

Prospects for US-China Confrontation: Impact on Geopolitical Processes and Taiwan Situation Development

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Summary

The inevitable and fatal confrontation, as described by Thucydides in his "History of the Peloponnesian War" and modernized by Harvard University Professor Graham Allison ("Destined for War"), is today applied to the rivalry between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, which to some extent mirrors the former great confrontation between the US and USSR. Such an approach is entirely legitimate, as it concerns two cosmic, nuclear, economically developed, demographically powerful, and politically ambitious superpowers with modern armed forces, whose interests intersect in many aspects.

Although unlike the bipolar world of the Cold War era, the current confrontation occurs under conditions of deep economic interdependence between the two states, which complicates both direct military confrontation and achieving objective strategic advantage. The US attempts to contain China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region by supporting allies and developing networks of "mini-alliances", while Beijing, in turn, challenges the established rules of the modern world order by investing in the development of non-Western coalitions (not "anti-Western", but "non-Western", meaning alternative ones). In this context, the confrontation takes the form of strategic competition, where the key instruments become not only the military component, but also trade, innovation, technology, and ideological competition for models of the future world order.

Essence of US-China Confrontation

China's view of the confrontation with the US is grounded in several fundamental principles, including historical context and experience of colonial humiliation. The Chinese political elite views the current competition with the US through the prism of the so-called "century of humiliation" (百年国耻) – a period of Chinese history that begins with the First Opium War (1839-1842) and ends in 1949 with the victory of the People's Republic of China in the Civil War. During this time, as a result of wars, humiliating unequal treaties imposed by imperialist powers, including as a result of the intervention of the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900, the Qing Empire was virtually transformed into a semi-colonial state, losing sovereignty (establishment of foreign control over the customs system, consular jurisdiction, extraterritoriality, creation of concessions and settlements, the right to keep troops in Northern China, division of the country into "spheres of influence", broad ideological influence (missionary activity)). The consequences of exploitative colonialism in history generate feelings of injustice and determine the desire to restore former greatness – "Make China Great Again". The United States is often perceived in Beijing as the heir to the old empires – states that seek to limit China's growth.

At the same time, Chinese political elites are irritated and internally reject the fact that the current world order is formed and led by a state with a history of less than 250 years. China is one of the oldest civilizations in Eurasia, whose culture has influenced many countries of the continent, particularly through the spread of philosophical teachings (Confucianism, Taoism), Chinese writing (especially in East Asia), technical inventions (compass, paper, printing, gunpowder), elements of art, architecture, and culinary traditions. Moreover, among most ancient civilizations, Chinese continues to function successfully in our time, while other ancient cultures (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Mesoamerican) have perished. This factor prompts political elites to conclusions about the inequality of a world order in which one of the fundamental civilizations is assigned secondary importance.

Such logic is one of the key reasons for the activation and strengthening of nationalist rhetoric in the PRC under Xi Jinping's leadership. "The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" is one of the main tasks of Xi Jinping's political strategy, who in 2012 presented the concept of the "Chinese dream" (中国梦). At the same time, given the ethnic and confessional heterogeneity of the population in China, the nation is understood as a macro-community united by common cultural and ideological identifiers. That is, the PRC's strategy is aimed not simply at achieving economic or military parity with the US, but also at correcting "historical injustice" and establishing the state as a civilizational power.

At the same time, American elites have always perceived the US as an "exceptional nation", a "city upon a hill", a civilizational project, a bearer of universal values of democracy, human rights, and market economy. This notion is rooted in a deep

historical tradition that begins with the Puritans who emigrated to the New World and adhered to the idea of their exceptionality, considering themselves "a people chosen by God". They justified their relocation for various reasons, particularly, emigration was described as service – settling empty lands, spreading Christianity, and establishing a new Puritan church. The Puritans saw their mission in creating an ideal society on the new continent that would become a model for the rest of the world – a new spiritual and social order that would embody divine will on earth. They sought to create a Christian community where moral purity and social justice would become the fundamental principles of life. These ideas formed the foundations of American exceptionalism. According to this philosophy, the United States is a state that must protect not only its own national interests but also has an obligation, as a moral authority for the rest of the world, to maintain a global order that promotes peace, freedom, and stability. American elites, as victors in World War II who helped rebuild Europe, and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as victors in the Cold War, perceived themselves as architects of the international order and bearers of the historical mission to shape global standards – democracy, human rights, free market, and rule of law.

In Zhongnanhai, the global role of the US is interpreted quite differently. Particularly, episodes such as the invasions of Iraq or Afghanistan are perceived by Beijing not as efforts to create a democratic world, but as a continuation of the colonial policy of 19th-century European empires – forcible imposition of political and value models. While Washington sincerely believes democracy to be a universal recipe for achieving prosperity for all peoples, Beijing promotes the possibility of multiple development models. Xi Jinping often says that there are no "bad" countries. "[There are](#) no two identical leaves in the world, and there are no countries with the same history, culture, and state system. Each history, culture, and state system has its unique dignity and advantage; they cannot be divided into good and bad. The question is how capable such a system is of responding to the country's realities, how it is supported by the people, whether it effectively ensures political stability, social development and population welfare, as well as human progress. The culture and social system of countries are historically different, which determines the peculiarity of civilization". Such rhetoric consistently rejects the idea of unifying the world according to Western templates, which from China's view are not universal but alien, especially for ancient civilizations like Chinese or, for example, Arab.

Thus, the essence of the confrontation between the US and China lies in a deep philosophical and worldview divergence. This is a collision of two visions of world order, the role of the state, the nature of justice, and the legitimacy of power. Of course, this confrontation takes concrete forms primarily in economic, military, and technological dimensions.

Strategic Competition for Leadership

China's economy over the past three decades has shown phenomenal growth, which has brought the country to second place in the world after the US in terms of GDP size. In the 1980s, China only began transitioning from a centrally planned economy to market reforms that facilitated accelerated development. China is now the world's largest manufacturer, exporter, and important player in international financial markets. Its strengths include large-scale production, infrastructure development, a significant domestic market, and technological innovations, especially in areas such as artificial intelligence and 5G.

However, China's economy also has its weaknesses. China faces problems in the area of domestic consumer demand, income inequality, as well as the need to adapt its economy to population aging. Additionally, high levels of debt, particularly in the corporate sector, remain a significant problem for the country. Also, environmental problems are an important obstacle, as China is one of the world's largest environmental polluters, which threatens sustainable development.

On the other hand, the US economy remains the most innovative in the world, especially in areas such as technology, financial services, and defense industry. The US also has a large domestic market capable of supporting economic growth even despite external challenges. The American economy, however, faces such problems as significant government debt, income inequality, and dependence on imports, particularly in areas such as energy and high-tech goods.

Despite these differences, the economies of China and the US are closely interconnected. China is the largest trading partner of the US and an important supplier of goods, while the US remains one of the main importers of Chinese goods. Additionally, China is one of the largest holders of American debt. Mutual investments between countries are enormous, and changes in the economies of one of them can have serious consequences for the other.

Beijing has become not only an economic competitor but also an important player in such critical areas as high-tech manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies. Particular concern is raised by China's ambitions to become a leader in technological industries, which is observed, particularly, within the "Made in China 2025" initiative, which provides for enhanced production and development of technologies that could potentially deprive the US of economic advantage. Particularly, in the 5G sphere, when China through Huawei company became a global leader. At the same time, the US questions the security of Chinese technologies and actively lobbies in the international community for banning or restricting the participation of Chinese companies in building global technological infrastructure.

Additionally, China actively works on creating alternative global alliances and structures that would help it weaken US dominance in global politics and economics. The PRC not only develops political and military alliances, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), but also actively puts forward new concepts (New Asian Security, Global Development Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and Global Security Initiative), aimed not only at qualitative change in the world architecture of security and development, but also at challenging the US and questioning the correctness of the values, ideas, and rules they support.

An example of this is BRICS, which is not currently a full-fledged alliance or bloc, but rather an association of countries dissatisfied with US economic dominance and such structures as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank. BRICS has become a platform for developing alternative financial mechanisms, such as creating their own investment banks and currency reserves (New Development Bank (NDB), also known as BRICS Bank), with the aim of gaining greater autonomy and less dependence on the US dollar, although the success and effectiveness of this association's activities raises certain doubts.

One of China's key strategic goals is the international role of the yuan as a global reserve currency. Beijing actively promotes the use of the yuan in bilateral trade agreements with countries like Russia, Iran, India, and African countries. Many of these countries have a common interest in abandoning the US dollar due to sanctions or economic restrictions imposed by the US, which are considered by many as an instrument of political pressure. One of the key directions is expanding the use of the yuan in international financial instruments, such as bonds and derivatives. China actively works on creating alternative financial platforms and initiatives, such as the "petro-yuan", which is used in oil deals instead of the dollar. This also indicates that China, despite great benefits from globalization and free trade, seeks new ways to change the international financial system, particularly in the context of a new multipolar world where US dominance should be reduced.

In military terms, China feels increasing threats from the US, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, where Washington strengthens defensive positions through expanding cooperation with allies, particularly Japan, South Korea, and Australia, as well as in the southern part of the Pacific Ocean through small island states. China, in turn, actively builds military might, focusing efforts on modernizing the Armed Forces, developing the latest missile technologies, aviation, and fleet, which creates new tension points in the region, particularly in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.

The confrontation between the US and China is no longer limited only to Earth's territory but extends beyond its boundaries, encompassing space as a new front of strategic rivalry. China actively develops its space program, becoming one of the leading players in this sphere. China's space station "Tianhe" and the launch of missions to the Moon and Mars have become symbols of the PRC's ambitions in space exploration. The US, in turn, maintains leadership in the space industry through NASA, numerous private initiatives, and ambitions for Moon and Mars colonization, which is realized through programs such as "Artemis" and other major projects.

However, the space race between the two countries is not limited only to research or scientific achievements but has military and security dimensions. China actively invests in developing dual-use space technologies, while the United States expresses concern about the potential threat of China's military expansion in space, particularly through the development of anti-space weapons.

In the future, relations between China and the US will most likely remain tense but simultaneously flexible – from open strategic competition to cautious coexistence in areas where mutual dependence is still strong (fighting climate change, drug trafficking, terrorism, etc.). Both states will focus on building parallel architectures of influence – economic, technological, security – which will gradually crystallize the new bipolarity of the 21st century. At the same time, the risk of unpredictable confrontation will grow, as more and more spheres – from space to artificial intelligence – become arenas without clear rules of the game. And although confrontation will take new forms, the cornerstone that will determine its trajectory will remain the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

“Taiwan Question”

Beijing considers Taiwan as an integral part of its territory, temporarily torn away as a result of the civil war of 1945-1949 due to the weakening of the Chinese state as a result of external intervention by European empires. That is, on one hand, the loss of the island is a consequence of the "century of humiliation", and establishing PRC jurisdiction over Taiwan is a historical mission of "national reunification". On the other hand, Taiwan is perceived in Zhongnanhai as a "rebellious province" that is subject to return – peacefully or, if necessary, by force. In this context, control over the island would symbolize the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the sole political center that has the right to represent the unified Chinese people on the international arena.

The geostrategic factor also plays a key role in shaping Beijing's policy toward Taiwan. Taiwan is located in the so-called "first island chain", which has strategic importance for controlling the Indo-Pacific region. The island is an important link in the chain of natural barriers that provide protection for the Chinese – coast from potential military threats. With its help, China can control important sea routes that are critical for ensuring trade, energy supplies, and regional security.

From a geostrategic perspective, Taiwan is a key object for ensuring PRC dominance in important waters, such as the South China Sea, which is rich in resources and is an important trade route. Control over the island would allow China to expand its zone of influence and change the balance of power in the region, which, in turn, would allow it to strengthen control over access to maritime communications.

Additionally, Taiwan's strategic importance lies in its ability to serve as a springboard for expanding Chinese military and political presence in the region.



Although Xi Jinping during the 20th CCP Congress in autumn 2022 [emphasized](#) commitment to "peaceful reunification" (和平统一) based on the "one country, two systems" model (Xi also stated that this is a great creation of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the best institutional structure for maintaining long-term prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macau after their return) and warned "separatist forces", Beijing does not renounce the use of force to protect China's interests. "[Resolving](#) the Taiwan question and achieving complete reunification of the motherland is an unchanging historical task of the party, a common aspiration of all Chinese sons and daughters, and an inevitable requirement for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". According to [Henry Kissinger](#), who was a mediator in normalizing relations in the 1970s, Mao Zedong told Richard Nixon that China could wait a century for Taiwan's return.

Despite statements about peaceful reunification, the PRC openly demonstrates readiness to use force in case of a change in Taiwan's diplomatic status, i.e., declaration of independence. The "[Anti-Secession Law](#)", adopted in 2005, directly states that military intervention is possible in case of "separatist actions that lead to the separation of the island from the mainland".

In recent years, Beijing has intensified air and naval operations near Taiwan, particularly modeling scenarios of blockade or invasion.

This raises serious concern from the US, which has a number of obligations to Taiwan defined by the Taiwan Relations Act. The law was adopted in 1979 after the US officially recognized the PRC and established diplomatic relations with Beijing to unite joint efforts against the USSR. However, despite the absence of official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, this law establishes the US obligation to support the island, particularly, the States are obligated to supply Taiwan with weapons and equipment to maintain defense capability. The US seeks to prevent forceful resolution of the "Taiwan question" by China and opposes any attempts to change the island's status by non-peaceful means. However, US support for Taiwan, particularly in the defense sphere, is interpreted in Beijing as a form of external interference in China's internal affairs and causes categorical aggression. One of the reasons for this is fears that the US, through military-technical cooperation, is gradually turning the island into a military base. These fears are a reflection of the "besieged fortress" syndrome, a deeply rooted sense of vulnerability to the surrounding world, which is the result of historical trauma from the colonial past. Accordingly, the surrounding world appears as a source of permanent threat, and the increase in the presence of external players near China's borders is perceived as a challenge to national security and sovereignty. Such a mental attitude only exacerbates the security dilemma in US-China relations. In the absence of effective direct communication between countries, such dynamics can lead to dangerous escalation in the future.

Moreover, the United States actively works to prevent Taiwan from isolation on the international arena. Although China conducts an active diplomatic campaign to limit the number of countries that recognize Taiwan or support it at the international level. After terminating diplomatic relations with Nauru in January 2024, the Republic of China

maintains official diplomatic relations with 11 UN member countries and the Holy See, while informal relations are maintained with almost 60 states. Foreign government agencies, such as the American Institute in Taiwan, act as de facto embassies on the island, and Taipei has similar de facto embassies and consulates in most countries under such names as "Taipei Representative Office" (TRO) or "Taipei Economic and Cultural (Representative) Office" (TECO). The US also always advocates for Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations and forums where possible. For example, Taiwanese representatives were invited to the Summit for Democracy in 2021, 2023, and 2024, initiated by the J. Biden administration. At the same time, the US adheres to the "One China Policy", which requires states not to recognize Taiwan as a separate state, but at the same time does not limit their support for Taiwan in other spheres.

US interest in Taiwan is driven by a combination of strategic, economic, and value considerations. Taiwan, as already noted, has geostrategic importance as part of the so-called "first island arc" that contains China's military expansion into the Pacific. The loss of Taiwan in case of transition under PRC jurisdiction would significantly strengthen Beijing's positions in the region, undermine the balance of power, and threaten US allies such as Japan and the Philippines. Additionally, Taiwan is an important element of the global technological supply chain, as this is where TSMC company is located – the world's largest semiconductor manufacturer, on which the US defense and digital industry depends.

At the same time, Taiwan embodies a democratic alternative to authoritarian China, and its support by the US is not only a security issue but also a signal of global solidarity among democratic countries. However, Taiwan's status as a symbol of democracy and US interests around it inevitably affect the security dynamics of the region, opening space for various scenarios of development in the Taiwan Strait.

Scenarios for Taiwan Strait Situation Development

One possible scenario is maintaining the status quo, when Taiwan and the PRC continue to interact, although tense, but controlled balance will be preserved. Within this variant, uncertainty remains: Taiwan functions as a de facto independent state, while the PRC continues to insist on the principle of "one China" and does not renounce the possibility of forceful "unification" in the future. However, even such a relatively stable scenario remains fragile because China will continue to strengthen military capabilities in the region, and Taiwan will actively increase defense capabilities. Taiwan will increasingly closely cooperate with the US and other partners, investing in defense technologies, reforming armed forces. This, in turn, may be perceived by Beijing as a provocation or gradual movement toward independence, which will increase the risk of incidents due to erroneous assessments.

Maintaining the status quo remains highly probable, not least because of the moods on the island. Over the past decades, a new political nation has actually formed in Taiwan, as many people, particularly youth under 40, do not identify themselves as Chinese but exclusively as Taiwanese and do not consider mainland China their "homeland". This is reinforced by the development of democracy, economic prosperity, and developed cultural identity that differs from continental China.

In addition, the indigenous population of Taiwan, which consists of various ethnic groups that historically lived on the island long before the arrival of refugees from mainland China, has a peculiar and sometimes contradictory attitude toward the question of unification with China. These peoples, among whom the most numerous are Amis, Atayal, Paiwan, Kavalan, have ancient and multifaceted culture, authentic languages, religions, and traditions that often differ from the dominant culture exported from mainland China. In the socio-political context, the indigenous peoples of Taiwan traditionally defend autonomy and distinctiveness. Given historical traumas, particularly the period of colonization, as well as the long process of assimilation under the rule of various empires, including China, they view the idea of unification with China with caution.

Thus, for the PRC, Taiwan's integration will be extremely problematic, as population resistance will be much stronger than it might seem at first glance. The lessons of the Russia-Ukraine war, when Ukrainians showed fierce resistance to the Russian army, and the underestimation of local population moods became one of the key reasons for the failure of the Russia's invasion, is an important signal for China. This experience, which demonstrated the importance of understanding national feelings and people's aspirations in the context of any attempt to change political status, will undoubtedly be taken into account by Beijing in the future.

Moreover, various political parties (Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Kuomintang) and leaders in Taiwan, although they have somewhat different views on the island's future, mostly agree with the opinion about the need to refuse integration with mainland China. The DPP, led by Lai Ching-te, Taiwan's president since May 2024, actively supports the status quo and seeks to preserve the island's autonomy without direct conflict with China. This party has the most pronounced commitment to the idea of Taiwan independence, although it does not officially proclaim a change in diplomatic status due to potential threats from China. Lai Ching-te has repeatedly [emphasized](#) that Taiwan is already a sovereign state named "Republic of China", so there is no need for formal declaration of independence. Particularly, in his inaugural speech, he [noted](#) that Taiwan exists as a state as long as it has sovereignty. He also [expressed](#) readiness for cooperation with China but emphasized the importance of protecting Taiwan's sovereignty and democracy, as well as respect from Beijing. The Kuomintang party led by Hou Yu-ih traditionally advocates for gradual integration of Taiwan with mainland China while maintaining certain autonomy. That is, the party actually supports the official PRC approach – "one country, two systems", but with the condition that Taiwan will preserve the democratic system and autonomy. However, he emphasized that the Constitution of the Republic of China does not contain provisions on "Taiwan independence", and therefore he [adheres](#) to the position that Taiwan's future should be determined by its citizens within the current constitutional norms. The Taiwan People's Party's position on Taiwan independence lies in supporting the preservation of the status quo, without official declaration of independence or unification with the PRC. The party's founder and presidential candidate in the 2024 elections, Ko Wen-je, has repeatedly emphasized that declaring independence would lead to war and is therefore an unacceptable option. The New Party consistently opposes Taiwan independence and supports unification with mainland China. Founded in 1993 as a split from the Kuomintang, the party occupies a right-conservative position and is part of the Pan-Blue coalition. In 2019, then party chairman Yu Mu-ming presented a plan for Taiwan's unification with China under the "one country, two systems" principle, which provided for preserving the multi-party system but includes a ban on the independence movement, reduction of armed forces, cessation of American weapons purchases, and Taiwan's participation in the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. At the same time, the idea of integration into the PRC is gradually losing popularity due to changes in population self-identification, which is increasingly inclined to view the PRC as a hostile political entity.

Another scenario for Taiwan Strait development provides for possible military escalation. In case of military invasion, China would likely try to conduct a swift operation to capture key objects in Taiwan, particularly airports, ports, military bases, and government institutions, to subjugate the territory before the US or other Taiwan allies could provide effective assistance, as the US would likely be forced to respond in one way or another, since they have obligations to help Taiwan in case of attack through the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. Particularly, the US may provide Taiwan with significant military assistance, particularly in the form of supplying modern weapons, equipment, ammunition, and intelligence data, without directly intervening in the conflict.

It is quite likely that China would begin a military operation with cyberattacks to weaken the island's connection with the outside world and destroy information systems, including government networks, military communications, control and command systems for defense forces. The goal of such attacks would be to disrupt or completely destroy the ability to exchange information and manage forces in real time. This could complicate response to invasion and coordination of defensive operations. China may conduct electronic warfare attacks to block or disorganize radio communications, navigation systems (for example, GPS), as well as other communication channels necessary for the work of military units and management structures. China may try to disable or destroy satellite systems used for navigation, reconnaissance, and communication to complicate conducting operations on the ground and deprive Taiwan of access to important real-time data.

China would likely plan an intensive air campaign, using fighters, bombers, and drones to strike key infrastructure objects. This would be accompanied by missile complex strikes on important military bases, command posts, airfields, and other strategic objects to maximally weaken the island's defense before the main phase of invasion.

The next stage would likely be landing troops in several places on Taiwan's coast. Taiwan's southern coast is one of the most likely directions for landing, as this region has several important ports, particularly the city of Kaohsiung, which is the largest port on the island. The southern region also differs in relatively weak defense compared to the northern and central parts of the island, making it attractive for rapid advance. Additionally, Chinese forces may direct their efforts to the central coast, particularly the city of Taichung, which is an important industrial and transportation center. Capturing this territory would allow ensuring control over key infrastructure objects, which is important for further development of military operations. Adjacent areas may also become objects for landing operations, as this would allow creating a bridgehead for further combat operations to the south or central part of the island. Landing may include using various methods, such as parachute landing, amphibious forces, and special units, which allows ensuring rapid and simultaneous strike in several directions.

A full-scale Chinese invasion of Taiwan remains possible, however, as of 2025, it appears unlikely for several key reasons.

First, although China has numerous and technically equipped armed forces, it is important to note that the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) has no experience conducting combat operations, especially in such complex and distant theaters of war. Taiwan, in turn, is well prepared for defense, has a developed air defense system, missile complexes, and modern weapons. This complicates the prospects for successful island capture without significant human and material losses, which could weaken the CCP's authority. In his 2024 New Year's speech, Xi Jinping [stated](#): "We Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one family. No one and never will be able to break the family ties between us, and no one and never will be able to stop China's reunification, which is a matter of time". However, starting a full-scale war against Taiwan could deeply undermine this narrative foundation. A war in which thousands of "Chinese on both sides of the strait" die would inevitably cause a moral dilemma for both the army and

society. Such "reunification", accompanied by bloodshed and actually fratricidal war, could be perceived as a strategic catastrophe that discredits party leadership and destroys the concept of "unity of the Chinese nation" that Beijing has actively promoted for years.

Additionally, the international situation should be considered. China already faces economic sanctions and technological restrictions, and new steps in case of invasion of Taiwan could significantly strengthen these trends. Although full-scale isolation of China is unlikely given its systemic integration into the world economy, the West would most likely focus on strengthening targeted sanctions in high-tech spheres – for example, semiconductors, avionics, telecommunications – as well as restricting Chinese companies' access to capital and know-how. Additionally, sharp deterioration of the security situation in the region would lead to increased business risks, which would force transnational corporations to accelerate withdrawal from the Chinese market or transfer supply chains to other Southeast Asian countries. In the long term, this could mean structural slowdown of the PRC economy, increased capital outflow, and erosion of trust in CCP policy.

Experts differ in opinions on the probability and timing of Chinese invasion. US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Philip S. Davidson warned in 2021 that China might try to invade Taiwan within the next decade, but some experts believe such invasion would occur later. Others name 2049 as a critical date, as the PRC will celebrate its 100th anniversary that year, and Xi [emphasized](#) that unification with Taiwan is important for realizing the "Chinese dream", which provides for restoring the PRC's status as a world power.

The threat of Chinese military invasion of Taiwan dominates global expert discussion. At the same time, much less attention is paid to analyzing the trend that has been unfolding for many years: Beijing [seeks](#) to capture without firing a single shot. Therefore, another possible scenario is hybrid conflict, in which China and Taiwan (with US support) may wage struggle not on the battlefield but also in cyberspace and the economic field. China actively develops cyber capabilities, and in case of situation escalation, cyberattacks on critical infrastructure of Taiwan and its allies can be expected. Instead of starting a full-scale offensive, China increases pressure on the island in various directions: political interference (through individual parties and political leaders), economic pressure, information operations, cyberattacks, and diplomatic isolation. These manipulations occur against the background of permanent military provocations. Xi Jinping's approach is understandable: he prefers to gradually force Taiwan to capitulate rather than start an open war. At the end of 2024, American intelligence reported that although Beijing continues to be determined to establish control over Taiwan, Zhongnanhai [hesitates](#) about direct armed conflict, as a war for Taiwan could cost the world economy 10 trillion dollars, which is significantly more than losses caused by Russia's war against Ukraine or the COVID-19 pandemic.

One possible variant of Taiwan situation development is PRC blockade of the island, which would allow Beijing to achieve goals without the need to use direct military force. As an island located 160 kilometers from China's coast, Taiwan has a natural advantage

in the form of the strait as a maritime barrier that complicates conducting full-scale invasion. In the Taiwan Strait area, there are powerful currents and frequent typhoons, creating additional risks for conducting military operations. At the same time, the surrounding waters give China the opportunity to impose a naval blockade to gradually force Taiwanese to capitulation. In case of maritime blockade of Taiwan by China, the island would face serious challenges in ensuring food and energy supplies. According to [Taiwan's Minister of Agriculture](#), state grain reserves amount to approximately 5.5 months and could be increased to 8-9 months with favorable harvest. Taking into account private reserves, total food reserves could meet population needs for up to one year. Taiwan imports over 97% of its energy resources, making it vulnerable to external influences. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) reserves currently amount to approximately 8 days, with plans to increase to 14 days by 2027. Oil reserves can [cover](#) needs for 5-6 months, while coal – for about a month. These limited energy reserves create a serious threat to stable functioning of the economy and population livelihood under blockade conditions.

Maritime blockade as a coercive instrument is strategically advantageous for China for several key reasons, making it a better alternative to full-scale military invasion of Taiwan. First and foremost, blockade allows avoiding direct combat and those numerous consequences that inevitably accompany open conflict, particularly enormous economic losses for the PRC that could significantly weaken its economic potential at the global level. A war for Taiwan would inevitably cause a major economic crisis, including sanctions, trade restrictions, and cessation of investments.

Moreover, China can mask the blockade as "military exercises" or "maritime safety measures". This would allow Beijing to minimize political resonance, preventing direct international reaction that could be significantly harsher in case of declaring open war. Compared to full-scale invasion, blockade gives China greater flexibility in controlling the situation and less risk of involving international forces in direct intervention. For example, even if the US or other countries try to help Taiwan through equipment supplies, the effectiveness of these actions would be limited because the blockade would give China the opportunity to control maritime communications.

It is unlikely that Washington would immediately proceed to direct military participation in the conflict, as this could lead to large-scale escalation due to the fact that China as a nuclear power possesses a significant arsenal. Although the US may provide Taiwan with significant support in the form of high-tech weapons, intelligence data, as well as diplomatic pressure on China and allies. Instead, maritime and potentially air blockade of Taiwan is a scenario in which the US may act more cautiously. The US is unlikely to go for direct military escalation in case of Taiwan blockade, as such a step could be perceived as indirect aggression by China, meaning the US would be forced to act through more diplomatic and economic methods, particularly through sanctions, increased presence in the region, and support for international organizations.

Strategic Uncertainty Regarding Taiwan

On April 2, 2025 – the day Donald Trump called "Liberation Day" – the United States announced a massive tariff increase for almost all US trading partners, including a 32 percent rate for Taiwan.

Analysts had anticipated that the Trump administration might resort to economic pressure on Taiwan, given his previous accusations against Taipei for "stealing" the American semiconductor industry. A few weeks before the election, Donald Trump, appearing on The Joe Rogan Experience, [stated](#) that, in his opinion, Taiwan uses unfair business practices and directly accused Taipei of "stealing" the American chip industry.

Vice Premier Chen Li-chun [announced](#) that the government would fully participate in negotiations with the US to minimize the impact of tariffs, continue developing Taiwan's industry, ensure fair competition, and develop just and mutually beneficial relations between Taiwan and the US.

In response, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) announced a new investment project in the United States, which can be viewed as an attempt to maintain access to the American market and reduce tensions in relations with Washington. An additional \$100 billion was announced in addition to \$65 billion for developing a large semiconductor plant in Arizona. The project involves building three new chip manufacturing plants, two advanced chip packaging centers, and a large research hub, making this project the largest one-time foreign direct investment in US history, providing employment for over 3,000 people on 1,100 acres of land in Arizona. TSMC produces over 90% of the world's most advanced semiconductors, which partially determines the need to protect Taiwan from PRC blockade or invasion.

Besides criticism regarding semiconductors, Trump has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with Taiwan's defense spending as a percentage of GDP. Currently, Taiwan spends slightly less than 3% on defense. Trump insists this figure should be 10%. During confirmation hearings for Elbridge Colby for the position of Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy, he confirmed this [position](#). President William Lai Ching-te [stated](#) that his government is "ready to cooperate with the US in all aspects" and promised to increase defense spending.

Through Executive Order #14169, President Donald Trump introduced a 90-day freeze on foreign aid, including funding under the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. Already on January 24, Secretary of State Marco Rubio officially [instructed](#) to suspend almost all US foreign aid obligations, including FMF fund allocation. At the same time, Taiwan [became an exception](#), ensuring continued military aid under the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act. Although this somewhat reduces the probability of immediate

funding cuts, which causes concern in Taipei, the future of the FMF program remains unclear given the increasingly transactional US approach to security partnerships.

Additionally, timelines for key deliveries, such as MQ-9B drones, HIMARS missile systems, and F-16V fighters, may be delayed as the Pentagon conducts a comprehensive review of arms export policy. This could force Taipei to reconsider its defense strategy and resource allocation.

Notably, it was during Trump's first administration that US defense supplies to Taiwan reached record levels in recent years: the total amount of agreements under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program reached about \$18 billion, including a large-scale \$8 billion deal for supplying 66 fighters. For comparison, during Barack Obama's eight-year presidency, FMS volumes amounted to \$14 billion (although another \$6.2 billion came from direct commercial sales), while during Joe Biden's four years – only slightly more than \$8 billion.

In addition to the above, the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) program became an extremely important form of military support for Taiwan, allowing rapid transfer of weapons and equipment directly from existing US army reserves in crisis situations. Under the Biden administration, Taiwan repeatedly received aid under PDA – particularly [in July 2023](#), [September](#), and [December 2024](#).

However, in the context of the current foreign aid freeze introduced by President Trump, further provision of PDA aid to Taiwan may come under stricter control, accompanied by delays or even reduction of support. During Senate hearings, then-candidate for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth [emphasized](#) that US priorities should focus exclusively on national interests and the readiness level of American armed forces. This also leaves the future of PDA aid to Taiwan in question.

Therefore, although Taiwan temporarily became an exception to the restrictions, the overall vector of US foreign policy signals growing conditionality and selectivity in providing security support. The focus is not only on strategic expediency but also on allies' compliance with Washington's requirements regarding self-defense, contribution to common security, and economic efficiency of partnership.

Due to this trajectory, there is a risk of destroying strategic trust between Washington and Taipei at a time when unity between the two partners is critically important for deterring the PRC. The introduction of tariffs and criticism of Taiwan's defense spending policy raises doubts in Taipei about the US's ability to fulfill its commitments. This could potentially encourage Beijing to test US readiness to defend Taiwan in case of danger. Moreover, if semiconductor production is relocated to the US to a greater extent, the island's geostrategic importance may diminish, negating one of the key factors determining US interest. In the broader context of US-China competition, such developments create challenges for implementing the US Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Conclusions

Strategic competition between the US and China is not only a struggle for global hegemony but also a collision of two fundamentally different worldviews and philosophies about international order and the role of each respective state in it. Each side seeks to assert its development model that corresponds to their historical experiences, cultural values, and national ambitions. For China, this particularly means correcting "historical injustice" and restoring the greatness of its civilization, while the US, relying on principles of democracy and universal values, attempts to maintain the existing international order. As a result, this confrontation grows into multidimensional strategic rivalry that encompasses not only economics and military power but also technology, ideology, and culture.

The global consequences of this confrontation are massive. They manifest in the formation of new blocs and alliances, fragmentation of world trade, redistribution of supply chains, as well as politicization of technologies and technological standards (5G and mobile communications, AI, etc.). Many countries find themselves under pressure to choose sides or balance between two forces, which complicates foreign policy and threatens their strategic autonomy. Competition for influence is growing in regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where China offers infrastructure investments within the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, while the US responds by strengthening security and economic partnerships. The confrontation also affects global governance – paralysis of international institutions is growing, the gap in approaches to climate issues, cybersecurity, and human rights is deepening. All this creates a new reality in which the international system becomes increasingly polarized and unpredictable.

And although confrontation will take new forms, the cornerstone that will determine its trajectory will remain the situation in the Taiwan Strait. One possible development scenario is maintaining the status quo: Taiwan will remain de facto independent, while China will continue to insist on the "one China" principle. However, this status is vulnerable due to constant military capability buildup on both sides. The internal political situation in Taiwan also favors maintaining the status quo. Taiwanese, especially youth, identify themselves as a separate nation and do not support integration with China. Political forces in Taiwan support the island's sovereignty, rejecting the idea of unification with the PRC.

Another possible scenario is military escalation. In case of Chinese attack, Taiwan would likely receive significant military aid from the US. China may begin with cyberattacks and aviation operations, as well as attempt to capture key infrastructure and military objects on the island. Such a scenario involves serious risks for regional stability.

Taiwan blockade is another possible development scenario that could be part of China's strategy to force the island into political concessions without the need to conduct large-scale military invasion.

The situation around Taiwan remains the most explosive node in US-China confrontation, capable of provoking a large-scale crisis with global consequences. In the broader perspective, this rivalry is already transforming the international system, defining a new architecture of global security, trade, and technological development.