SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

THE PRESIDENT (POTUS)

Your Job

As president, you are the ultimate decider—the "principal." You run the meeting, calling on people at the table to speak and ask them for up-to-date information, background details, and for advice. Lean on your Chief of Staff to help you with this process. You make the choices and final decisions.

- How do you assess the situation, given the intelligence reports and expertise of others?
- What are the risks of possible actions or inaction?
- What is the menu of policy options that are on the table? Which are the best options? Which are most likely to succeed?

Background

You are a former U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, a battleground state, who was elected in a very close contest race for president. You are one year into your first term in office. You ran on a platform that largely focused on growing the economy and lifting the middle class. Your domestic policy program, a mix of tax, health care, and energy reforms, is currently working its way through the Senate, which your party narrowly controls. [Feel free to make up more backstory].

Actions

Possible things to do:

- Make decisions (but at least let some other players speak first)
- Delay! Delay! Anything to avoid making a decision.
- Stand up and pace around the room.
- Get angry or annoyed. Call people idiots.
- Tell a joke or folksy story from your Pennsylvania days to strategically lighten the mood in the room.

Possible things you can say:

- "What are my options here?"
- "Is this the best we can do? Really?"

- “Frankly, I don’t want to be left holding the bag.”
- “I don’t want to end up like my predecessor…”
- “Isn’t there another approach? Let’s think outside the box.”
- “What does this mean for our allies in the region?”

Keep In Mind

You are responsible.

> “The buck stops here,” as Truman once said. The American public and other countries are very likely to identify you with consequences of any decisions that you make.

You are running for reelection.

> You must balance international affairs with domestic policy. You need to keep your political party unified and to maintain public support to win reelection.

The national interest.

> You must find some balance between what you think is best for the country, what your advisors recommend, what your allies prefer, how voters might react, and, above all, what is practical in the situation.

Uncertainty.

> No guarantees. No matter how well-informed or planned a decision might be, you are never quite sure how a decision or policy choice will turn out. Consider the concept of the “Fog of War.” There is an inherent level of uncertainty even when you know your own capacities, those of adversaries, and the intent of key players.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

CHIEF OF STAFF

Your Job

As chief of staff, you have three main jobs: (1) be an honest broker of the information-sharing process, ensuring all legitimate voices are heard; (2) give advice in the best interests of the president; and (3) establish a menu of viable policy options for POTUS to make the best possible decision.

Is the information provided by others sound or is it skewed in a way that will potentially impair the president's decision-making ability? What is the menu of policy options on the table—*what isn't being considered*? Have the potential impacts been fully mapped out? *What information or decision-making process represents the president's best interests*?

Menu of Policy Options To Provide

- *Unified Messaging*: Coordinate the NSC, Defense, and State Department so the president has a coherent and aligned message.
- *Screen Decision Briefs for Political Risk*: Require all proposals to include potential for second-order domestic and electoral impacts.
- *Keep the President's Schedule Clear of Non-Essential Events*: Clear the decks in the coming days for national focus and crisis management.

Ideas of things you can say

- "Mr./Madame president, can we hear from some more voices? Can we hear from _____?"
- "Do we know this for sure? Or is this just speculation?"
- "What is the endgame here?"
- "Let's not forget that Midterm elections are right around the corner!"
- "Sure, but if you tank the economy, Mr./Madame president, you can better kiss your reelection goodbye."
- "Do you care more about _____ than the president's agenda? Huh? Do you"
- "Screw them! This is about survival!"

- “Mr/Madame president, we were scheduled to do an event at _____ but I’ll clear your schedule for tomorrow.”

Ideas of things that you can do

- Take notes and relay them to the president when needed.
- Be very businesslike, professional, and process-oriented.
- Keep the process focused and on target.
- After awhile, you can strategically lose patience if things go off the rails.
- Take a phone call on a secure line and then tell the president that _____ is on the line.
- Question the accuracy of information given by another player.
- Question the motives of another player, asking them if they care more about _____ than the president’s agenda or reelection.

Your Character’s Prevailing Concerns

- POTUS credibility and reelection
- Validity of the information provided by advisors
- Giving POTUS a menu of policy options
- Planning for unforeseen policy consequences

Keep In Mind

You are not the principal. Give the president the tools needed to make the best decision. But do not insert your own viewpoints to unfairly shape the process.

Gatekeeper. Sometimes you need to be the bad cop so POTUS doesn’t have to be.

Advice. You personally have a career background in economic policy and electoral politics. Your expertise allows you to weigh in on those matters to evaluate the advice of others.

Brief tenure. You have a high-performance, high burnout job.

Blame. If things go poorly, you are likely the first one internally to be blamed in the White House for the policy failure and ultimately fired.

Briefing: List of Members of the Situation Room

You are responsible for overseeing the information-sharing and decision-making process. The Chief of Staff should expect players to fulfill the following roles:

1. President of the United States (POTUS)

- Decision-maker-in-chief: Will weigh options and make final calls on military, diplomatic, and messaging actions.
- Needs clear, concise options with risks, timelines, and consequences.

2. National Security Advisor

- Crisis coordinator and strategic integrator.
- Synthesizes intel, military, diplomatic, and economic input.
- Guides POTUS on cross-agency alignment and escalation management.

3. Secretary of State

- Leads diplomatic response and international coalition-building.
- Will coordinate with allies, manage messaging to Beijing, and handle global fallout.
- Needs talking points, timelines, and redline clarity.

4. Secretary of War/Defense

- Oversees force posture, readiness, and military options.
- Will detail operational timelines, rules of engagement, and deterrence posture.
- Needs decision authority and clarity on thresholds for escalation.

5. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations

- Leads international diplomacy and messaging at the UN, especially with China and Security Council members.
- Needs clear policy language and legal justifications for public and closed-door sessions.

6. White House Legislative Affairs Director

- Coordinates with Congressional leadership and key committees.
- Ensures bipartisan support, briefings, and potential legislative tools (e.g., sanctions, aid packages).
- Needs messaging discipline and up-to-date decisions for Hill outreach.

7. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

- Top military advisor: provides operational assessments, risks, and real-time capabilities.
- Will brief on force movements, contingency plans, and coordination with allies.
- Needs tight coordination with SecDef and clear policy intent.

8. Senior Political Advisor

- Monitors domestic political impact, public opinion, and media landscape.
- Helps shape presidential messaging and public communications.
- Needs communication plans and polling inputs.

9. Vice President

- Serves as trusted advisor, surrogate, and link to stakeholders (e.g., Congress, governors, public).
- May engage foreign counterparts or lead domestic reassurance efforts.
- Needs top-line briefings, talking points, and defined roles.

10. Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA)

- Provides real-time economic impact assessments of crisis scenarios (e.g., sanctions, military escalation, supply chain disruptions).
- Advises on financial market stability, trade exposure, and inflationary effects.
- Works closely with Treasury, Commerce, and NEC to forecast and model outcomes.
- Needs intel on likely policy moves (e.g., sanctions, export controls, investment restrictions) to anticipate economic ripple effects.
- Supports strategic communication with business leaders and economic stakeholders when needed.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

Your Job

As national security advisor, your job is to brief the president on the most up-to-date and accurate intelligence about the unfolding situation. You serve as chair of the National Security Council (NSC), which serves as the focal point for policymaking in the national security space. You draw your intelligence briefings from the CIA, which conducts espionage and collects intelligence, including from human sources, and the NSA, which monitors, collects, and processes information and data from cyber sources.

Opening Script

"Mr/Madame president, we have a situation unfolding in real time. China has launched ballistic missiles at Taiwan. We have reports of massive troop buildups in southern China, in Fujian province, across the Taiwan strait. In addition, we have satellite images of Chinese naval vessels converging in the East China Sea and Taiwan strait, which have encircled Taiwan, effectively blockading Taiwanese commercial and military navigation. At this time, we have no clear sense of whether this is a war game with live fire, a full invasion, or something in between."

[If asked for follow up]

- Ballistic missile launch: high confidence
- Naval blockade: high confidence
- Troop buildup: Medium confidence
- Is this an invasion? No definitive assessment as this time.

Menu of Policy Options To Provide

- *Initiate a Joint Intelligence Task Force***:** Assemble intel from NSA, CIA, DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), and regional allies to determine whether this is a drill or an invasion. Present updated assessments to POTUS.

- *Establish a Red Line Communication Channel with Beijing:* Quietly open a secure backchannel to gauge Chinese intent and prevent miscalculation.

- *Prepare a Limited Contingency Response Package:* Develop options for a calibrated U.S. military signal (e.g., moving a carrier group to the region) without crossing into open escalation.

Actions

Things you can do:

- Brief the president in detail
- Establish what is known and what is not known
- Speak to which players are directly involved and what external actors like other countries are doing in reaction
- Decline to say that you know the answer but that you can draw on intelligence capabilities from the CIA, NSA or allies to get more leverage on the answer.

Things you can say

- "Here's what we know right now…"
- "We're seeing a significant escalation in adversary behavior."
- "Intelligence indicates intent but not yet a decision to act."
- "We can't say that with high confidence, no."

Your Character's Prevailing Concerns

- Explaining what we know. Being forthright with what we don't know.
- Accuracy and validity of intelligence reports.
- Counterintelligence & countering propaganda of foreign adversaries.
- Timeliness of intelligence - worries about changes on the ground
- Protecting sources and methods of intelligence from adversaries

Keep In Mind

Technocrat. You are not a political player. You are a matter-of-fact technocrat.

High Confidence/Low Confidence. Reliability of intelligence is never 100% assured. But it can be "high confidence" or "low confidence." There are also "unknown unknowns" (meaning, we don't know what we don't know).

Allies. US intelligence relies heavily on the "Five Eyes" for SIGNIT (signals intelligence) and data sharing. The alliance is Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand + the US.

Briefing I: US Intelligence Capabilities in East Asia

Current Situation Overview

- PLA military activity: [e.g., large-scale exercises, air/maritime incursions near Taiwan]
- Taiwan's response posture and political signals
- Intelligence update: PRC intent, capabilities, and redlines

Risk Assessment & Scenarios

- Short-term risk of escalation or miscalculation
- Possible PRC actions: blockade, cyberattacks, air/naval "gray zone" ops
- Recommended U.S. redlines and escalation management framework

Strategic Communications Plan

- Proposed Presidential remarks or statement
- Unified messaging with allies and partners
- Narrative framing: support for democracy, regional stability, and U.S. leadership

Briefing II: Taiwan's Domestic Political Situation

Vibrant Multi-Party Democracy

- Taiwan transitioned from authoritarian rule to a full democracy in the 1990s.
- Regular, competitive elections and peaceful transfers of power reflect strong democratic institutions.

Dominant Parties: DPP vs. KMT

- Politics are largely shaped by two major parties: the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which leans pro-sovereignty, and the Kuomintang (KMT), which favors closer ties with China.
- Tensions over cross-Strait policy are central to Taiwanese political identity and voter alignment.

Generational and Identity Shifts

- A growing number of Taiwanese, especially younger voters, identify as Taiwanese rather than Chinese, influencing support for the DPP and cautious views of China.
- National identity of Taiwan is a key domestic cleavage polarizing voters.

Civil Society and Press Freedom

- Taiwan has a robust civil society and one of the freest media environments in Asia.
- Active public discourse on democracy, sovereignty, and social issues.
- Major campaign issues in the last presidential election of 2024 were cross-strait relations with China and national defense, followed by the cost of living, capital punishment, and the pay gap between men and women.

China's Influence and Disinformation

- PRC attempts to sway Taiwanese politics via **economic pressure, media influence, and election interference** have become a significant domestic issue.
- Taiwan has developed advanced counter-disinformation tools and legal frameworks to safeguard its democracy.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Secretary of State

Your Job

As Secretary of State, you job is to leverage diplomacy and negotiation to its maximum effect. You emphasize the relationship of American security and power to its network of allies and adversaries. You are predisposed to negotiating an outcome and considering the opinion of other world leaders. Ambassadors and diplomats report to you.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, President Xi is saying this is a war game, just like any other. But the PRC's official spokesman is calling for an end to Taiwan's freedom of navigation, reiterating they consider the island a rogue province. *The People's Daily*, the communist party's newspaper, is calling for quick reunification, by military force if necessary. The Chinese ambassador to the U.S. in Washington calls this crisis an internal, domestic matter. Our diplomatic backchannels to China tell us to stand down or risk war. To say that our allies in the region, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, are very concerned, would be an understatement. All of these countries—the entire region, really—would likely be drawn into any larger conflict. Our allies are calling for de-escalation.

Menu of Policy Options

- *Push for Emergency Talks with Key Allies*: Urge a G7 nations or NATO emergency summit to build diplomatic consensus and contain escalation.

- *Engage ASEAN + Quad Diplomacy*: Rally regional players (Japan, India, Australia, Philippines) to issue a joint statement condemning the blockade. ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

- *Demand Clarity from Beijing at the UN*: Call for an emergency UN Security Council meeting to force China to define its intentions on the record.

- *Backchannel Diplomacy*. Find out what they actually want. This might not be an invasion. This could be an aggressive renegotiation of geopolitical realities.

Ideas of things you can say

- "Have we consulted with NATO or the UN? What's the temperature like there?"

- "This undermines decades of China's diplomatic credibility. But, depending on our actions, it might also undermine our own in the eyes of regional allies."

- “There are backchannel negotiations already in motion.”
- “We’ll likely lose global support if we act unilaterally.”

Ideas of things you can do

- Call out the potential negative effects of diplomatic fallout.
- Suggest regional or international coalitions.
- Delay for consultations
- Offer to call a foreign counterpart on the president’s behalf or pursue diplomatic backchannels.

Prevailing Concerns

- Prevent avoidable military escalation
- Impact on international relationships: You represent the US to the world
- Global Norms and US credibility
- Negotiation: you tend to value stability and negotiation
- Preventing the pitfalls of an aggressive military response that can better be solved by diplomacy

Keep In Mind

Vision. You share the president’s foreign policy vision and grand strategy and are the president’s main institutional voice abroad.

Legitimacy. Because you are interfacing with representatives from other countries on a regular basis, U.S. legitimacy matters a great deal to your ability to get things done.

Senate Oversight. You were confirmed by the U.S. Senate and must testify on administration policy regularly. This opens you up to a direct level of public scrutiny and criticism that presidents can avoid when you must defend administration actions.

Ambitions. You are an ambitious politician with career goals of your own. If you get credit for your achievements and raise your profile, it will advance your career goals for higher office (you might run for Senate or president) and your own personal legacy.

Briefing: Historical Overview of U.S.–Taiwan Policy

1. **Post-WWII Context (1949)**
   - The U.S. initially recognized the Republic of China (ROC) government, which relocated to Taiwan after the Communist Party took over mainland China.
   - U.S. support for the ROC was part of Cold War containment of communism.
2. **Taiwan Strait Crises (1950s)**
   - The U.S. signed the **Mutual Defense Treaty** with Taiwan (1954) following military tensions with the PRC.
   - The U.S. deployed forces to deter PRC aggression, especially during the 1954–55 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises.
3. **Shift in Recognition (1971–1979)**
   - **1971**: The U.S. backed UN Resolution 2758, which replaced the ROC with the PRC in the United Nations.
   - **1979**: The U.S. officially recognized the PRC and severed formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan.
4. **Taiwan Relations Act (1979)**
   - Passed by Congress to maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan.
   - Ensures continued arms sales and U.S. interest in Taiwan's security, without committing to direct military intervention.
5. **Six Assurances (1982)**
   - U.S. clarified its position to Taiwan, affirming no prior consultation with the PRC, no pressure to negotiate with Beijing, and continued arms sales.
6. **Strategic Ambiguity**
   - U.S. policy intentionally leaves unclear whether it would defend Taiwan in a conflict to deter both Chinese aggression and a unilateral Taiwanese declaration of independence.
7. **Contemporary Developments (post 2000s)**
   - Growing U.S.–Taiwan ties in trade, technology, and defense.
   - Increased congressional and executive support for Taiwan amid rising U.S.–China tensions.
   - Visits by high-ranking U.S. officials (e.g., Speaker Pelosi in 2022) have drawn strong reactions from China.
8. **Trump I and Biden Administrations (2017-2025)**
   - Trump accepts first congratulatory election call from Tawain's president, breaking precedent of avoiding direct head of state talks
   - Trump discusses US-Taiwan relations as part of tariff and trade negotiations
   - Biden said in a 60-minutes interview that the US would come to Taiwan's defense if China launched an unprovoked attack.
   - Biden also stated that the US does not support the independence of Taiwan

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Secretary of War/Defense (Pentagon)

Your Job

As Secretary of War/Defense, you lead the largest part of the government as measured by personnel or spending. You are in charge of 1.3 million active duty military servicemembers and 770,000 civil service workers. You are a top political appointee. You were confirmed by a Senate vote of 98-0 which gives you wide latitude in political support across the political spectrum.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, if I may. What we need right now is a show of force. We have longstanding security commitments to defend Taiwan and the region from invasion. Our allies in the Pacific—including Taiwan— expect us to ensure its territorial integrity. If we fail to do so, they will not expect us to act on their own behalf at a later juncture in defense of existing security agreements that benefit them. We cannot stand idly by while President Xi rewrites the world map. We should immediately move the Pacific Fleet, including aircraft careers, into the Taiwan Strait to challenge the Chinese blockade. We must ready a plan for friction, not only between China and Taiwan, but China and the US.

Menu of Policy Options

Deploy a Carrier Strike Group: Demonstrate resolve without immediate confrontation.

Establish Terms of Engagement. Decide whether forces on the ground should engage adversaries, including at which point in the chain of command firing on targets is authorized.

Order Strategic Basing Alert Drills in Guam and Okinawa: Quietly move military assets in the Pacific into position for regional readiness.

Arm Taiwan with Emergency Defense Aid: Accelerate the delivery of air defense systems and intelligence sharing.

Ideas of things you can say

- "This could set a precedent, not only for the Taiwan strait, but for contested regions across the globe—eastern Europe, the middle east, Africa."
- "That's a high-risk strike with no exit strategy."

- “We can do it, but expect retaliation within 72 hours.”
- “Respectfully, we’ve done this before — and it didn’t end well.”
- “With all due respect to State, this isn’t a diplomatic situation anymore.”

Ideas of things you can do

- Establish or dispute the military viability of a proposal.
- Give the president a classified threat matrix.
- Signal military support, but only with tight constraints.

Prevailing Concerns

- Advancing POTUS foreign policy with “hard power” (use of force, if necessary)
- Grand strategy—not just vis a vis Taiwan but all US military forces
- Military readiness and force protection
- Avoid political blowback at home and abroad from potential US casualties, which can generate public pressure to limit future military options

Keep In Mind

Politics.

You are the president’s political appointee. You’ve had a career that straddles both military experience and public office. You harbor ambitions of your own.

Use of Force.

The Pentagon is far more amenable to using military force than those predisposed to “soft power” and diplomacy, like the Secretary of State or UN Ambassador.

Allies.

US military bases in East Asia are located in other countries. The military coordinates with those countries to situate US personnel and move assets. The largest US bases in Asia are in South Korea, Japan (Okinawa is 400 miles to Taiwan) and the Philippines.

Capacity.

As the most well-resourced part of the executive branch, the Department of War/Defense has immense capacity to carry out its orders. There are risks to mission success and unknowns but the Pentagon can carry out difficult orders.

Briefing: Relative Strength of Chinese Military vs. US and Allies

1. **PLA Has Grown Rapidly, But U.S. Maintains Key Advantages**

   - China's military has modernized significantly, especially in missile forces, naval assets, and air defense.
   - The U.S. retains superior power projection, global logistics, and combat experience.

2. **Regional Proximity Favors China—But Alliances Balance the Equation**

   - China's geographic advantage in the Taiwan Strait gives it a local edge in speed and concentration of forces.
   - U.S. alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines provide forward-deployed forces and regional basing that offset this.

3. **U.S. and Allies Have Technological Edge**

   - The U.S. leads in stealth, ISR (intelligence/surveillance/recon), cyber, and undersea warfare.
   - Combined allied capabilities add depth in areas like missile defense, integrated command, and maritime domain awareness.

4. **Naval Balance is Contested, but Quality Favors the U.S.**

   - China has the world's largest navy by number of ships.
   - The U.S. fleet is more advanced, longer-ranged, and supported by regional allies like Japan and Australia.

5. **Allied Interoperability is a Force Multiplier**

   - Joint exercises, shared technologies, and coordinated planning across allies enhance deterrence.
   - Indo-Pacific strategy increasingly focuses on distributed operations and resilience under pressure.

6. **China Still Faces Operational and Logistical Gaps**

   - Limited combat-tested leadership, joint operations experience, and sustainment capacity over long distances.
   - U.S. and allied forces can sustain multi-domain operations across the region.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Chair of the Joint Chiefs (US Military)

Your Job

You are the highest-ranking military officer. You give professional military advice, not political spin. You speak in a matter-of-fact way to capabilities, timelines, and consequences and adhere to longstanding military codes of conduct. Your constituencies are military institutions: the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, principally.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, we have 7 aircraft carriers in the pacific fleet. We could move the USS Nimitz, a nuclear-powered aircraft career, into position within the hour. But it will take 3-5 hours and maybe longer to deploy to these waters with overwhelming force. We have bases in South Korea, Okinawa, and across the pacific. We have 313 military bases in East Asia, in total. But needless to say, we are not currently mobilized for full-scale war with the second largest, second most advanced military in the world. If we move into war readiness, what are the terms of engagement? Also, we are likely to trigger countermobilizations elsewhere in the region and potentially around the world.

Menu of Policy Options

Run Joint Military Readiness Drills in the Region: Include Japan and the Philippines to show interoperability without provocation.

Prepare Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) for Americans in Taiwan: Get ready to protect U.S. citizens if the situation escalates.

Present a Military Cost-Risk Ladder: Give the president a tiered menu from deterrence to full engagement with timeframes and casualty projections.

Ideas of things you can say

- "From a purely military perspective, here's how we'd do it."
- "That's a multi-theater operation with stretched logistics."
- "Sir/Ma'am, we have to be honest about readiness here."
- "We have to consider if there will be secondary movements by the North Koreans, the Russians, or the Vietnamese."

Ideas of things you can do

- Lay out cold, hard timelines and capabilities.
- Brief the president on contingency plans others aren't mentioning.
- Pause to ask for a backchannel military communication before proceeding.

Prevailing Concerns

- Military readiness
- Coordination of Army, Navy, Air, and Marine forces
- Mission clarity
- Maintaining the US security blanket in East Asia
- Preventing China from expanding influence in Asia

Keep In Mind

Chain of Command.

You are not in the chain of command — that's the Secretary of War/Defense role. You assist in implementing decisions and coordinating branches of the military. But that also means you lkely have far greater expertise than civilians or top political appointees like the Secretary of War/Defense.

Perspective.

You value honor, clarity, and non-partisanship.

Methods.

You are results-oriented.

Limits.

You offer pushback if asked to "sell" a plan you don't believe in or falls outside of the scope of military institutions or the military's actual ability to implement a plan.

Briefing I. US Military Assets in East Asia

7th Fleet (Headquartered in Yokosuka, Japan)

- Includes **aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines**.
- Rapid-response naval power in the Western Pacific.
- 5 Forward-Deployed Aircraft Carriers

USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)

- Homeport: *Naval Air Station North Island, California*
- Frequently deployed to the Western Pacific; has participated in freedom of navigation ops in the South China Sea.

USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71)

- Homeport: *Naval Base San Diego, California*
- Deployed multiple times to Indo-Pacific; key strike capability for potential crisis response.

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72)

- Homeport: *Naval Air Station North Island, California*
- Has operated in the Western Pacific and is part of rotational presence in the region.

USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76)

- **Forward-deployed** at *Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan*
- The only **permanently deployed U.S. carrier** outside the continental U.S.
- First to respond in regional contingencies, including a Taiwan Strait crisis.

USS Nimitz (CVN-68) *(semi-regularly rotates in)*

- Homeport: *Bremerton, Washington*
- Though aging, still active and available for Indo-Pacific surge operations if needed.

Submarine Forces in the Western Pacific

- Attack submarines (SSNs) operating out of **Guam** and **Japan**.
- Provide **stealth, strike, and intelligence-gathering** capabilities near Taiwan.

Kadena Air Base (Okinawa, Japan)

- Hosts **F-15 fighters, tankers, and ISR aircraft**.

- Critical hub for air superiority, surveillance, and logistics support.

Andersen Air Force Base (Guam)

- Home to **B-1, B-2, and B-52 bombers**.
- Long-range strike capability covering the entire Taiwan Strait region.

Marine Corps Forces in Okinawa

- Includes **expeditionary units** capable of rapid deployment.
- Trained for **littoral operations and island defense**, aligned with Indo-Pacific strategy.

U.S. Bases in the Philippines (EDCA Sites)

- Forward staging areas near **Luzon**, facing Taiwan's southern flank.
- Useful for logistics, surveillance, and launching small-scale operations.

Allied Support Assets

- **Japan**: F-35s, Aegis destroyers, and bases that support U.S. air/naval ops.
- **Australia and South Korea**: Force projection, logistics, and coordination potential.

Briefing II. Pentagon Assessment of Chinese Military Assets

Eastern Theater Command (ETC)

- PLA's primary regional command for operations against Taiwan.
- Controls ground, air, naval, and rocket forces in the Taiwan Strait area.

PLA Navy (PLAN) Assets in the East and South China Seas

- Large surface fleet: destroyers, frigates, and amphibious assault ships.
- Increasing aircraft carrier activity (e.g., **Shandong**, **Fujian**).
- Submarine presence (nuclear and diesel-electric) for blockade or interdiction roles.

PLA Rocket Force (PLARF)

- Short- and medium-range ballistic missiles (e.g., **DF-15**, **DF-16**, **DF-21**) positioned in **Fujian and Guangdong provinces**.
- Capable of targeting Taiwan's runways, ports, and U.S. bases in the region.

Air Power (PLA Air Force and Navy Air Arm)

- Advanced fighters and bombers (e.g., **J-20**, **J-16**, **H-6K**) regularly cross the Taiwan Strait median line.
- Air bases in eastern China within striking range of Taiwan.

Amphibious and Airborne Forces

- Expanding amphibious assault brigades and transport capability for potential cross-Strait operations.
- Presence of **airborne rapid-reaction units** that could target key infrastructure early in a conflict.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

UN Ambassador

Your Job

You represent the U.S. at the United Nations (and thus, in official capacity, to the world). You are attuned to global opinion, multilateral coordination, and international law. You often work closely with the State Department, but have your own platform and ambitions. You were previously the popular governor of an important state and ran for president but lost to the current president, which can make things awkward.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, Taiwan is a robust democracy, an ally, and a trading partner. We cannot let this aggression go unanswered. But a military solution is not the only one on the table. Let us to the UN Security Council and pass a resolution condemning these moves. Let us rally world opinion and work to isolate China not only militarily but economically and diplomatically. The Chinese cannot afford to alienate Europe, which it needs to export to for its growth model. And China does not want to overplay its hand by pushing the South Koreans and the Japanese into a closer military alliance.

Menu of Policy Options

Draft a Strong Security Council Resolution Condemning Aggression: Even if it's vetoed by China or Russia, use it to shape international opinion.

Coordinate an Emergency UNGA Session: Mobilize a coalition of allies and smaller nations to isolate China diplomatically.

*Push for UN Monitors or Naval Observers in the Taiwan Strait***:** Even symbolic presence could raise the cost of escalation.

Ideas of things you can say

- "We'll be isolated in the Security Council if we act alone."
- "This could be seen as a violation of international norms; we can use that to our advantage."
- "We need to lead, not act alone."
- "China and Russia will spin this their way. What is our official response?"

Ideas of things you can do

- Urge patience for international alignment.
- Urge strategic symbolic concessions to lower the temperature.
- Deliver public talking points for global media that might differ from administration statements to domestic media.
- Highlight the possible humanitarian fallout the Pentagon hasn't mentioned.

Prevailing Concerns

- Global legitimacy and optics
- Security Council dynamics
- Leveraging longstanding alliances in the region and across the globe.
- Humanitarian and human rights impacts

Keep In Mind

Strategy.

> You understand the limits of what the UN can do, but you care deeply about optics, which is also about public opinion and the legitimacy of actions.

Alliances.

> You're experienced in building international coalitions — or blocking bad ones.

Methods.

> You might be more idealistic, but you also know how to work the room.

Ambitions.

> You are probably going to run for higher office in the future. This could be a make-or-break moment for you.

Briefing I. Taiwan's Democracy in U.S. Foreign Policy

1. **Democracy as Shared Values**
   - Taiwan's democratic system aligns with U.S. values of self-governance, civil liberties, and rule of law.
   - Promotes the U.S. narrative of supporting democracies over authoritarian regimes.

2. **Symbolic Counterpoint to China**
   - Taiwan serves as a democratic contrast to the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian model.
   - U.S. often cites Taiwan as proof that Chinese culture is compatible with democracy.

3. **Strategic Justification for Support**
   - Taiwan's democratic status reinforces U.S. moral and political rationale for supporting it—beyond just strategic interests.

4. **Soft Power and Global Norms**
   - U.S. support for Taiwan bolsters global democratic norms and shows commitment to liberal internationalism.
   - Taiwan's vibrant civil society and elections are often highlighted in U.S. public diplomacy.

5. **Legitimacy in Congress and Public Opinion**
   - Taiwan's democracy helps generate bipartisan support in Congress and favorable views among the U.S. public.
   - Seen as a "like-minded partner" rather than a client state.

6. **Democracy Promotion Agenda**
   - Taiwan is often included in U.S.-led forums and initiatives for democratic cooperation, such as the **Summit for Democracy**.
   - A model for democratic resilience under pressure from authoritarian influence.

7. **Tension with Strategic Ambiguity**
   - The emphasis on Taiwan's democracy can complicate U.S. "One China" policy and strategic ambiguity, especially as Taiwan reasserts its identity.
   - Raises questions about whether defending Taiwan is a matter of principle or strategy—or both.

Briefing II. UN Security Council Members

Permanent Members (P5)

1. **United States**
    - **Likely response**: Strong support for Taiwan, diplomatic and possibly military backing; would push for international condemnation of Chinese aggression. Likely to veto any pro-China resolution.
2. **China**
    - **Likely response**: Views Taiwan as a breakaway province; any move toward independence is seen as a red line. Would oppose any international intervention and likely veto anti-China resolutions.
3. **Russia**
    - **Likely response**: Tends to support China in international forums; likely to back or abstain in favor of China, or at least oppose U.S.-led condemnations.
4. **United Kingdom**
    - **Likely response**: Aligns with the U.S. and EU; would express concern for peace and stability, likely support Taiwan diplomatically.
5. **France**
    - **Likely response**: Similar to the UK; supportive of democratic Taiwan, though might urge de-escalation and multilateral diplomacy.

Non-Permanent Members

(*Rotating members, subject to change annually*)
Examples of countries serving include:

6. **Japan**
    - **Likely response**: Strong support for Taiwan; sees China as a regional threat. Would back diplomatic action against Chinese aggression.
7. **Brazil**
    - **Likely response**: Push for peaceful resolution; likely neutral or slightly non-aligned, possibly cautious due to trade ties with China.
8. **Ghana**
    - **Likely response**: Calls for de-escalation and peaceful dialogue. Might lean neutral or avoid taking a hard stance.
9. **Switzerland**
    - **Likely response**: Emphasis on neutrality, humanitarian impact, and conflict de-escalation.
10. **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**
    - **Likely response**: Balances economic ties with China and Western partners. Likely to urge calm but avoid confrontation.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Chair, Council of Economic Advisors (EoP)

Your Job

You are the president's top economic strategist. You provide data-driven analysis on how policies impact markets, jobs, inflation, trade, and long-term growth. You are a close political ally of the president, and aligned with the administration's vision, but what you bring to the table is *how this policy might impact the domestic and foreign economy*.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, China is our third largest trading partner, representing no less than 11% of our total trade. Agricultural exports to China from the rural Midwest and the plains states represent a *huge* business that might be disrupted; much of our supply chain for consumer items like laptops and smart phones is located in China. Any escalation of tensions might seriously disrupt the domestic economy and slow growth; or, God forbid, the outbreak of war, might plunge us into a global depression.

At the same time, Taiwan is a major investor in the US. Taiwanese multinational companies lead the world in the manufacturing of semiconductors, which have strategic implications for US national security. If Taiwan is invaded we may lose access to this cutting-edge technology. We are attempting to reshore manufacturing, but that is a longterm project likely to take years—decades, even.

Menu of Policy Options

Issue a Market Stability Reassurance Statement: Coordinate with the Fed and Treasury to prevent panic and show economic control.

Propose Emergency Economic Shields for Taiwan: Create a rapid-response aid package to help Taiwan's markets and exports survive the blockade.

Model Global Trade Shock Scenarios: Present forecasts on potential ripple effects in supply chains, especially semiconductors.

Ideas of things you can say

- "A major conflict in that region will spike energy prices."
- "This decision could trigger capital flight."
- "Markets are already jittery; this may tip them."
- "Let's run a cost-benefit analysis on this move."

Ideas of things you can do

- Slide a spreadsheet across the table.
- Flag economic fallout others have ignored.
- Quietly remind the president that the economy underpins reelection.

Prevailing Concerns

- Growth and role of the US in international markets
- Economic stability and investor confidence
- Trade implications and market disruptions
- Budgetary and fiscal consequences of military or foreign policy decisions

Keep In Mind

Markets.

> You come from the private sector with a business background. You don't deal in political wins — you deal in numbers and trends.

Timeframes.

> You think in financial quarters and years, not news cycles.

Methods.

> You're data-centric, calm, and not easily rattled. You talk in terms of probabilities, because market outcomes are not entirely predictable.

Loyalty.

> You're the president's handpicked economic adviser because you supported past campaigns. The advice you give is practical, but you understand political dynamics. You know that if economic growth slows that everything goes south for the president's domestic policy agenda and business support.

Briefing I: Economic Tools to Use in a Taiwan Crisis

1. Sanctions on Chinese Financial Institutions

- Freeze assets or cut off major Chinese banks (e.g., Bank of China, ICBC) from the U.S. financial system.
- Target SWIFT exclusion to limit global financial transactions (global payment transfers between banks and countries).

2. Export Controls & Technology Restrictions

- Expand bans on exports of semiconductors, AI chips, and advanced tech to China.
- Restrict access to U.S.-origin tools and software vital for manufacturing.

3. Trade Restrictions

- Impose tariffs or a full trade embargo on Chinese goods.
- Ban imports of strategic sectors (e.g., electronics, rare earths, batteries).

4. Sanctions on Chinese Companies and State Entities

- Target major state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in defense, telecom, and energy.
- Block listings or delist Chinese firms from U.S. stock exchanges.

5. Asset Freezes and Travel Bans

- Sanction Chinese officials, military leaders, and business elites involved in the invasion decision.
- Seize assets held in U.S. or allied jurisdictions.

6. Secondary Sanctions

- Penalize foreign firms or countries that help China evade U.S. sanctions.
- Pressure third-party states to limit trade or investment with China.

7. Investment Restrictions

- Expand Outbound Investment Screening to stop U.S. capital and know-how from supporting Chinese military or surveillance tech.
- Ban new U.S. investments in sensitive Chinese industries.

8. Cyber and Financial Countermeasures

- Conduct or assist in cyber disruption of China’s financial or logistics networks.
- Undermine the use of the digital yuan or China’s alternative financial systems.

9. Global Coalition for Coordinated Sanctions

- Lead a multilateral effort with allies (EU, Japan, G7) to align economic penalties.
- Mirror the Russia sanctions playbook, but scaled up.

Briefing II. Top Asian Economies and Their Share of Global GDP

1. **China**
   - Nominal GDP (2024): Approximately $17.7 trillion
   - Share of Global GDP: ~18%
2. **Japan**
   - Nominal GDP (2024): Approximately $4.23 trillion
   - Share of Global GDP: ~4.3%
3. **South Korea**
   - Nominal GDP (2024): Approximately $1.84 trillion
   - Share of Global GDP: ~1.9%
4. **Indonesia**
   - Nominal GDP (2024): Approximately $1.69 trillion
   - Share of Global GDP: ~1.7%

Briefing III. Projected Economic Impact of a Taiwan Strait Crisis

Conflict in the Taiwan Strait might have profound economic repercussions

- **Global Economic Impact:**
  - **Estimated Loss:** Up to $10 trillion, equivalent to approximately 10% of global GDP.
- **Regional Impact:**
  - **China's GDP:** Could contract by 25-35% in the event of a severe conflict.
  - **Taiwan's GDP:** Might experience a devastating decline of up to 40%.
  - **Japan's Economy:** As a major global economy with close proximity and economic ties to Taiwan and China, Japan would likely face significant disruptions in trade and manufacturing supply chains, particularly in the electronics and automotive sectors.
  - **South Korea's Economy:** Given its reliance on semiconductor production and exports, a crisis could severely impact South Korea's tech industry and overall economic stability.

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Director of Legislative Affairs (EoP)

Your Job

You are the White House's main liaison to Congress. Your job is to assess what will fly on the Hill and manage key relationships in both parties. You are attentive to the public mood and possible fallout in the midterm elections. BUT first and foremost, you care about the current legislative balance of power and what is immediately possible to pass. You are attuned to the impact of this crisis on the president's domestic policy agenda.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, should we brief the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on these developments? How about the House Foreign Affairs committee chair? Should we also brief the ranking members? (the opposition?) It will likely make it easy to get what we need from Congress in the future if we loop stakeholders in now. They might get angry at us if we don't. A few well-placed calls from you might head off criticism from US Senators who might otherwise go to the press with complaints. Of course, we'll need appropriations from Congress going forward; even if this blows over, we have "asks" for more funding to modernize strategic military assets.

Menu of Policy Options

Gauge Congressional Appetite for Military Action: Quietly survey key members on both sides of the aisle for red lines.

Coordinate Briefings for Key Committees: Ensure Armed Services, Intelligence, and Foreign Relations committees are looped in.

Draft Emergency Funding Request Language: Prepare a draft bill for Taiwan military or humanitarian support.

Ideas of things you can say

- "We are preparing to brief members of Congress and key committees within the hour."
- "We don't have the votes in the Article 1 Branch."
- "If we're not careful, we'll lose the Armed Services Chair on this."
- "We can't afford another rebellion from the progressive/conservative wing."
- "Do you want this to be a floor fight, or a closed-door deal with party leaders?"

- “Don’t forget about your domestic agenda, Mr./Madame president.”

Ideas of things you can do

- Relay whispers from Capitol Hill: who wants what (committee chairs or party leaders).
- Suggest concessions or policy tweaks for legislative buy-in.
- Propose bringing in a senator for a private conversation.

Prevailing Concerns

- Congressional balance of power: backlash or support
- Legislative timing and windows
- Relationship management with powerful committee chairs

Keep In Mind

Votes.

> You have a whip count in your head at all times (meaning: how members of Congress plan to vote on a given bill).

Knowledge.

> You know what Congresspeople care about — and who needs hand-holding.

Practical Politics.

> You constantly weigh what can be passed vs. what’s symbolic. Congress cares a lot about symbolic politics and about being briefed. This makes you predisposed to the views of the senior political advisor.

Briefing: Congressional Committees Involved in US-Taiwan Policy

1. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

- Primary committee for diplomatic and foreign policy oversight.
- Reviews arms sales, diplomatic initiatives, treaties, and Taiwan-related legislation.
- Subcommittee of note: East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy.

2. House Foreign Affairs Committee

- House counterpart with similar oversight of State Department activities and foreign relations.
- Reviews and drafts legislation involving Taiwan relations.
- Subcommittee of note: Indo-Pacific Subcommittee.

3. Senate Armed Services Committee

- Oversees Department of Defense policies, military readiness, and Indo-Pacific force posture.
- Key for reviewing military aid, defense cooperation, and Taiwan Strait security.

4. House Armed Services Committee

- Similar responsibilities in the House.
- Plays a role in military assistance, defense authorization, and reviewing posture changes in the region.

5. Senate Appropriations Committee

- Controls funding for foreign aid, military assistance, and defense operations.
- Subcommittees of interest:
    - Defense
    - State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

6. House Appropriations Committee

- Controls the power of the purse in the House.
- Oversees spending on diplomacy, military presence, and foreign assistance relevant to Taiwan.

7. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the U.S. and the Chinese Communist Party

- Created to focus specifically on U.S.–China relations, including Taiwan.

- Issues reports and recommendations on strategic, military, and economic policy.

8. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC)

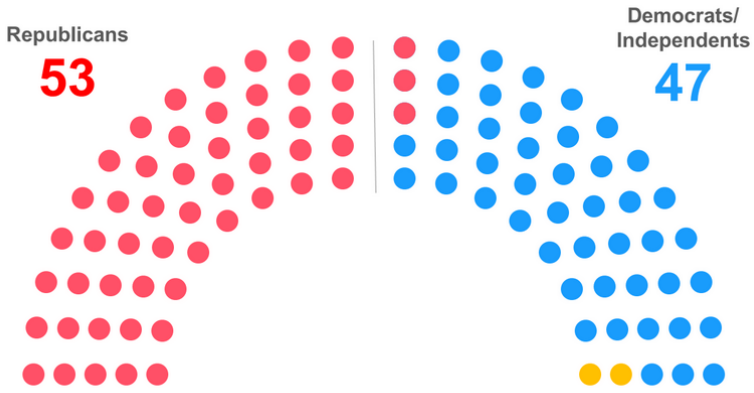
- Joint House–Senate body monitoring human rights, democracy, and rule of law in China and related regions.
- Often addresses Taiwan's democracy and regional pressure from China.

9. Senate and House Intelligence Committees (SSCI / HPSCI)

- Oversight of intelligence assessments related to China's military intentions, Taiwan contingencies, and U.S. strategic planning.

Briefing II. Congressional Balance of Power

U.S. Senate



House of Representatives

Party Breakdown			119th Congress
220	REPUBLICANS	0	OTHER
213	DEMOCRATS	2*	VACANCIES

SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Senior Advisor To The President (EoP)

Your Job

You are a political animal. You helped run the president's successful election campaign and your background is in election politics. Your job is to protect the president's political capital and reelection prospects. You calculate how decisions will play with the media, public, and key voting blocs.

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame president, we have to avoid looking weak and indecisive. The public hates a weakling. We'll get roasted by the opposition and criticized on all the talk shows. The public has a very unfavorable view of China and a favorable view of Taiwan, a longtime ally. However, it is not clear that voters have much of a stomach to go to war on behalf off an Asian ally in a far-off conflict. What the public cares about is the economy, first and foremost. Your poll numbers are currently above water, but just barely, at 51% approval. Your strongest numbers, however, are on domestic policy and your promises to bring down prices, raise wages and to restore growth. On the other hand, the wrong move here might cement a view that you are weak on foreign policy. If the PRC does invade Taiwan, and we do nothing to stop it, you will be blamed.

Menu of Policy Options

Test Messaging with Battleground Pollsters: Run instant polling on public sentiment around confrontation with China.

Frame the Narrative as American Strength and Restraint: Advise POTUS to show resolve without recklessness.

Identify Political Risk from Escalation or Inaction: Warn which swing states might turn on the president either way.

Ideas of things you can say

- "Public messaging will be critical in the next 12-24 hours."
- "This is going to play terribly in the Rust Belt."
- "If we lose the narrative, we lose the room."
- "We'll get hammered on the Sunday shows."
- "It's not just what we do — it's how we look doing it."

Ideas of things you can do

- Quote polling numbers or media reactions.
- Interrupt a policy discussion with a political reality check.
- Frame decisions as winning or losing the news cycle.

Prevailing Concerns

- President's image and approval ratings
- Impact on midterms, reelection, or core constituencies
- Blowback from party members or interest groups

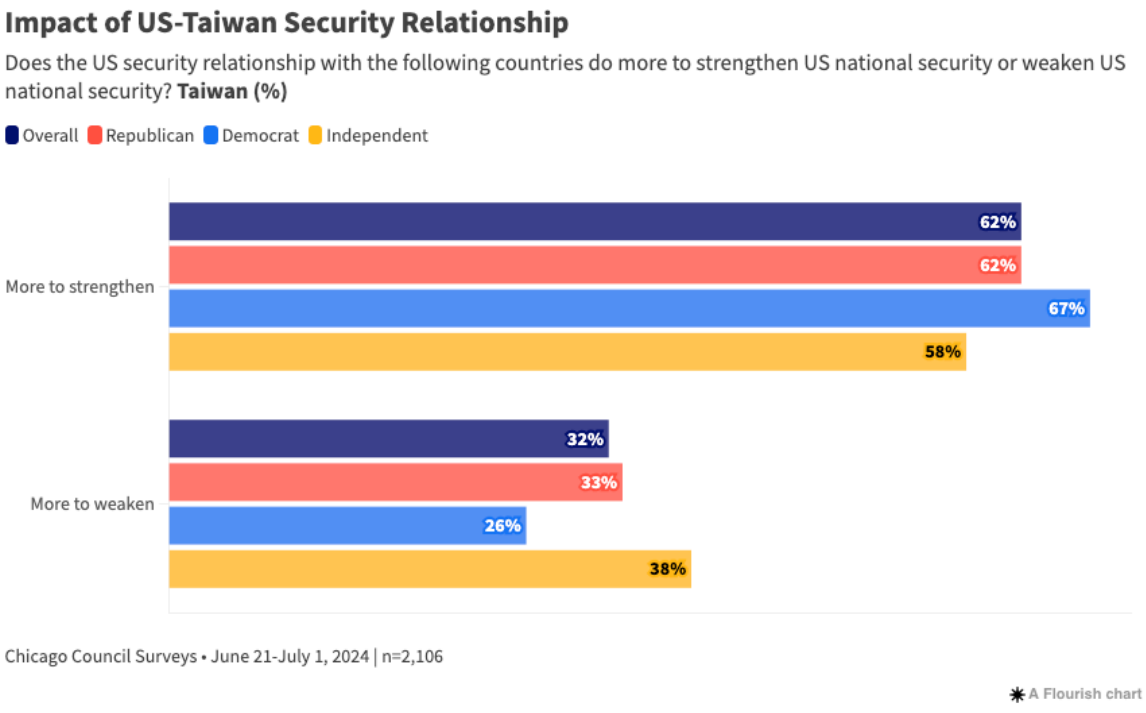
Keep In Mind

Practical politics. You're not an expert in policy, but you understand the political terrain.

Public Opinion. You watch polls, pundits, and cable news coverage relentlessly.

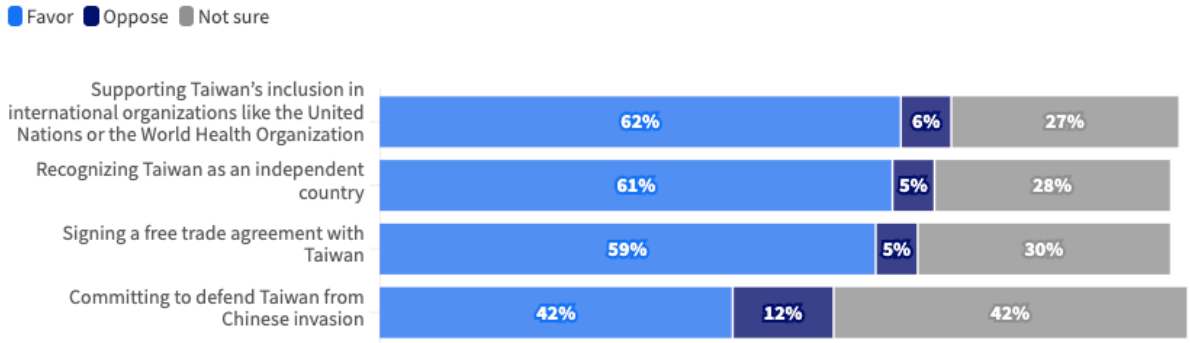
Optics. You care about framing and how things look—not just substance.

Briefing: Polling Data on US-Taiwan Relations



US-Taiwan Policy

Taiwan has been self-governed since 1949. While China claims it as part of its territory, the United States' official position is that Taiwan's political status is unresolved and maintains a strong but unofficial relationship with Taiwan. China views US support for Taiwan as interference in Chinese internal affairs and has threatened to invade Taiwan should it ever declare independence. Would you favor or oppose the following US policies toward Taiwan? **(%)**



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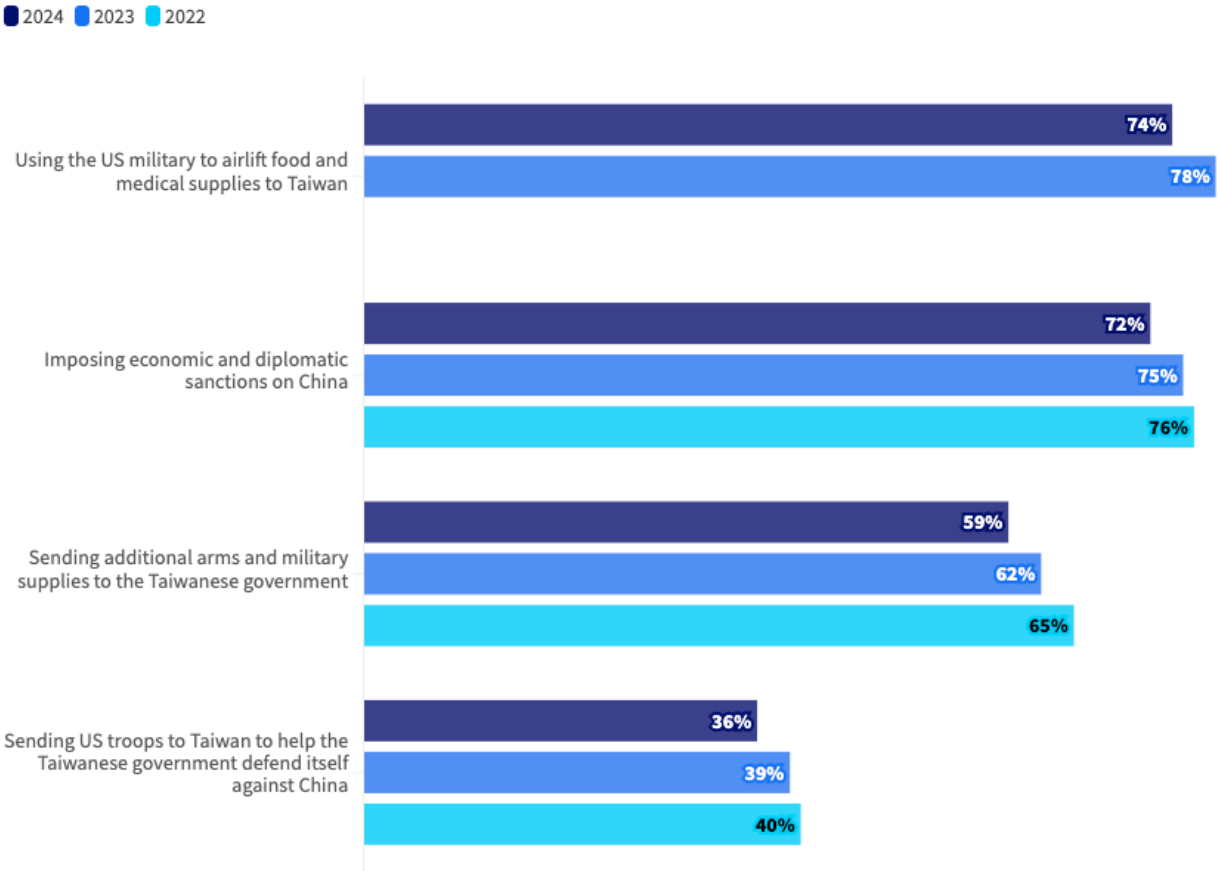
Trend: US Policy Toward Taiwan

If China were to invade Taiwan, would you support or oppose the United States: **(% support)**



SITUATION ROOM – Player Sheet

Vice President

Your Job

You are the president's partner and political twin — but you also have your own identity and ambitions. You speak when others hesitate, and must take on uncomfortable truths in defense of the president. Sometimes you try out messaging and float trial balloons for the administration. Other major players like the Secretary of State or Secretary of War/Defense may not take you as seriously because you are not the principal (POTUS).

Opening Script

"Mr./Madame President, the country is watching. We've just seen evidence of Chinese aggression. What happens when images and news begin to flood social media — including panic in Taiwan or even footage of an invasion?

Our allies in Southeast Asia are asking what signal we're sending. The Hill is split — some want immediate reassurance of U.S. resolve, others are warning against another overseas entanglement. And I have to be blunt: if this spirals and we're caught flat-footed, it's your credibility — not just abroad, but with voters at home — that takes the first hit.

We need to be sure whatever we do next, we're fully aligned, fully briefed, and fully ready to own the consequences."

Menu of Policy Options

Call Key Foreign Leaders on the President's Behalf: Build a sense of global unity while the president manages the crisis.

Quietly Meet with Senate Foreign Relations Leadership: Deescalate or reinforce support from within government channels.

Float a Trial Balloon on Sanctions or Military Posture: Test options the president may be unwilling to voice yet.

Ideas of things you can say

- "Let me just be devil's advocate here…"
- "I think what we're all circling around is this…"
- "You've got my full support, but we should tread carefully."

- “If this leaks, we own it — no matter who pushed it.”

Ideas of things you can do

- Smooth over sharp disagreements with statesmanship.
- Say the uncomfortable thing others won’t.
- Offer to take a trip or make a statement to defuse a hot situation.
- Tell a joke or folksy story from your Pennsylvania days to strategically lighten the mood in the room.

Prevailing Concerns

- Supporting the president without being a “yes” person
- Avoid upstaging the president while also advancing self-importance
- Preserving your own credibility and future viability
- Knowing when to weigh in, and when to stand back

Keep In Mind

Line of Succession.

You’re a heartbeat away from the presidency.

Partners.

You know the president better than anyone else in the room.

Messaging.

You’re often used to test messaging or soothe tensions. You try and find an inter-agency consensus that works well for the administration.

Ambitions.

You’re running for president in the future. You’ll be tied to the administration’s record. You want to support POTUS but also make sure no bad decisions destroy your path to the presidency.

Briefing: List of Domestic and International Figures the VP Can Reach Out To

Congressional Leaders

- Speaker of the House / Senate Majority Leader – for bipartisan messaging and legislative support
- Chairs of Senate/House Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees – to unify the national security front

Key Business & Tech Leaders

- CEOs of Apple, NVIDIA, Qualcomm, and TSMC (U.S. execs) – given deep Taiwan exposure and semiconductor relevance
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce & Business Roundtable Leaders – for managing corporate consensus and public messaging

Former National Security Officials

- Former Secretaries of State, Defense, or National Security Advisors – e.g., Robert Gates, Condoleezza Rice, Leon Panetta – for advice and public credibility

Political Leaders

- Prime Minister of Japan – first-line ally, critical for basing and military cooperation
- President of South Korea – for regional stability and coordination
- Prime Minister of Australia – for Indo-Pacific strategy alignment
- President of the Philippines – for EDCA base access and frontline posture
- Leaders of EU Institutions (esp. Germany, France, and EU Commission President) – to align on sanctions and messaging

Taiwan Leadership

- President of Taiwan (e.g., Lai Ching-te) – for direct coordination and moral solidarity
- Taiwan's National Security Council or Foreign Minister – for diplomatic alignment and public unity

Multilateral Forums

- NATO Secretary General – to globalize the response and raise diplomatic pressure
- G7 Leaders – coordinate economic responses and demonstrate international unity

International Business Figures

- TSMC Leadership (e.g., Morris Chang, Mark Liu) – given their geopolitical and supply chain importance
- CEOs of European and Asian firms with major exposure in China – to preempt economic fallout and gain support