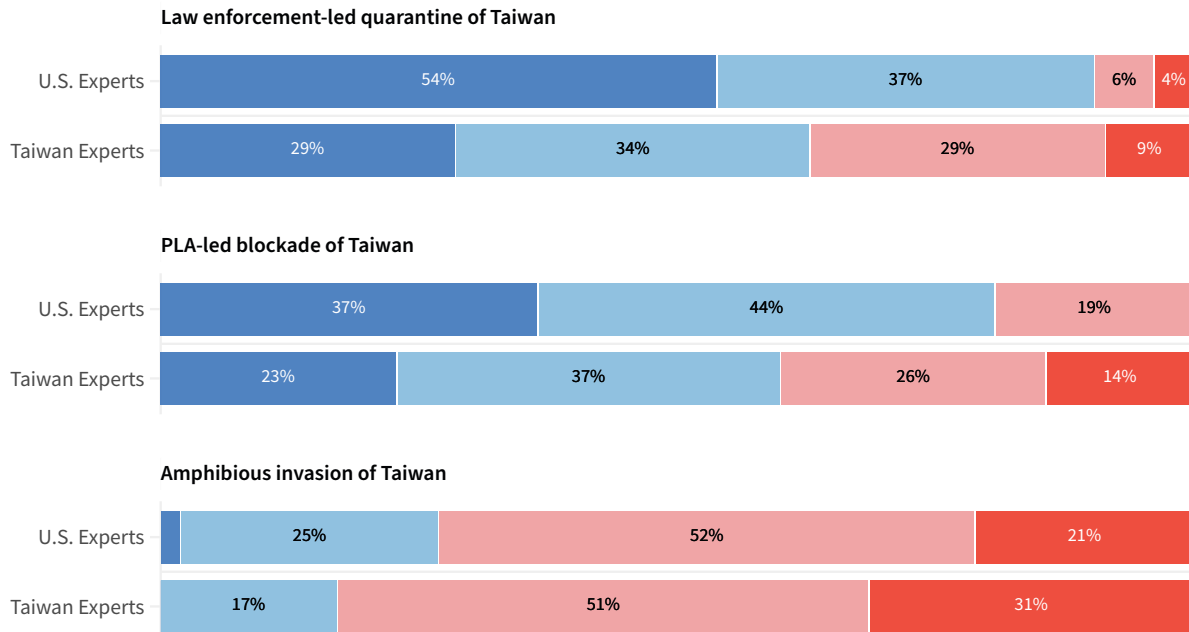
This survey began by asking experts to evaluate China's current ability to effectively execute three different courses of action against Taiwan: a law enforcement-led quarantine, a PLA-led blockade, and an amphibious invasion. To see how the survey defined these terms, see Appendix B.

Experts' assessments of China's capabilities were inversely correlated with the level of forces needed to execute a course of action. About 90 percent of U.S. experts and 62 percent of Taiwan experts strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that China currently possesses the capabilities to execute a law enforcement-led quarantine that would substantially reduce trade into Taiwan. Asked about China's current capabilities to execute a PLA-led blockade of Taiwan, still 80 percent of U.S. experts and 60 percent of Taiwan experts agreed that China possesses sufficient capabilities (Figure 1).

## Figure 1: China Could Effectively Quarantine or Blockade Taiwan, Not Invade

Question: Please indicate the extent to which you agree to disagree with the following. Beijing currently possesses the capabilities to effectively execute a/an . . .

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

Confidence in China’s ability to execute an amphibious invasion was much lower. Only 27 percent of U.S. experts polled agreed that China could execute an amphibious invasion given its current capabilities, and just 17 percent of Taiwan respondents believed the same.

There are two immediate explanations for lower confidence in China’s ability to invade Taiwan. An amphibious invasion would require a much larger commitment of military forces than a quarantine or blockade, and the operations involved would be significantly more complicated. Second, respondents may be factoring in the likelihood of military intervention by the United States and its allies. As Figure 10 shows, experts were more confident that Washington would intervene militarily at higher levels of conflict, such as an invasion, compared to lower end scenarios like a quarantine.

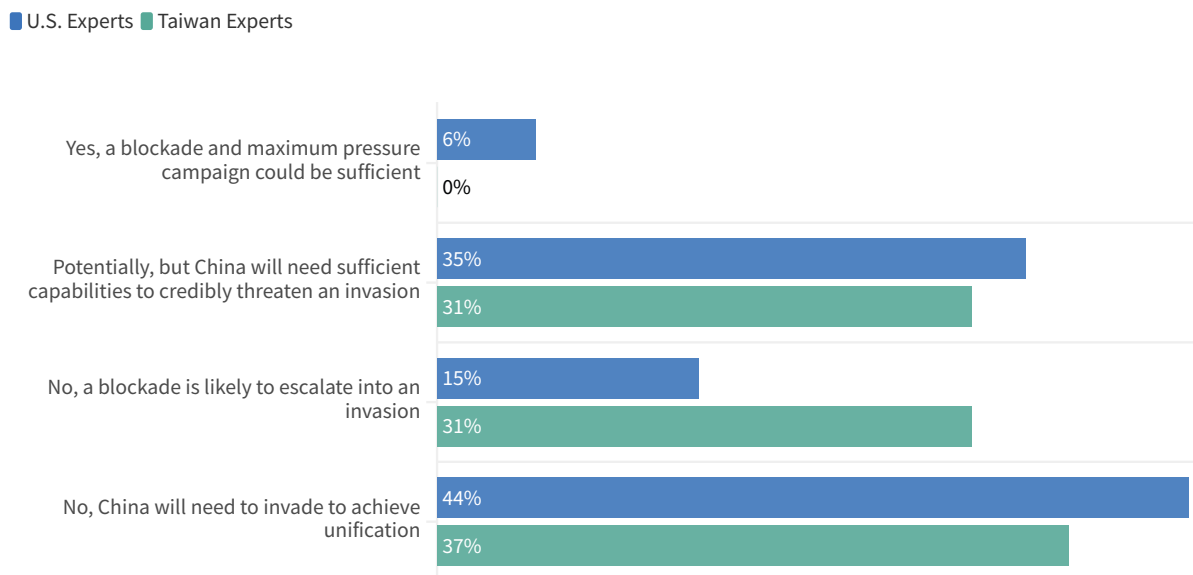
Across all three scenarios, experts from Taiwan were notably more conservative in their assessments of China’s current capabilities. For example, no U.S. experts strongly disagreed that China already has the capabilities to carry out an effective blockade, whereas 14 percent of Taiwan experts did. Taiwan experts were also more skeptical of China’s abilities for an invasion with none of them confident that China could execute this given its current capabilities.

## The Efficacy of a Blockade

While most U.S. and Taiwan experts agreed that China currently has the capability to execute a blockade, a majority did not believe a blockade alone could achieve Taiwan’s forceful unification. About 60 percent of U.S. experts and 69 percent of Taiwan experts said a blockade alone could not achieve unification—either because a blockade would likely escalate to an invasion or because forcing Taipei’s capitulation would require an invasion (Figure 2).<sup>6</sup>

### Figure 2: A Blockade Alone Is Not Sufficient to Force Unification

Question: Can Beijing successfully force Taiwan to unify with China via a PLA-led blockade and maximum pressure campaign without the need to invade Taiwan?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

A sizable minority was more confident in a blockade’s ability to force unification. Approximately one-third of U.S. and Taiwan experts believed that a blockade could “potentially” achieve unification, but they qualified this assessment by adding that China would need “sufficient capabilities to credibly threaten an invasion if it were to launch an invasion.” Only three U.S. respondents—and zero Taiwan respondents—believed that a blockade and maximum pressure campaign alone could force Taiwan’s unification with the mainland.

## Significance of Xi’s 2027 Modernization Deadline

Finally, while China’s capabilities are a crucial factor, respondents ultimately believed that capabilities would not be the determining factor in Beijing’s approach if it decides to take major coercive actions against Taiwan.

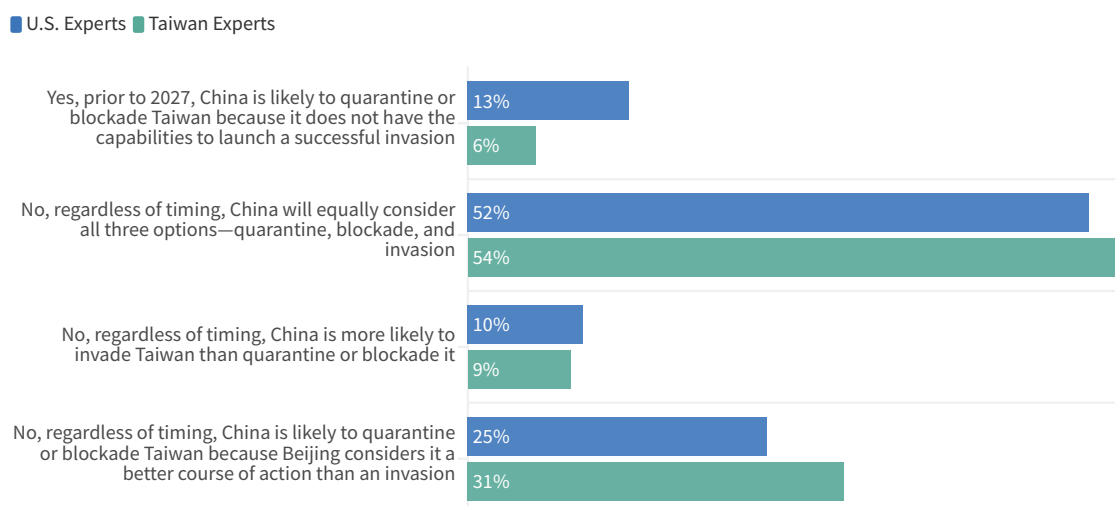
China is undertaking sweeping efforts to modernize the PLA, and as new capabilities come online, Beijing will have more of these at its disposal. The U.S. intelligence community has revealed that

President Xi has instructed the PLA to be ready to conduct an invasion of Taiwan by 2027.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has provided similar but less concrete assessments that Xi has instructed the PLA to realize military modernization goals by 2027, which “could give the PLA capabilities to be a more credible military tool for the [Chinese Communist Party’s] Taiwan unification efforts.”<sup>8</sup>

The U.S. and Taiwan experts surveyed overwhelmingly assessed that Xi’s 2027 military modernization deadline does not have an impact on Beijing’s choice of whether to quarantine, blockade, or invade Taiwan. Only 13 percent of U.S. experts and 6 percent of Taiwan experts believed that the 2027 timeline matters with respect to how China might choose to use force against Taiwan (i.e., that China would choose to quarantine or blockade Taiwan but not invade the island before 2027 because it lacks the capabilities to invade) (Figure 3).

### Figure 3: Xi’s 2027 Military Modernization Order Does Not Determine Beijing’s Decisionmaking on How to Use Force against Taiwan

Question: President Xi Jinping has instructed the PLA to have the capability to forcefully unify Taiwan by 2027. Does this affect your assessment of whether China is more likely to quarantine or blockade Taiwan than invade the island?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

A majority of respondents said, regardless of timing, China would equally consider whether to quarantine, blockade, or invade Taiwan. The remaining respondents believed that Beijing would either choose to quarantine, blockade, or invade Taiwan because that course of action would best achieve Chinese leaders’ objectives.

U.S. and Taiwan responses to this question were very similar. This suggests that China would tailor its actions based on its goals, such as whether it simply intends to punish Taiwan or whether it intends to force unification. Respondents may also have taken into account the fact that the actions Taiwan takes may constrain Beijing’s responses. A separate survey conducted by the China Power Project in 2022 found that 77 percent of the U.S. experts polled believed that China would immediately move to invade Taiwan if it formally announced independence.<sup>9</sup>

# Factors Affecting Beijing's Use of Force

Besides China's capabilities, several factors impact Beijing's decisionmaking on using force against Taiwan. These factors include Beijing's overall objectives, its willingness to escalate to certain levels, and its determination to sustain operations for an extended period of time. Taipei also has agency, so the survey sought to assess Taiwan's will and ability to resist Chinese measures.

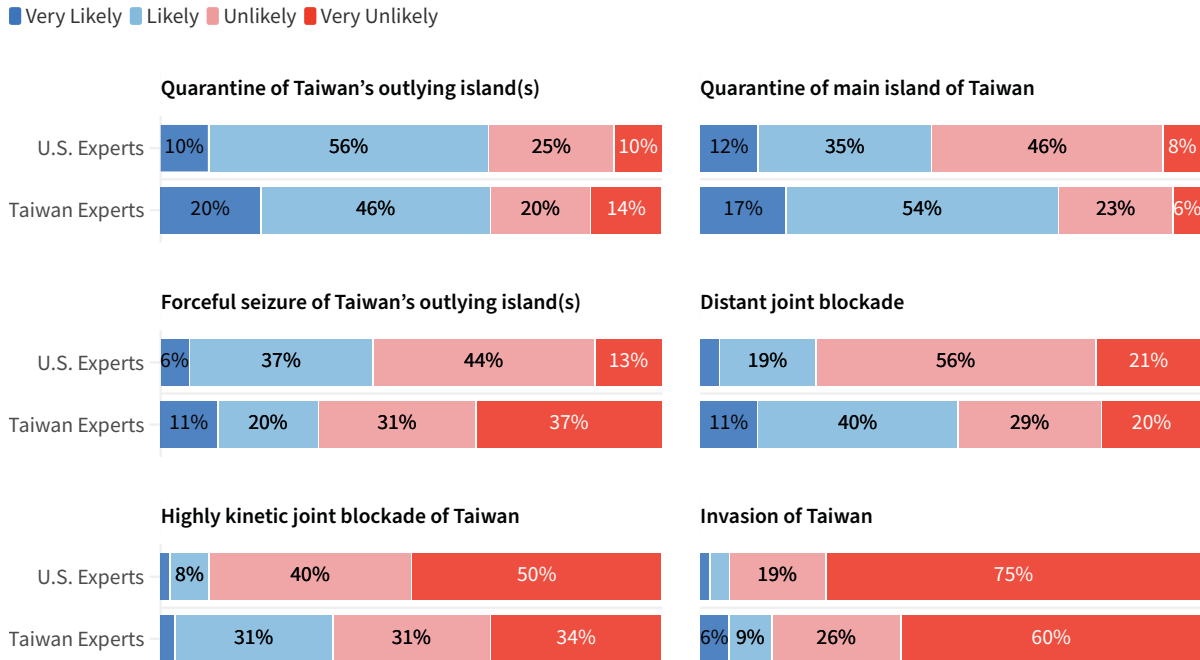
## Beijing's Varying Strategic Objectives

First, political and strategic objectives will largely determine Beijing's course of action. The survey began with two sets of questions asking experts to assess the likelihood of China taking various actions over the next five years. The first set asked about the likelihood of different scenarios if Beijing's goal is to punish and coerce Taiwan but *not* immediately force unification.

Both U.S. and Taiwan experts agreed that a quarantine would be the likeliest action if Beijing's goal is to punish and coerce, but there are important differences in their views. U.S. experts tended to think a quarantine of Taiwan's outlying islands (such as Kinmen and Matsu) would be the likeliest scenario, with 65 percent saying so. About 66 percent of Taiwan experts also said that a quarantine of outlying islands would be likely; however, 71 percent believed a quarantine of the main island of Taiwan would be likely. In other words, Taiwan respondents thought a quarantine of the main island of Taiwan would be likelier, whereas U.S. respondents believed a quarantine of outlying islands would be slightly more likely. In fact, a slim majority of U.S experts did not think a quarantine of the main island of Taiwan would be likely under these conditions (Figure 4).

## Figure 4: A Quarantine Is the Likeliest Action If Beijing Seeks to Punish and Coerce Taiwan

Question: In the next five years, if Beijing’s primary goal is to punish Taiwan and coerce Taipei to change certain activities or policies (but not immediately force unification), how likely is Beijing to resort to the following courses of action?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

More broadly, there were notable differences between U.S. and Taiwan views on this question. Among almost all the scenarios listed, experts from Taiwan assessed that an action would be more likely. This is most noticeable in the assessments of the likelihood of blockades. Over 51 percent of Taiwan experts said a distant blockade would be likely or very likely, while only 23 percent of U.S. experts thought the same. The difference was even more stark for highly kinetic blockades: the share of respondents who said a highly kinetic blockade would be likely was three times higher for Taiwan experts than for U.S. experts.<sup>10</sup> Taiwan experts also more readily saw an invasion as likely; however, the vast majority still did not see an invasion as likely if China merely intended to punish or coerce Taiwan.

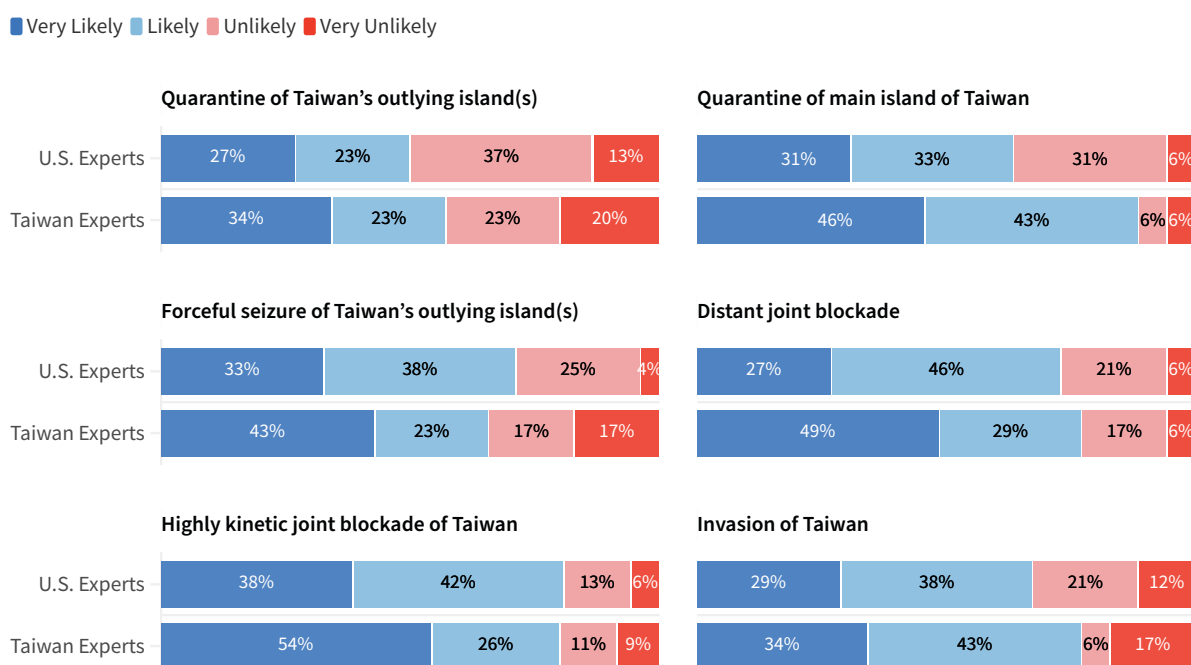
There was one exception to this trend. A larger share of U.S. experts thought that forceful seizure of a Taiwan offshore island would be likely. This may be because more Taiwan experts simply did not think this was a likely course of action in general. Some experts have argued, for example, that a forceful island seizure may be a mistake because it could strengthen the determination of Taiwan’s people and expose Beijing’s ambitions to the world without achieving desired political or strategic gains.<sup>11</sup>

The survey next asked experts to assess the likelihood of these same scenarios if Beijing’s goal is to immediately force Taiwan’s unification. As Beijing’s objectives change, so does the likelihood of various actions.

If Beijing’s objective is to immediately force unification, experts saw a blockade as the most likely scenario. About 80 percent of U.S. and Taiwan experts said a highly kinetic joint blockade would be “very likely or “likely,” but Taiwan experts were more confident in this assessment. About 54 percent said a highly kinetic blockade would be “very likely,” while only 38 percent of U.S. experts rated this scenario as “very likely” (Figure 5).

### Figure 5: A Blockade Is the Likeliest Action If Beijing Seeks to Immediately Force Unification

Question: In the next five years, if Beijing’s primary goal is to immediately force Taiwan’s unification, how likely is Beijing to resort to the following courses of action?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

A distant joint blockade was the second most likely scenario with 73 percent of U.S. and 77 percent of the experts from Taiwan believing this would be likely or very likely. Among Taiwan experts, the same overall share of respondents (77 percent) said an invasion would be likely or very likely—tying it with the distant blockade. However, more Taiwan experts assessed the distant blockade as being very likely, suggesting more confidence in its likelihood.

Compared to Taiwan experts, a slightly smaller share of U.S. experts assessed an invasion as likely in the next five years. This difference may not have been an assessment of Beijing’s overall willingness to escalate but may instead be because U.S. assessments were colored by the time frame in question. U.S. experts were slightly more likely to believe that China would wait until after 2027



to invade because it will have better capabilities then (Figure 3). Three of the experts who said that China may feel compelled to wait to invade until after 2027 were among those who said that an invasion in the next five years would be unlikely or very unlikely.

It is also worth noting that assessments of the likelihood of various scenarios were not mutually exclusive. For U.S. and Taiwan experts, there was a positive correlation between views on a highly kinetic blockade and an invasion. In other words, experts who saw a highly kinetic blockade as likely also tended to see an invasion as likely.

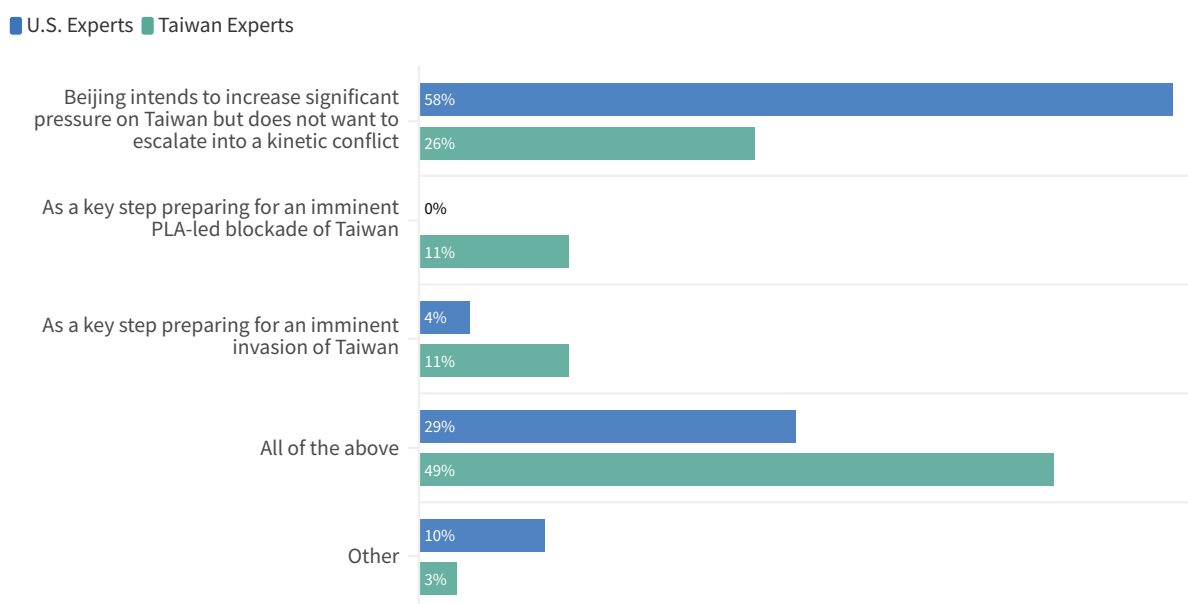
Over 70 percent of U.S. experts and 65 percent of Taiwan experts saw China’s forceful seizure of one or more outlying islands as likely or highly likely. Such a seizure could be part of a larger PRC blockade or invasion plan, or it could be executed to allow Beijing to demonstrate progress on immediate unification with a part of Taiwan.

Finally, if Beijing’s goal is immediate unification, survey respondents said a quarantine was the least likely scenario. This suggests that experts tended to view a quarantine as a lower-end scenario.

To dig into this question more deeply, the survey asked under what conditions Beijing would be likely to quarantine Taiwan. The U.S. and Taiwan experts’ responses were strikingly different. Over half of U.S. experts (58 percent) believed that if Beijing were to implement a law enforcement-led quarantine of Taiwan, the objective would be to increase significant pressure against Taiwan without escalating tensions to a point of kinetic conflict. Approximately a third of U.S. experts believed that Beijing would undertake a quarantine as a precursor to an imminent blockade or invasion (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Divergent Views on Beijing’s Likely Motives behind a Quarantine**

Question: Under what circumstances would Beijing most likely choose to implement a law enforcement-led quarantine of Taiwan?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

Experts from Taiwan held more diverse views. Only 26 percent thought that China would launch a quarantine with the express intention to avoid a more escalatory conflict. They were more willing to see a quarantine as a more flexible option and a precursor to more escalatory PRC military campaigns.

## In Their Own Words

On top of the prescribed options, this question allowed respondents to write in their own responses. Five U.S. experts and one Taiwan expert did so. Their responses are quoted below, with minor edits for style and grammar.

- **Taiwan #1:** “Testing possible international responses and Taiwan’s social endurance.”
- **U.S. #1:** “Test Taiwan, the United States, and [allies’] response.”
- **U.S. #2:** “Beijing intends to prevent U.S. weapons deliveries [that] China considers offensive, with the immediate goal of punishing Taiwan and inducing a return to the status quo.”
- **U.S. #3:** “A blockade operation is part of a continuum of operations intended to pressure Taiwan’s leadership to capitulate. It should not be considered an independent course of action. The survey is unclear about the permeability of a blockade which may be only partially successful at stopping the flow of commerce, but more effective at increasing the cost of supplying the island.”
- **U.S. #4:** “If China assesses that they must act strongly before the U.S. can gather its forces, it will try to invade. If this does not matter to them, they will use a quarantine as the first step on an escalation ladder, with the goal of subduing Taiwan without the use of force.”
- **U.S. #5:** “Increase pressure but do so in a way that provides a justified narrative for the international community (and [generates] less blowback).”

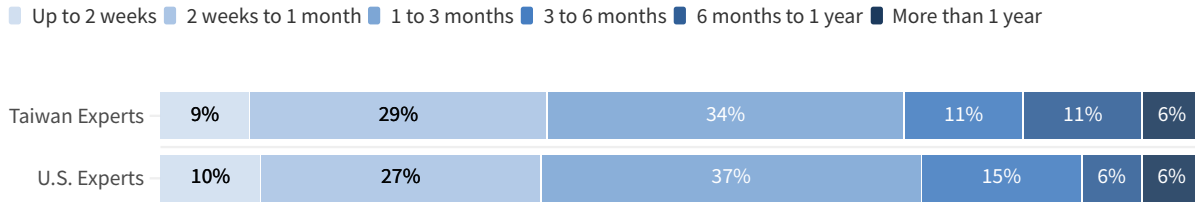
## Ability and Willingness to Fight

Another key factor is the willpower and ability of both China and Taiwan to hold out to achieve their objectives under various scenarios. Assessing these dynamics is difficult. As Russia invaded Ukraine, many expected Kyiv to fall quickly in the face of a larger, better-equipped military. Yet Ukraine has held out for nearly two years thanks to international support from the United States and its allies.

If China blockades Taiwan and the United States does not significantly intervene militarily, how long would the island be able to resist Chinese forces and support the needs of its people? U.S. and Taiwan experts’ responses to this question were strikingly similar. The most common answer was that Taiwan would likely be able to hold out for between one and three months. Only 27 percent of U.S. experts and about 29 percent of Taiwan experts believed Taiwan could hold off for a period of more than three months (Figure 7).

## Figure 7: Taiwan Is Unlikely to Resist Beijing in the Long Term without U.S. Military Intervention

Question: If China blockades Taiwan, how long would Taiwan be able to hold out and resist Beijing if there is no (or very limited) U.S. military intervention?



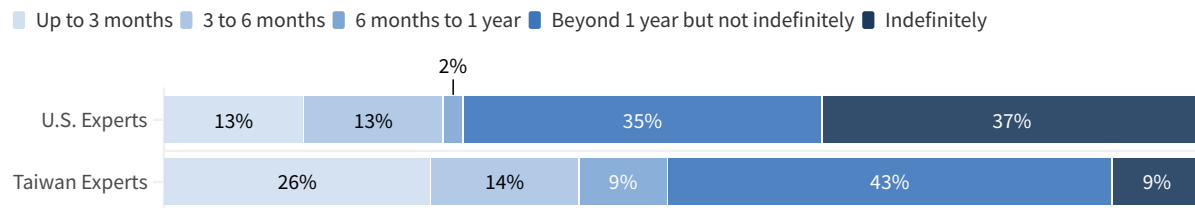
Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

While there were significant similarities of opinion among U.S. and Taiwan experts, several variables could substantially alter Taiwan’s timelines. If a PLA blockade of Taiwan is porous, allowing some goods to get onto the island, Taiwan may be able to last for a significantly longer period. Energy and food stockpiles may prove vital since nearly 98 percent of Taiwan’s energy is imported and approximately 65 percent of its food is imported.<sup>12</sup>

Beijing’s own willpower will also play a crucial role. Experts in our poll anticipated that Beijing would be willing to carry out high-intensity military operations for long periods. Nearly 37 percent of U.S. experts said China would be willing to carry out high-intensity operations indefinitely, and another 35 percent believed China could sustain operations for over a year but not indefinitely (Figure 8).

## Figure 8: U.S. Experts Think China Can Sustain a High-Intensity Conflict for Longer

Question: If a conflict over Taiwan becomes protracted, how long would Beijing be willing to continue large-scale, high-intensity kinetic operations?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

Experts from Taiwan were more conservative. Only 9 percent believed China would carry out operations indefinitely, and about 26 percent believed China could stay in a high-intensity fight for only up to three months. Still, a plurality (43 percent) believed China could continue high-tempo operations for at least a year, though not indefinitely.

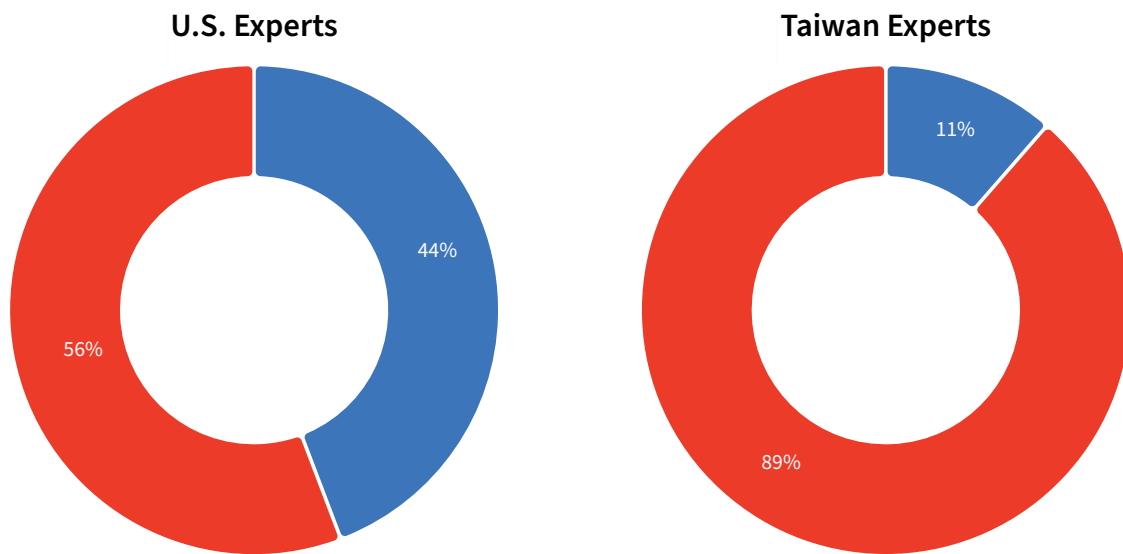
How far exactly would Beijing be willing to go in a conflict? If the United States intervenes militarily to defend Taiwan and China finds itself in a protracted war and feels threatened, would Beijing be willing to use (i.e., detonate) nuclear weapons against U.S. and coalition forces?

U.S. and Taiwan views on this issue are significantly different—more so than on any other question in the poll. A slight majority of U.S. respondents (56 percent) believed China would not use nuclear weapons, whereas about 89 percent of Taiwan respondents believed China would not resort to using nuclear weapons against enemy forces (Figure 9).

### Figure 9: Sharply Divided Views on Beijing’s Willingness to Use Nuclear Weapons

Question: Do you think China would be willing to use (detonate) a nuclear weapon against U.S. or coalition forces in a conflict over Taiwan?

● Yes ● No



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

This issue is of critical importance to regional and global security. In recent years, China has embarked on an effort to rapidly and significantly build up its arsenal of nuclear weapons. The DOD assesses that China could field over 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030, rapidly closing the gap with the United States.<sup>13</sup> China is also fielding new and diverse launch and delivery systems, many of which are capable of ranging the continental United States. So far, Beijing has not acknowledged its nuclear buildup and has not announced any changes to its nuclear doctrine. This lack of transparency has made it very difficult to assess the drivers of China’s buildup and what Beijing aims to achieve.

# U.S. and Allied Approaches

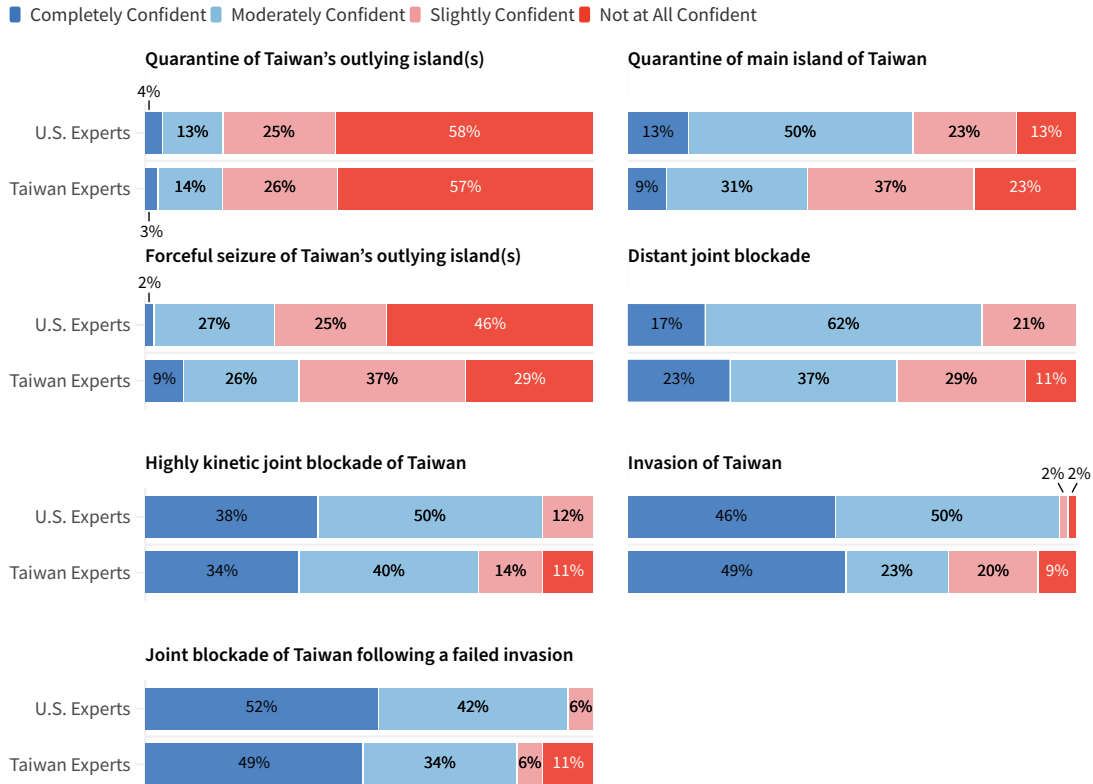
Given the potentially dire stakes of a conflict over Taiwan, what do experts believe the United States will do in response to Chinese actions? Will U.S. allies and partners intervene militarily to help defend Taiwan? How should the United States balance threats and assurances as it tries to deter Chinese aggression? Interestingly, U.S. and Taiwan experts largely saw eye to eye on these questions.

## Confidence in U.S. Intervention

An overwhelming 96 percent of U.S. experts were completely or moderately confident that if China invades Taiwan in the next five years, the U.S. military would intervene to defend Taiwan. Of these, 46 percent were completely confident of U.S. intervention in this scenario. U.S. experts were also highly confident Washington would intervene to defend against various forms of a blockade. However, few experts believed Washington would involve itself to resist a Chinese quarantine or seizure of an outlying island (Figure 10).

## Figure 10: There Is High Confidence in a U.S. Military Intervention against a Blockade or Invasion

Question: Given this scenario occurs in the next five years, how confident are you that the United States would be willing to intervene militarily to stop Beijing from achieving its objectives?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

Taiwan experts were less confident than U.S. experts about U.S. intervention. The starkest difference was in expectations of an intervention against a quarantine of Taiwan. Whereas 63 percent of U.S. experts expressed some confidence that Washington would step in to push back against a civilian-led quarantine, only 40 percent of Taiwan experts shared such confidence.

Lower levels of confidence in the United States likely stem from a combination of factors. First, U.S. support for Taiwan is conditional. The goal of U.S. policy toward Taiwan has long been to avoid moves by either side of the Taiwan Strait to unilaterally shift the status quo. Moves by Taipei to unilaterally change the status quo would not be welcome in Washington, and if Taiwan's actions precipitate a conflict, the United States may be disinclined to intervene. Taiwan experts were aware of such conditionality, and it may have weighed more heavily on their thinking compared to U.S. experts.

Second, in recent years, China has been stepping up efforts to spread misinformation and disinformation within Taiwan about U.S. willingness to come to Taiwan's aid. These efforts are aimed at causing the Taiwan public to lose hope and feel that unification is their only option.

It is worth noting that Beijing has little doubt that Washington would defend Taiwan. In the 2022 China Power Project poll of U.S. experts, 100 percent of the U.S. expert respondents said Beijing assumes the U.S. military would deploy forces to defend Taiwan.<sup>14</sup>

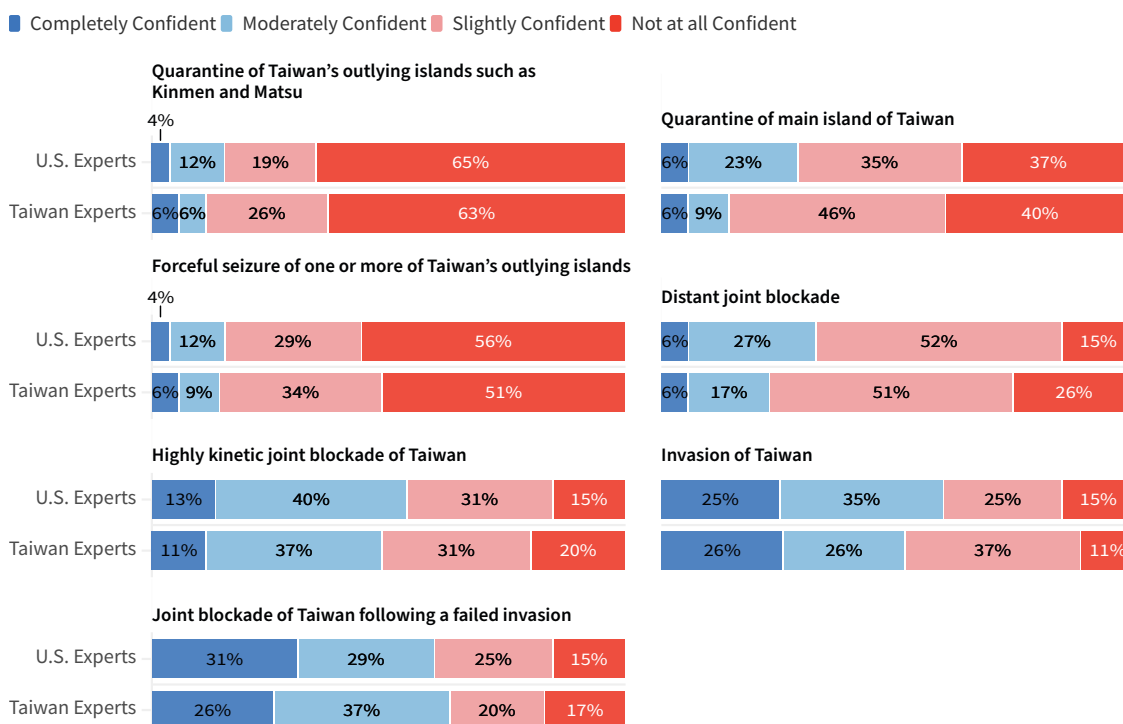
## Confidence in Intervention by U.S. Allies and Partners

U.S. and Taiwan experts did not share the same level of confidence in U.S. allies and partners to intervene militarily to defend Taiwan—even if they are led by the U.S. military. Of the seven scenarios surveyed, there were only two of these in which a majority of both U.S. and Taiwan experts were completely or moderately confident in military intervention from allies and partners. These were an invasion and a post-failed invasion blockade. Notably, confidence in intervention against the post-failed invasion blockade may benefit from the fact that if an ally already intervened to defend against an invasion, it will continue to help defend against a post-invasion blockade.

On these scenarios, there were no major differences in U.S. and Taiwan experts’ responses. The greatest discrepancy pertains to a quarantine of the main island of Taiwan. While 29 percent of U.S. experts were completely confident or moderately confident that partners and allies would join U.S.-led multinational military efforts to defend Taiwan against a quarantine, only 15 percent of Taiwan experts thought the same. In fact, 40 percent of Taiwan experts were not at all confident (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: There Is Limited Confidence in U.S. Allies and Partners to Defend Taiwan**

Question: Given this scenario occurs in the next five years, how confident are you that U.S. allies and partners would be willing to join U.S.-led multinational military efforts to defend Taiwan?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

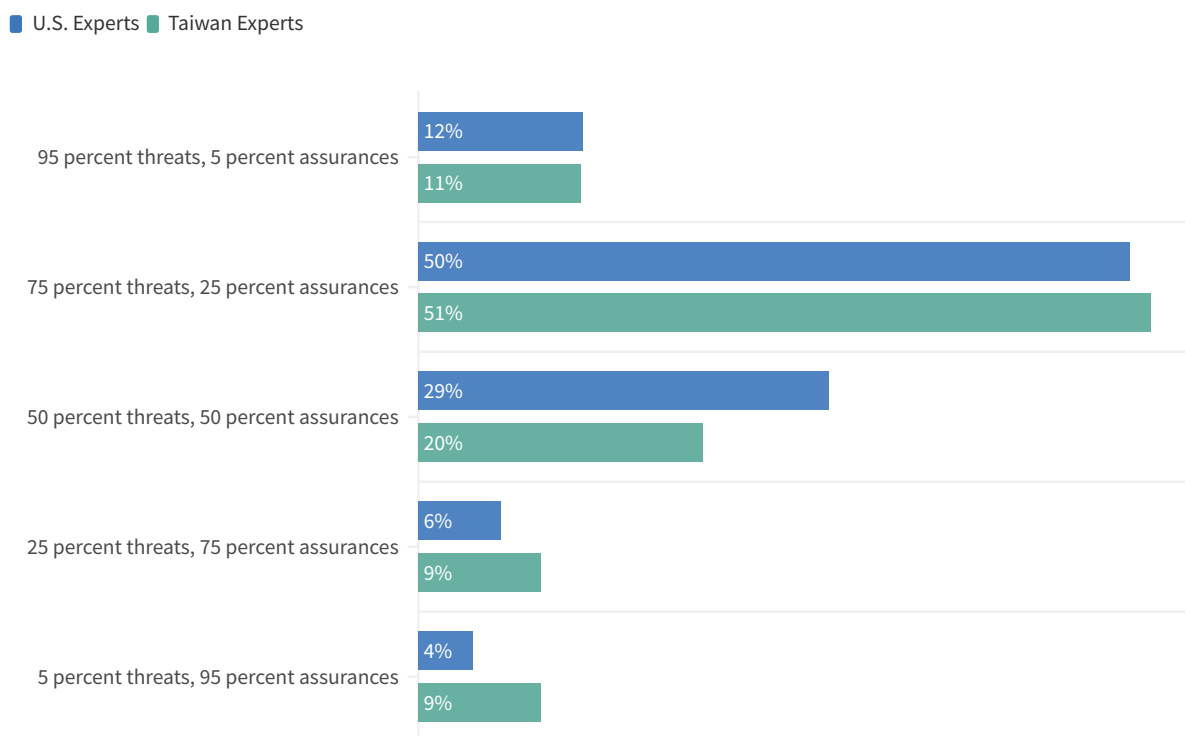
Overall, respondents had more confidence that allies and partners would intervene in more high-end conflicts. This may be because large-scale conflicts are more likely to experience horizontal escalation, which embroils countries within the region in the fighting. This is most true for Japan, a key U.S. treaty ally that is geographically close to Taiwan and home to several key U.S. military installations in the region.

Given these assessments of Beijing’s thinking and the likelihood of various scenarios, how should the United States deter Chinese aggression? Political science literature typically emphasizes that deterrence requires a combination of credible threats and credible assurances. As U.S.-China tensions have heated up, debates have emerged over how best to adequately threaten and assure Beijing.<sup>15</sup>

So, what mix of U.S. threats and assurances is most appropriate for deterring Beijing from use of force against Taiwan? While there may be differences in how U.S. and Taiwan experts would make specific policy choices, the results of this poll showed that their views on this question were very closely aligned. The majority of both groups thought a combination of 75 percent threats and 25 percent assurances was the best balance (Figure 12).

### Figure 12: Deterring China Requires More Threats Than Assurances

Question: Political science literature defines deterrence as requiring a combination of credible threats and credible assurances. What mix of U.S. threats and assurances is most appropriate for deterring Beijing from use of force against Taiwan?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.



About 29 percent of U.S. experts and 20 percent of Taiwan experts said a 50-50 balance is most appropriate, and about 11-12 percent of experts thought the U.S. approach should lean heavily toward threats over assurances in a ratio of 95-5 percent. The remaining small share of respondents leaned toward more assurances than threats. Thus, there was a general consensus that the right balance consisted of more threats than assurances, but there was not an agreement on exactly what that balance looked like.

# Implications of Geopolitical Developments

The final portion of this survey asked questions about key geopolitical developments and their implications for Taiwan, cross-strait dynamics, and U.S.-China relations.

## The 2024 Taiwan Presidential Election

The most significant issue in question is the Taiwan presidential election of January 2024. On January 13, Taiwan elected DPP candidate William Lai as its next president. Lai won with just over 40 percent of the vote—a far weaker win than current president Tsai Ing-wen, who attracted over 56 percent of the popular vote in both of her elections. Hou Yu-ih, of the once-dominant Kuomintang (KMT) party, received only 33.5 percent of the votes. The Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) candidate Ko Wen-je took the remaining 26.5 percent of the vote in the strongest performance of a third-party candidate in over two decades.

Crucially, the DPP lost its majority in Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan, and no party received enough seats in the legislature to lead it outright. This will prove a major obstacle for Lai and could force him to compromise in his pursuit of a DPP agenda. It will also leave the TPP and its leader Ko Wen-je with a strong hand to shape a multi-party coalition in the new legislature.<sup>16</sup>

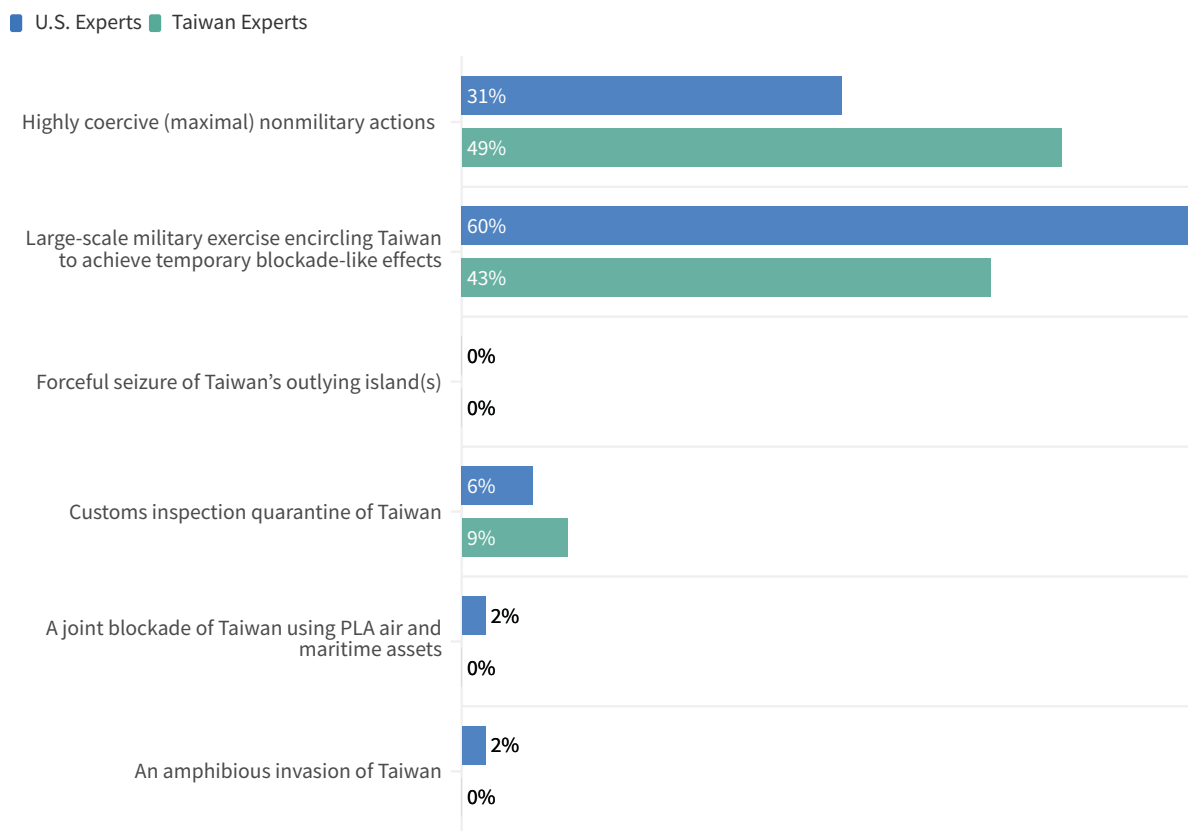
Beijing has long made it known that it does not want to see another DPP president. When Tsai Ing-wen won the presidency in 2016, China responded by cutting off many areas of cross-strait engagement and significantly ramping up pressure on Taiwan through all means possible.

China has already responded to Lai’s election by poaching one of Taiwan’s few remaining diplomatic allies—Nauru—and it has lodged diplomatic complaints against the United States and several of its allies and partners for congratulating the new president-elect.<sup>17</sup> Will Beijing escalate further than this? How and when might it respond?

To cast light on these questions, the survey asked experts to anticipate the most escalatory action Beijing would take if it perceived the results of the election not to be in its interest. Respondents were primarily split between two options. About 60 percent of U.S. respondents assessed that China would be willing to escalate and stage large-scale PLA exercises that cause temporary blockade-like effects against Taiwan—such as the exercises held in August 2022 and April 2023.<sup>18</sup> Most of the remaining U.S. respondents said Beijing would only be willing to take highly coercive nonmilitary measures against Taiwan. A handful of U.S. respondents thought Beijing would be willing to escalate beyond military exercises to a quarantine, blockade, or invasion (Figure 13).

### Figure 13: U.S. Experts See Greater Risk of Chinese Escalation in Response to Taiwan’s Election

Question: If Chinese leaders perceive the results of the January 2024 Taiwan presidential election to be unfavorable to Chinese interests, what is the most escalatory action Beijing is likely to take before the end of 2024?



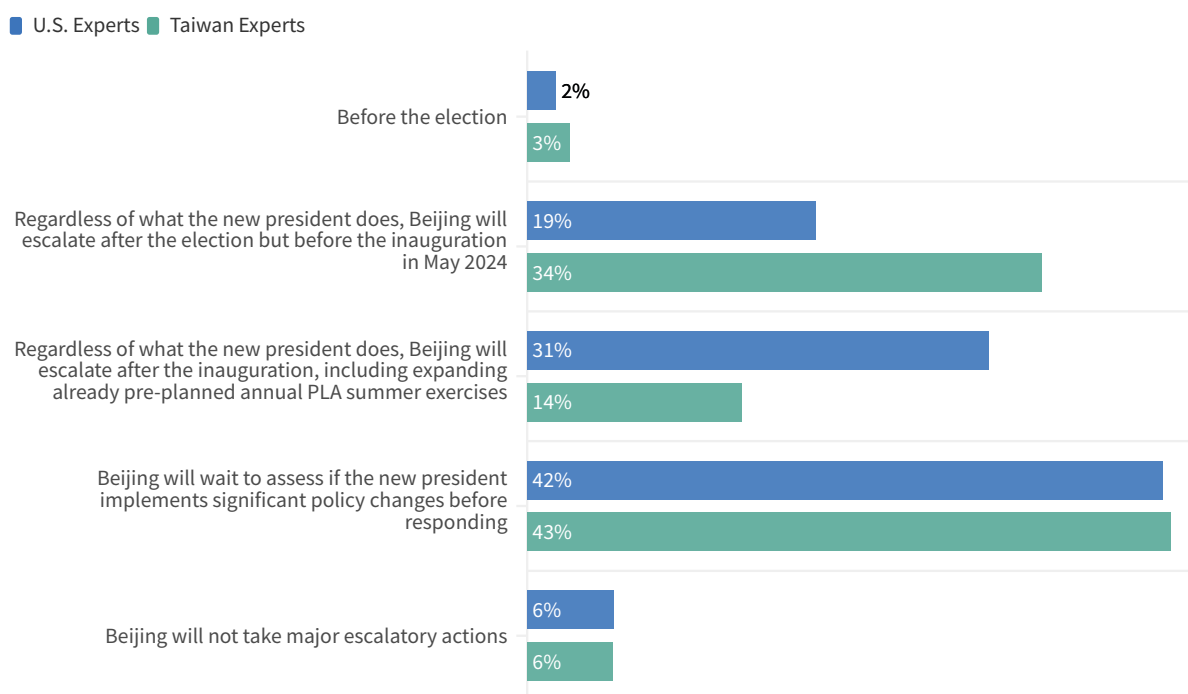
Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

Taiwan respondents similarly coalesced around the two actions at the low end of the escalatory ladder but placed more emphasis on PRC nonmilitary coercion. Nearly 49 percent thought China would not escalate beyond nonmilitary means. Another 43 percent assessed that China could stage PLA exercises, and the remaining 9 percent viewed China as willing to execute a civilian-led quarantine of Taiwan.

Views were also divided in terms of *when* Beijing would engage in the most escalatory response to a candidate it deems unfavorable. A significant minority of U.S. and Taiwan experts (42 percent and 43 percent, respectively) agreed that China will wait to see if the new president implements significant policy changes before taking action. If Beijing does take such a wait-and-see approach, it could suggest a reassessment of the existing policies, but it will require time to determine whether Beijing makes a lasting, substantive shift (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: No Consensus on When Beijing Will Respond to the Taiwan Election**

Question: If Chinese leaders perceive the results of the January 2024 Taiwan presidential election to be unfavorable to Chinese interests, when do you think Beijing will engage in the most escalatory response?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

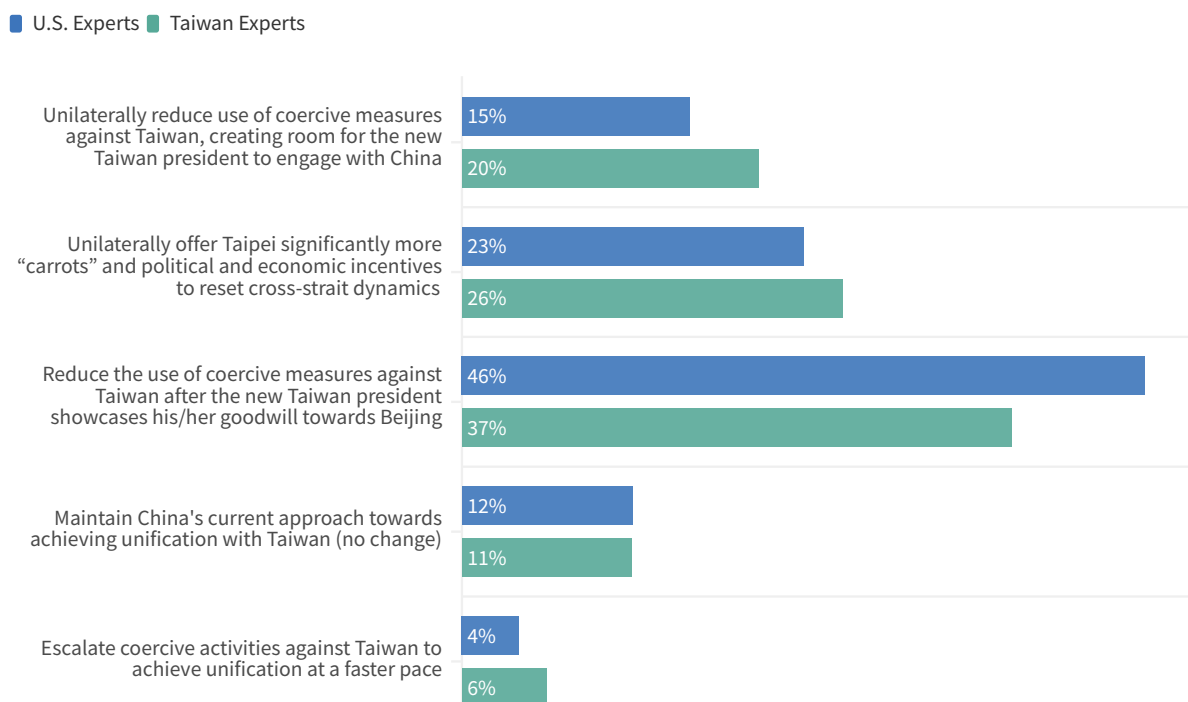
A slight majority of participants, however, believed China would not wait to see what policies the new president announces. Within this grouping, a bigger slice of the Taiwan participants anticipated China would engage in the most escalatory response between the election and inauguration (January 13–May 20, 2024), whereas U.S. experts anticipated the most escalatory response after the inauguration (on May 20, 2024). Only a small handful of experts believed China would escalate dramatically before the election.

Overall, experts were nearly unanimous that Beijing would respond in some significant way. Only 6 percent of U.S. and Taiwan experts believed China would take no major action.

When asked how Beijing would respond to the Taiwan presidential election if its preferred candidate won, U.S. and Taiwan experts overwhelmingly assessed that Beijing would seek to improve cross-strait ties. Only about 15 percent of U.S. experts and 17 percent of Taiwan experts believed China would maintain its existing coercive approach or increase coercion against China (Figure 15).

### Figure 15: Beijing Will Shift Gears If Its Preferred Candidate Wins the Taiwan Presidency

Question: If Chinese leaders perceive the results of the January 2024 Taiwan presidential election to be favorable to Chinese interests, what do you expect China’s primary course of action to be after the new Taiwan leader is inaugurated?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

There was no consensus, however, on exactly how Beijing would alter its approach. About 46 percent of the experts from Taiwan assessed that Beijing would shift its approach unilaterally—whether offering carrots or reducing coercive measures—whereas 46 percent of U.S. experts believed that Beijing would act only after the new Taiwan leader showcased goodwill toward Beijing.

### Likelihood of a 2024 Taiwan Strait Crisis

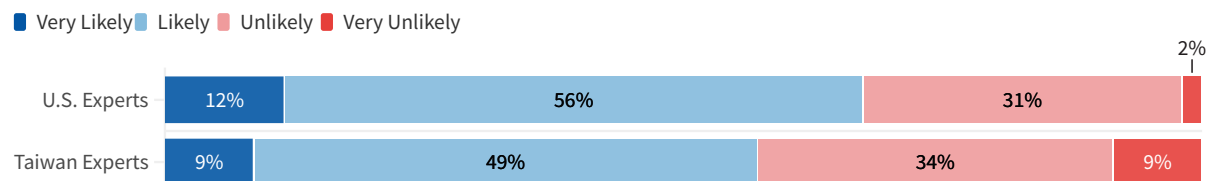
Given the nature of the Taiwan election and Beijing’s growing willingness to use its military to press its interests, the survey asked about the possibility of a Taiwan Strait crisis in 2024. Such a crisis was defined as “a situation similar to the 1995/1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis where there is a significant

increase in cross-strait tensions that is accompanied by at least a major PLA exercise aimed at coercing Taiwan and renewed Chinese threats to use force against the island.”

The survey showed a majority of both U.S. and Taiwan experts assessed that a crisis is either likely or very likely. Taiwan experts appeared to assess a crisis as slightly less likely than U.S. experts did, but the difference was not significant (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: A Taiwan Strait Crisis Is Likely in 2024**

Question: How do you assess the probability of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait in 2024?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

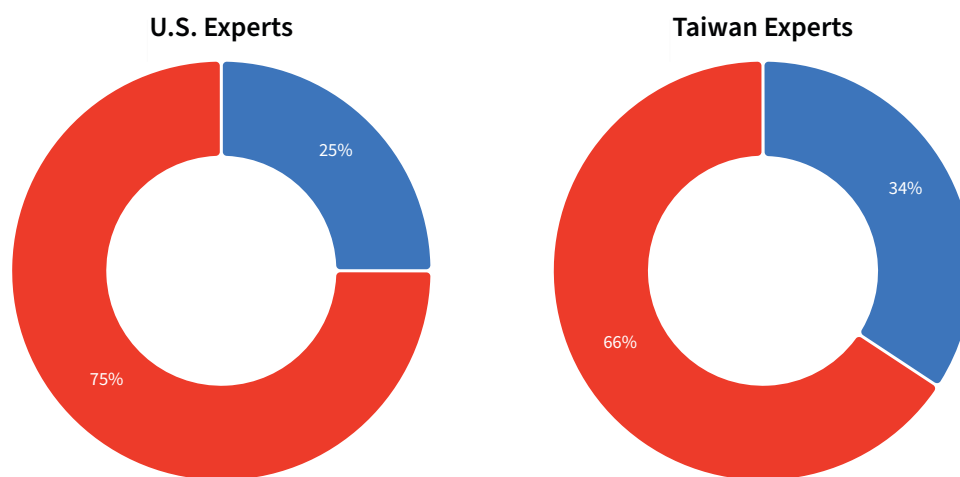
The experts’ pessimism is likely driven by a combination of factors, including assessments of potential negative PRC responses to Taiwan’s presidential elections as well as the overall state of U.S.-China relations. Despite notable efforts by Washington and Beijing to stabilize relations, the bilateral relationship remains fundamentally focused on competition.

The November 2023 summit between President Biden and President Xi did not change this. About 75 percent of U.S. experts and 66 percent of Taiwan experts said that the Biden-Xi meeting did not stabilize relations such that it significantly reduced the potential of a Taiwan Strait crisis (Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Efforts to Stabilize U.S.-China Ties Will Not Stave Off a Taiwan Strait Crisis**

Question: Following the Biden-Xi meeting in November 2023, have U.S.-China relations stabilized such that the likelihood of a potential Taiwan Strait crisis in 2024 has been significantly reduced?

● Yes ● No



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

## Implications of a Chinese Economic Slowdown

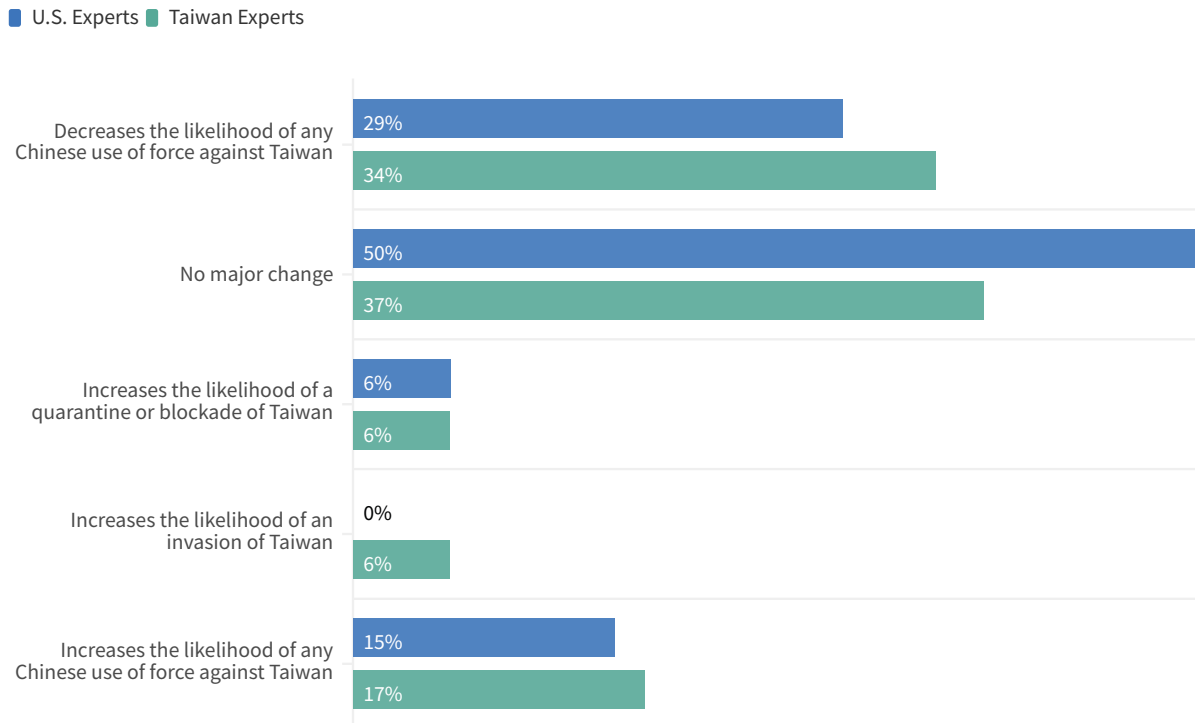
The final question of the survey sought to gauge experts' views on a perennial question: if the Chinese economy suffers a sharp, prolonged downturn, how does this impact the likelihood of China using force against Taiwan? Versions of this question typically stem from theories related to “diversionary wars,” or wars launched to distract domestic populations from other mounting issues at home.

These questions have re-emerged amid signs that China’s economy is struggling. Years of self-imposed Covid-19 shutdowns, coupled with a flagging real estate sector, have left Beijing grappling with sluggish growth, high youth unemployment, and a slate of other issues. There are long-held debates about whether these issues are cyclical or structural and how long China may suffer from this current bout of malaise.

If Beijing faces a prolonged and sharp slowdown, would it consider launching some kind of military action against Taiwan to distract from its economic woes at home? Less than a third of Taiwan experts and only 21 percent of U.S. experts thought a slowdown would increase the likelihood of any use of force, including a quarantine, blockade, and invasion. Most survey respondents rejected the logic of a diversionary crisis or war against Taiwan.

### Figure 18: China’s Economic Downturn Will Not Push Beijing to Use Force against Taiwan

Question: If the Chinese economy suffers a sharp, prolonged downturn, how does this impact the likelihood of China using force against Taiwan?



Source: CSIS China Power Project-INDSR survey of 52 U.S. experts and 35 Taiwan experts.

In fact, about 29 percent of U.S. respondents and 34 percent of Taiwan respondents believed a slowdown would decrease the likelihood of China using force. This may stem from the belief that a sluggish economy reduces the resources available to commit to a conflict over Taiwan, and it may leave China more exposed to economic reverberations and punitive sanctions in the wake of an attack on Taiwan.

Overall, most experts from Taiwan believed that the state of China's economy impacted Beijing's calculus regarding use of force against Taiwan, but they were divided on what that impact would be. In contrast, half of U.S. experts did not believe a prolonged Chinese economic downturn would have a major impact on whether China uses force against Taiwan.



# About the Authors

**Bonny Lin** is a senior fellow for Asian security and director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Previously, she was the acting associate director of the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE and a political scientist at the RAND Corporation, where she analyzed different aspects of China's foreign and defense policy and U.S. competition with China, including China's use of gray zone tactics against U.S. allies and partners. Her research advised senior leaders in the Department of Defense, including military leaders at U.S. Pacific Air Forces and U.S. Army Pacific. Dr. Lin also served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2015 to 2018, where she was director for Taiwan, country director for China, and senior adviser for China.

Dr. Lin has testified in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee, House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and an adjunct at the RAND Corporation and Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA). Dr. Lin holds a PhD in political science from Yale University, a master's degree in Asian studies with a focus on China from the University of Michigan, and a bachelor's degree in government from Harvard College.

**Brian Hart** is a fellow with the China Power Project at CSIS, where he researches the evolving nature of Chinese power. His particular research interests include Chinese foreign and security policy, Chinese military modernization, and U.S.-China technological competition. Prior to joining the China Power Project, he conducted research on Chinese politics and foreign policy for the Project 2049 Institute, the Freeman Chair in China Studies at CSIS, and Trivium China. Brian earned

his MA with honors in China studies and international economics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He also has a graduate certificate in China studies from the SAIS Hopkins-Nanjing Center and holds a BA with honors in politics and international affairs from Wake Forest University, where he graduated *magna cum laude*.

**Chen Ming-chi** is chief executive officer at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR). Prior to INDSR, Dr. Chen served as senior advisor at Taiwan's National Security Council. Dr. Chen received his PhD in sociology from Yale University and his bachelor's degree from National Taiwan University, and he currently works as an associate professor at National Tsing-Hua University, Institute of Sociology. His academic expertise includes economic sociology, contemporary Chinese society, and complex organizations.

**Shen Ming-shih** is acting deputy CEO for research at INDSR and is director of its Division of National Security Research. He is a prominent scholar focusing on strategic theory, PLA studies, India defense and security, national security, and civil-military relations. He was a visiting fellow in 2010 at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in India.

**Samantha Lu** is a research assistant with the China Power Project at CSIS. Her research interests include China's internal politics, as well as Chinese foreign policy and military power. Previously, she was a research intern with the China Power Project. Prior to joining CSIS, she interned with the U.S. embassy in Warsaw and the Council on Foreign Relations, where she supported public affairs and programming. Samantha holds a BA with honors in international relations from the University of Southern California.

**Truly Tinsley** is a program manager with the China Power Project at CSIS. Prior to joining CSIS, Truly worked at Democracy International, where she focused on global operations. Truly graduated from George Washington University with an MA in international affairs in Asia.

**Yu-Jie (Grace) Liao** is a former intern with the China Power Project at CSIS.

# Appendix A

## *Survey Participants*

*A total of 52 U.S. and 35 Taiwan respondents participated in this survey. The individuals listed below gave permission to publicly acknowledge their participation. An additional five U.S. respondents and 13 Taiwan respondents participated but did not wish for their names to be publicly listed.*

**U.S. respondents:** Jeff Benson, Jude Blanchette, Dennis J. Blasko, Joseph Bosco, Jean-Pierre Cabestan, Matthew Cancian, Elbridge Colby, Zack Cooper, Anders Corr, John Culver, Brian Davis, Gerard DiPippo, John Dotson, Lukas Filler, Dave Finkelstein, Taylor Fravel, Bates Gill, Wallace Gregson, Derek Grossman, Kristen Gunness, Paul Heer, Eric Heginbotham, Lonnie Henley, Russell Hsiao, Michael A. Hunzeker, Christopher Johnstone, Shirley Kan, Ivan Kanapathy, Isaac Kardon, Jennifer Kavanagh, David Keegan, William Klein, Heino Klinck, Bonny Lin, Roderick Lee, Oriana Skylar Mastro, Matthew McInnis, Douglas Paal, Gregory Poling, Daniel Russel, Scott Savitz, Thomas Shugart, Robert Sutter, Kharis Templeman, Drew Thompson, Dennis C. Wilder, Joel Wuthnow

**Taiwan respondents:** Vincent Chao, Chen Ping-Kuei, Peter Chen, Alex (Yu-Cheng) Chen, Arthur Ding, Norah M. Huang, Lee Jyun-yi, Lee Che-chuan, Lee Hsi-Min, Lin Pao-Wen, Lin Tai-Ho, Lin Wen-Cheng, Lin Ying-Yu, Lin Pin-Yu, Liu Jhih-Siang, Ma Chun-Wei, Pao Cheng-Hao, Shen Ming-Shih, Shu Chin-Chiang, Yau Hon-Min, Yu Ruei-Lin, Allen Yu

# Appendix B

## *The Survey*

*Below is a full reproduction of the survey sent to participants. U.S. participants received only the English version. Taiwan participants received a bilingual version with both traditional Chinese and English.*

### **Surveying the Experts: China's Approach to Taiwan in 2024 and Beyond**

#### **專家調查：2024年及未來中國對台方針**

Please enter your name.

請輸入您的姓名。

Do you want your name to be publicly associated with the survey? (We will not share your responses to specific questions).

- Yes
- No

您希望您的名字公開與本調查相關嗎？（我們不會分享您對特定問題的回答）。

- 是
- 否

## DEFINITIONS 定義

This survey focuses on three main courses of action which China might take against Taiwan: quarantine, blockade, and invasion. Please refer to the definitions below in order to have a common understanding of these key terms.

這項調查重點在於中國可能對台灣採取的三個主要行動方針：隔離、封鎖和入侵。  
請參閱下面的定義，以便對這些關鍵術語有共同的理解。

**Quarantine:** A law enforcement operation led by non-military actors (e.g., China Coast Guard, maritime militia, etc.) that is focused on limiting the flow of commercial goods into Taiwan. Quarantines can be more limited in scope than a blockade and could, for example, focus on restricting traffic into just a few ports in the name of a customs inspection regime. On the high end, a more intense quarantine could involve some People's Liberation Army (PLA) assets and limited kinetic actions, but the primary actors would be Chinese law enforcement agents, not military forces.

**隔離：**由非軍事行為者（例如中國海警、海上民兵等）主導的執法行動，重點在於限制商業貨物進入台灣。隔離的規模可能比封鎖更有限，例如，假借以海關檢查制度的名義集中限制少數港口的交通。更嚴格的隔離可能涉及一些解放軍的武力資產和有限度的高動能行動，但主要行為者將是中國的執法人員而不是軍隊。

**Blockade:** A multi-domain PLA-led operation to heavily restrict the flow of commercial goods and military activity around Taiwan. A blockade could vary significantly in terms of kinetic action, ranging from targeted interdiction of commercial vessels and opposing military forces to highly kinetic operations to destroy port and airport facilities on Taiwan. A blockade could be employed in conjunction with another military operation (e.g., before, during, or after an invasion), but a “standalone” blockade is the primary course of action with no intention of an accompanying invasion.

**封鎖：**由解放軍主導的多域行動，嚴格限制台灣週邊的商業貨物流動和軍事活動。封鎖在高動能行動方面可能存在很大差異，從有針對性地攔截商船和敵對軍事力量到摧毀台灣港口和機場設施的高度動態行動。封鎖可以與其他軍事行動結合（例如，在入侵之前、期間或之後），但「獨立」封鎖是主要行動方針，無意伴隨入侵。

**Invasion:** A large-scale, multi-domain, and highly kinetic amphibious island landing campaign to forcefully seize the main island of Taiwan.

入侵：大規模、多領域、高動能的兩棲登島戰役，強行奪取台灣本島。

## China's Capabilities 中國的能力

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE ALL SINGLE-CHOICE UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.**

**(以下問題除特殊說明外皆為單選題)**

**For questions 1-3, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

**對於問題 1-3, 請表示您在多大程度上同意或不同意以下陳述。**

1. Beijing currently possesses the capabilities to effectively execute a law enforcement-led quarantine of Taiwan that would substantially restrict trade to the island.
  - Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree
1. 北京目前擁有能力對台灣有效執行以執法為主導的隔離, 並嚴重限制外界與台灣的貿易。
  - 非常同意
  - 有點同意
  - 不太同意
  - 強烈反對
2. Beijing currently possesses the capabilities to effectively execute a PLA-led blockade of Taiwan.
  - Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree
2. 北京目前擁有能力對台灣有效執行由解放軍主導的封鎖。
  - 非常同意
  - 有點同意
  - 不太同意
  - 強烈反對
3. Beijing currently possesses the capabilities to effectively execute an amphibious invasion of Taiwan.
  - Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree

3. 北京目前擁有能力對台灣有效執行兩棲入侵。
  - 非常同意
  - 有點同意
  - 不太同意
  - 強烈反對
  
4. Can Beijing successfully force Taiwan to unify with China via a PLA-led blockade and maximum pressure campaign without the need to invade Taiwan?
  - Yes, a blockade and maximum pressure campaign could be sufficient
  - Potentially, but China will need sufficient capabilities to credibly threaten an invasion if it were to launch a blockade
  - No, a blockade is likely to escalate into an invasion
  - No, China will need to invade Taiwan to achieve unification
  
4. 北京能否不需要入侵台灣, 僅僅透過解放軍主導的封鎖和極限施壓行動, 成功迫使台灣與中國統一?
  - 是, 封鎖和極限施壓行動就足夠了
  - 有可能, 但如果中國要發動封鎖, 它需要有足夠的能力施加可信的入侵威脅
  - 否, 封鎖可能會升級為入侵
  - 否, 中國需要入侵台灣才能實現統一

#### **FACTORS AFFECTING BEIJING'S USE OF FORCE 影響北京使用武力的因素**

5. President Xi Jinping has instructed the PLA to have the capability to forcefully unify Taiwan by 2027. Does this affect your assessment of whether China is more likely to quarantine or blockade Taiwan than invade the island? *For the purposes of this question, please assume Beijing assesses that Taiwan has crossed a major red line towards independence.*
  - Yes, prior to 2027, China is likely to quarantine or blockade Taiwan because it does not have the capabilities to launch a successful invasion
  - No, regardless of timing, China is likely to quarantine or blockade Taiwan because Beijing considers it a better course of action than an invasion
  - No, regardless of timing, China will equally consider all three options—quarantine, blockade, and invasion
  - No, regardless of timing, China is more likely to invade Taiwan than quarantine or blockade

5. 習近平主席已指示解放軍在2027年之前具備武力統一台灣的能力。這是否會影響您對中國是否更有可能隔離或封鎖而非入侵台灣的評估？(就本問題而言, 請假設北京評估台灣已跨越走向台獨的主要紅線。)
- 是的, 在2027年之前, 中國可能會隔離或封鎖台灣, 因為它沒有能力發動成功的入侵
  - 否, 無論何時, 中國都有可能隔離或封鎖台灣, 因為北京認為這是比入侵更好的行動方針
  - 否, 無論何時, 中國都會同等考慮隔離、封鎖和入侵這三種選擇
  - 否, 無論何時, 中國都更有可能入侵台灣, 而不是隔離或封鎖台灣
6. Under what circumstances would Beijing most likely choose to implement a law enforcement-led quarantine of Taiwan? (If you select “Other” please specify in your written response)
- Beijing intends to increase significant pressure on Taiwan but does not want to escalate into a kinetic conflict
  - As a key preparation for an imminent PLA-led blockade of Taiwan
  - As a key preparation for an imminent invasion of Taiwan
  - All of the above
  - Another reason. Please specify. [PLEASE PROVIDE WRITTEN RESPONSE]
6. 什麼情況下北京最可能會選擇對台灣實施以執法為主導的隔離？(若您選擇“Other”(其他原因), 請說明您的答案)
- 北京試圖大幅增加對台灣的壓力, 但無意升級為武裝衝突
  - 作為解放軍短程內若要封鎖台灣的重要準備步驟之一
  - 作為短程內若要入侵台灣的重要準備步驟之一
  - 以上皆是
  - 其他原因, 請明確說明。[請填寫]
7. If China blockades Taiwan, how long would Taiwan be able to hold out and resist Beijing if there is no (or very limited) U.S. military intervention
- Up to two weeks
  - Two weeks to one month
  - One month to three months
  - Three months to six months
  - Six months to one year
  - More than one year



7. 如果中國封鎖台灣, 在沒有(或非常有限的)美國軍事干預下, 台灣能夠堅持和抵抗北京多久?
- 最長兩週
  - 兩週至一個月
  - 一個月至三個月
  - 三個月至六個月
  - 六個月至一年
  - 一年以上
8. If a conflict over Taiwan becomes protracted, how long would Beijing be willing to continue large-scale, high-intensity kinetic operations (before pausing or scaling down operations significantly)?
- Up to three months
  - Three months to six months
  - Six months to one year
  - Beyond one year, but not indefinitely
  - Indefinitely
8. 如果對台武裝衝突曠日持久, 北京願意持續其對台大規模、高強度的武裝行動多久(在暫停或大幅縮減行動規模之前)?
- 最長三個月
  - 三個月至六個月
  - 六個月至一年
  - 超過一年, 但不是無限期
  - 無限期
9. Do you think China would be willing to use (detonate) a nuclear weapon against U.S. or coalition forces in a conflict over Taiwan?
- Yes
  - No
9. 您認為中國願意在對台衝突中對美國或其盟軍使用(引爆)核武嗎?
- 願意
  - 不願意

**Questions 10 and 11 ask you to rate the likelihood of China taking the following courses of action based on a given objective. Please evaluate the likelihood of each scenario separately.**

**問題 10 和 11 要求您評估中國根據給定目標，採取以下行動方針的可能性。請分別評估每種情境的可能性。**

10. In the next five years, if Beijing’s primary goal is to punish Taiwan and coerce Taipei to change certain activities or policies (but not immediately force unification), how likely is Beijing to resort to the following courses of action?

10. 在未來的五年內，如果北京的首要目標是懲罰台灣，並迫使台灣政府改變某些行動或政策（但不是立即強制統一），那麼北京採取以下行動方針的可能性有多大？

Scenario 情境	Very unlikely 非常不可能	Unlikely 不太可能	Likely 可能	Very likely 非常有可能
Quarantine of Taiwan’s outlying islands such as Kinmen and Matsu (use of non-military actors to surround islands and disrupt trade) 隔離台灣例如金門、馬祖等離島（利用非軍事行為者（例如中國海警、海上民兵等）包圍島嶼並限制貿易）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quarantine of main island of Taiwan (use of non-military actors to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade) 隔離台灣本島（利用非軍事行為者利用非軍事行為者包圍台灣並限制貿易）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forceful seizure of one or more of Taiwan’s outlying islands 強行奪取一個或多個台灣離島	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distant joint blockade (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade) 遠程聯合封鎖（利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Highly kinetic joint blockade of Taiwan (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade, including firepower strikes against the island) 對台灣的武力聯合封鎖（利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易，包括對台灣本島進行火力攻擊）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invasion of Taiwan 入侵台灣	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. In the next five years, if Beijing’s primary goal is to immediately force Taiwan’s unification, how likely is Beijing to resort to the following courses of action?

11. 在未來的五年內，如果北京的首要目標是立即迫使台灣統一，北京採取以下行動的可能性有多高？

Scenario 情境	Very unlikely 非常不可能	Unlikely 不太可能	Likely 可能	Very likely 非常有可能
Quarantine of Taiwan's outlying islands such as Kinmen and Matsu (use of non-military actors to surround islands and disrupt trade) 隔離台灣例如金門、馬祖等離島(利用非軍事行為者(例如中國海警、海上民兵等)包圍島嶼並限制貿易)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quarantine of main island of Taiwan (use of non-military actors to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade) 隔離台灣本島(利用非軍事行為者包圍台灣並限制貿易)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forceful seizure of one or more of Taiwan's outlying islands 強行奪取一個或多個台灣離島	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distant joint blockade (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade) 遠程聯合封鎖(利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Highly kinetic joint blockade of Taiwan (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade, including firepower strikes against the island) 對台灣的武力聯合封鎖(利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易, 包括對台灣本島進行火力攻擊)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invasion of Taiwan 入侵台灣	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## U.S. AND ALLIED APPROACHES 美國及其盟國的做法

12. Political science literature defines deterrence as requiring a combination of credible threats and credible assurances. What mix of U.S. threats and assurances is most appropriate for deterring Beijing from use of force against Taiwan?

- 95 percent threats, 5 percent assurances: the United States needs to maximize credible threats and minimize credible assurances. Beijing cannot be reassured
- 75 percent threats, 25 percent assurances: the United States needs to prioritize credible threats but should not overlook the importance of credible assurances
- 50 percent threats, 50 percent assurances: the United States needs a relatively equal mix of credible threats and assurances
- 25 percent threats, 75 percent assurances: the United States needs to prioritize credible assurances but should not overlook the importance of credible threats
- 5 percent threats, 95 percent assurances: the United States needs to maximize credible assurances and minimize credible threats. Reassurance will deter Beijing

12. 政治學文獻將嚇阻定義為需要結合可信的威脅和可信的保證。哪種美國的威脅和保證的比例組合最能有效嚇阻北京對台灣使用武力？

- 95% 的威脅, 5% 的保證: 美國需要最大化可信威脅並最小化可信保證。  
對北京做出保證只是徒勞
- 75% 的威脅, 25% 的保證: 美國需要優先考慮有可信的威脅, 但不應忽視有可信的保證的重要性
- 50% 威脅, 50% 保證: 美國需要相對均等的可信威脅和保證組合
- 25% 的威脅, 75% 的保證: 美國需要優先考慮有可信的保證, 但不應忽視有可信的威脅的重要性
- 5% 的威脅, 95% 的保證: 美國需要最大化可信保證並最小化可信威脅。  
有可信的保證能嚇阻北京

**Questions 13 and 14 include a list of scenarios. For each scenario, please indicate your level of confidence. Please evaluate each scenario separately.**

**問題 13 和 14 包含一系列情境。針對每種情境，請表示您的信心程度。請分別評估每個情境。**

13. Given this scenario occurs in the next five years, how confident are you that the United States would be willing to intervene militarily to stop Beijing from achieving its objectives?

13. 若在未來五年內發生以下情況，您對美國願意進行軍事干預以阻止北京實現其目標的信心有多大？

Scenario 情境	Very unlikely 非常不可能	Unlikely 不太可能	Likely 可能	Very likely 非常有可能
Quarantine of Taiwan's outlying islands such as Kinmen and Matsu (use of non-military actors to surround islands and disrupt trade) 隔離台灣例如金門、馬祖等離島(利用非軍事行為者(例如中國海警、海上民兵等)包圍島嶼並限制貿易)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quarantine of main island of Taiwan (use of nonmilitary actors to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade) 隔離台灣本島(利用非軍事行為者包圍台灣並限制貿易)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forceful seizure of one or more of Taiwan's outlying islands 強行奪取一個或多個台灣離島	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distant joint blockade (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade) 遠程聯合封鎖(利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Highly kinetic joint blockade of Taiwan (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade, including firepower strikes against the island)

對台灣的武力聯合封鎖(利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易, 包括對台灣本島進行火力攻擊)

Invasion of Taiwan      
 入侵台灣

Joint blockade of Taiwan following a failed invasion      
 入侵台灣失敗後聯合封鎖台灣

14. Given this scenario occurs in the next five years, how confident are you that U.S. allies and partners would be willing to join U.S.-led multinational military efforts to defend Taiwan?

14. 若在未來五年內發生以下情況, 您對美國的盟友和夥伴願意加入美國領導的多國軍事行動來保衛台灣的信心有多大?

Scenario 情境	Very unlikely 非常不可能	Unlikely 不太可能	Likely 可能	Very likely 非常有可能
Quarantine of Taiwan's outlying islands such as Kinmen and Matsu (use of non-military actors to surround islands and disrupt trade)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
隔離台灣例如金門、馬祖等離島(利用非軍事行為者(例如中國海警、海上民兵等)包圍島嶼並限制貿易)				
Quarantine of main island of Taiwan (use of nonmilitary actors to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
隔離台灣本島(利用非軍事行為者包圍台灣並限制貿易)				
Forceful seizure of one or more of Taiwan's outlying islands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
強行奪取一個或多個台灣離島				
Distant joint blockade (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
遠程聯合封鎖(利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易)				

Highly kinetic joint blockade of Taiwan (use of PLA to surround Taiwan and disrupt trade, including firepower strikes against the island)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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對台灣的武力聯合封鎖(利用解放軍包圍台灣並限制貿易, 包括對台灣本島進行火力攻擊)

Invasion of Taiwan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
入侵台灣				

Joint blockade of Taiwan following a failed invasion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
入侵台灣失敗後聯合封鎖台灣				

### IMPLICATIONS OF GEOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS 地緣政治發展的影響

15. Following the Biden-Xi meeting in November 2023, have U.S.-China relations stabilized such that the likelihood of a potential Taiwan Strait crisis in 2024 has been significantly reduced?

- Yes
- No

15. 2023 年11月拜登與習近平會晤後, 美中關係是否穩定下來, 以致 2024 年潛在台海危機爆發的可能性大幅降低?

- 是
- 否

16. How do you assess the probability of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait in 2024? (A crisis refers to a situation similar to the 1995/1996 Taiwan Strait crisis where there is a significant increase in cross-strait tensions that is accompanied by at least a major PLA exercise aimed at coercing Taiwan and renewed Chinese threats to use force against the island)

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

16. 您如何評估 2024 年台海危機爆發的可能性?(危機是指類似於 1995/1996 年台海危機的情況, 其中兩岸緊張局勢顯著加劇, 同時解放軍至少進行了一次旨在脅迫台灣的大型演習, 並且中國再次威脅對台灣使用武力。)

- 非常有可能
- 可能

- 不太可能
  - 非常不可能
17. If Chinese leaders perceive the results of the January 2024 Taiwan presidential election to be unfavorable to Chinese interests, when do you think Beijing will engage in the most escalatory response?
- Before the election
  - Regardless of what the new president does, Beijing will escalate after the election but before the inauguration in May 2024
  - Regardless of what the new president does, Beijing will escalate after the inauguration, including expanding already pre-planned annual PLA summer exercises
  - Beijing will wait to assess if the new president implements significant policy changes before responding
  - Beijing will not take major escalatory actions

17. 如果中國領導人認為2024年1月台灣總統大選的結果不利於中國，您認為北京什麼時候會做出最劇烈的升級緊張行動？

- 在選舉前
  - 不管新總統做什麼，北京會在選舉結束後、2024年5月就職典禮前升級
  - 不管新總統做什麼，北京會在就職典禮後立即開始升級，包括擴張提前準備好的年度解放軍夏季演習
  - 北京將等待觀察新總統的政策後再採取行動
  - 北京不會採取重大升級行動
18. If Chinese leaders perceive the results of the January 2024 Taiwan presidential election to be unfavorable to Chinese interests, what is the most escalatory action Beijing is likely to take before the end of 2024?
- Highly coercive (maximal) non-military actions (e.g., diplomatic and/or economic measures)
  - Large-scale military exercise encircling Taiwan to achieve temporary blockade-like effects
  - Forceful seizure of Taiwan's outlying island(s)
  - Customs inspection quarantine of Taiwan
  - A joint blockade of Taiwan using PLA air and maritime assets
  - An amphibious invasion of Taiwan

18. 如果中國領導人認為 2024 年 1 月台灣總統大選的結果不利於中國，北京可能在 2024 年底之前採取的最劇烈的升級緊張行動是什麼？
- 採取最大脅迫(極限)非軍事行動(例如外交和/或經濟措施)
  - 大規模環台軍演, 達到暫時封鎖效果
  - 強行奪取台灣一或多個離島
  - 對台灣執行海關檢驗隔離
  - 利用解放軍空中和海上武力聯合封鎖台灣
  - 兩棲入侵台灣
19. If Chinese leaders perceive the results of the January 2024 Taiwan presidential election to be favorable to Chinese interests, what do you expect China's primary course of action to be after the new Taiwan leader is inaugurated?
- Unilaterally offer Taipei significantly more “carrots” and political and economic incentives to reset cross-strait dynamics
  - Unilaterally reduce use of coercive measures against Taiwan, creating room for the new Taiwan president to engage with China
  - Reduce the use of coercive measures against Taiwan after the new Taiwan president showcases his/her goodwill towards Beijing
  - Maintain China's current approach towards achieving unification with Taiwan (no change)
  - Escalate coercive activities against Taiwan to achieve unification at a faster pace
19. 如果中國領導人認為2024年1月台灣總統大選的結果有利於中國，您預期台灣新領導人就職後中國對台的主要行動方針是什麼？
- 選後立即單方面向台灣政府提供更多讓利措施, 例如及政治和經濟激勵措施, 以重啟兩岸互動
  - 選後立即單方面減少對台脅迫措施, 為台灣新總統與中國交流創造空間
  - 在台灣新任總統向北京展現善意後, 減少對台灣採取脅迫措施
  - 繼續中國目前對台灣的促統作為(沒有改變)
  - 升級對台脅迫活動加快促統
20. If the Chinese economy suffers a sharp, prolonged downturn, how does this impact the likelihood of China using force against Taiwan?
- Decreases the likelihood of any Chinese use of force against Taiwan
  - No major change
  - Increases the likelihood of a quarantine or blockade of Taiwan
  - Increases the likelihood of an invasion of Taiwan
  - Increases the likelihood of any Chinese use of force against Taiwan



20. 如果中國經濟急劇且長期下滑, 這對中國對台灣使用武力的可能性有何影響?

- 降低中國對台灣使用武力的可能性
- 無重大變化
- 增加台灣被隔離或封鎖的可能性
- 增加入侵台灣的可能性
- 增加中國對台灣使用武力的可能性

# Endnotes

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- 3 Bonny Lin et al., “Tracking China’s April 2023 Military Exercises around Taiwan,” CSIS, *ChinaPower*, April 10, 2023, <https://chinapower.csis.org/tracking-chinas-april-2023-military-exercises-around-taiwan/>.
- 4 “President Xi Jinping Meets with U.S. President Joe Biden in Bali,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 14, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202211/t20221114\\_10974686.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221114_10974686.html); “Wang Yi: The One-China Principle Is What Underpins Stability across the Taiwan Strait,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, July 11, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/wshd\\_665389/202207/t20220712\\_10718857.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202207/t20220712_10718857.html); and “President Xi Jinping Meets with U.S. President Joe Biden,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 16, 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics\\_665678/xjpfmgjxzmshwtscxapec/202311/t20231116\\_11181442.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/xjpfmgjxzmshwtscxapec/202311/t20231116_11181442.html).
- 5 “Readout of President Joe Biden’s Meeting with President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China,” The White House, November 15, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/11/15/readout-of-president-joe-bidens-meeting-with-president-xi-jinping-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-2/>.
- 6 Please note that the figures in the graphic may be slightly different from those in the text due to rounding.
- 7 Hope Yen, “CIA Chief: China Has Some Doubt on Ability to Invade Taiwan,” AP News, February 26, 2023,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-taiwan-politics-united-states-government-eaf869eb617c6c356b2708607ed15759>.

- 8 U.S. government sources have been mixed in what capabilities Xi has instructed the PLA to have by 2027. The DOD’s 2023 report on China’s military does not specifically mention when the PLA aims to have the capabilities for an “invasion.” See U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2023* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 2023), <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>.
- 9 Bonny Lin et al., “Surveying the Experts: China’s Approach to Taiwan,” CSIS, *ChinaPower*, September 12, 2022, <https://chinapower.csis.org/survey-experts-china-approach-to-taiwan/>.
- 10 A distant blockade involves PRC civilian and military forces enforcing a maritime and air exclusion zone to block off trade to the island. While there is a large PLA presence, China does not use force from the outset, but it may choose to do so if the situation escalates. A highly kinetic blockade also involves PRC civilian and military forces enforcing a maritime and air exclusion zone, but this operation will involve a heavy use of force, including firepower strikes against key military and civilian assets.
- 11 Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard, “China Blockade Would Be Act of War, Taiwan Would Not Surrender, Official Says,” Reuters, September 23, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-blockade-would-be-act-war-taiwan-would-not-surrender-official-says-2022-09-23/>.
- 12 See Marek Jestrab, *A Maritime Blockade of Taiwan by the People’s Republic of China: A Strategy to Defeat Fear and Coercion* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, December 2023), [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/strategy-paper\\_naval-blockade-of-Taiwan.pdf](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/strategy-paper_naval-blockade-of-Taiwan.pdf). Note that food import reliance is based on caloric value; see “Review of Taiwan’s Food Security Strategy,” FFTC Agricultural Policy Platform, September 10, 2020, <https://ap.fftc.org.tw/article/2570>.
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