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ARTICLE

Countdown To 2027: China's Roadmap To Taking Taiwan Will Affect Us All





BY PNW STAFF DECEMBER 30, 2025

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On Monday, the skies and seas around Taiwan filled once again with the unmistakable message of intimidation. Chinese air, naval, and rocket forces surged into coordinated military drills encircling the island, placing Taiwan's armed forces on high alert. Beijing called the exercises a "stern warning" against separatism and "external interference." But to Taiwan, the United States, and much of Asia, it felt like something more ominous: another rehearsal in a long-running campaign of psychological warfare meant to exhaust, intimidate, and normalize the threat of invasion.

These drills were not isolated. They fit into a pattern that has intensified over the past two years--frequent sorties, naval maneuvers, missile tests, and increasingly aggressive rhetoric. The goal is not only military readiness but mental erosion: to make the possibility of war feel inevitable, even mundane. And according to the Pentagon, that sense of inevitability may now come with a date attached.

Why 2027 Matters

A Pentagon report obtained by Reuters has sharpened global focus on a troubling milestone: 2027. U.S. defense planners assess that by then, China expects to have the capability to invade Taiwan "by brute force" and complete a takeover. This timeline is not arbitrary. It coincides with key modernization goals set by Chinese leader Xi Jinping for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including full joint-force integration, improved amphibious capabilities, and the ability to deter--or defeat--U.S. intervention in the Western Pacific.

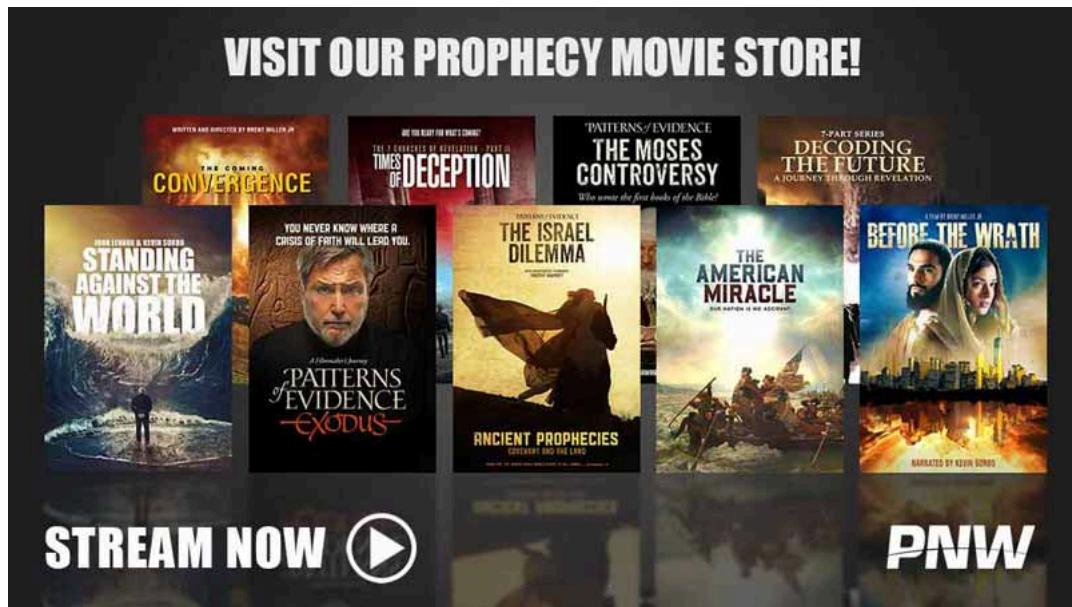
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Japan Breaks Its Silence--and Its Doctrine

China's drills also came amid rising tensions with Japan, long constrained by its post-World War II pacifist constitution. That restraint is now visibly eroding. Japanese leaders have begun speaking more openly about Taiwan as a direct national security concern. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi recently suggested that Japan might intervene militarily if China attacked the island--remarks that triggered an angry response from Beijing, including warplane sorties and sharp diplomatic warnings to "stay out of China's business."

But geography makes that demand unrealistic. Taiwan sits astride vital maritime chokepoints, including the Bashi Channel, through which a significant portion of global trade flows. A Chinese-controlled Taiwan would place Beijing in a dominant position over Japan's sea lanes and severely threaten U.S. forward presence in the region. Japan's rearmament--including increased defense spending, long-range strike capabilities, and closer coordination with U.S. forces--reflects a sobering conclusion: peace doctrine alone will not deter an expansionist power.



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China's Naval and Missile Surge

Perhaps the most visible symbol of China's ambitions is its navy. According to the U.S. Naval Institute, the People's Liberation Army Navy is on track to field up to nine aircraft carriers by 2035--potentially outnumbering U.S. carriers in the Pacific. This represents the largest carrier expansion in the Indo-Pacific since World War II and signals Beijing's intent to project power far beyond its shores.

At the same time, China has undertaken a sweeping expansion of its missile production network. A CNN analysis of satellite imagery shows that more than 60 percent of facilities linked to missile manufacturing or the PLA Rocket Force have expanded since 2020. These include conventional ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, and nuclear delivery systems--tools designed to hold U.S. bases, ships, and allies at risk from the opening moments of any conflict.

Together, carriers and missiles form the backbone of China's strategy: keep U.S. forces at bay while overwhelming Taiwan before help can arrive.

What an Attack Could Look Like

Recent reporting suggests that a Chinese invasion would prioritize speed and shock. Analysts point to the development of large civilian-style barges capable of transporting troops and heavy equipment across the Taiwan Strait, supplementing traditional amphibious assault ships. The likely scenario would begin with massive missile barrages to cripple Taiwan's air defenses, ports, and command centers, followed by cyberattacks to sow confusion. Airborne and special forces could attempt rapid seizures of key infrastructure while naval blockades choke off reinforcements.

The aim would be simple: present the world with a fait accompli before the United States and its allies can decide how far they are willing to go.

Why This Matters to America

For the average American, Taiwan may feel distant. But the consequences of a Chinese takeover would be immediate and severe. Taiwan is central to global semiconductor production, underpinning everything from smartphones to cars to military systems. A conflict would disrupt supply chains, spike inflation, and shake financial markets. Strategically, the fall of Taiwan would tip the balance of power in Asia decisively toward Beijing, weakening U.S. alliances and emboldening authoritarian regimes worldwide.

Washington's policy of "strategic ambiguity" has long been designed to deter both Taiwanese independence and Chinese aggression. But as China accelerates its military buildup and psychological pressure, ambiguity may become harder to sustain.

The drills this week were not just a warning to Taipei. They were a message to Washington, Tokyo, and the world: the clock is ticking. Whether 2027 becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy will depend on deterrence, resolve, and the willingness of democracies to recognize that the future of Taiwan is inseparable from their own.

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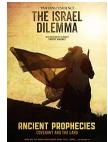
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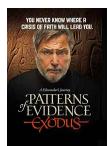
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