

# Shared Confidence, Diverging Expectations in the Taiwan Strait

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Results from the 2025 Chicago Council Survey in the United States and the 2025 Taiwan National Defense Surveys find that majorities of both American and Taiwanese publics are confident in US military superiority over China and view China's rise as a critical threat to their nations. However, Americans are somewhat more reluctant to commit US forces to a conflict with China than Taiwanese would like. And ultimately, Americans and Taiwanese would prefer to maintain the status quo across the Taiwan Strait than push Taipei toward independence or unification. Given this shared preference despite differing preferences in a crisis scenario, policymakers in Washington and Taipei alike will have to manage Taiwanese public expectations against practical assessments of US policy.

## Key Findings

- Both Taiwanese (60%) and Americans (53%) say the United States is militarily stronger than China.
- The Taiwanese public (60%) is far more confident that American economic power surpasses China's than are Americans (34%).

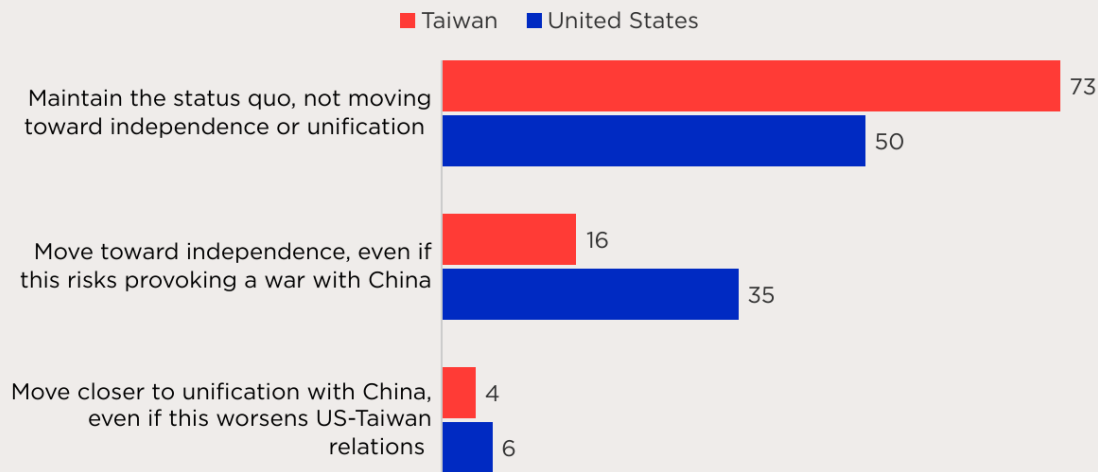
- Taiwanese (55%) are only slightly more likely than Americans (50%) to say the development of China as a world power is a critical threat to their countries.
- Three-quarters of Taiwanese (73%) and half of Americans (50%) say Taiwan should maintain the status quo.
- Majorities of Taiwanese expect that the United States would provide—and majorities of Americans support providing—food, medical, and military aid to Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.
- Half of Taiwanese (51%) expect the United States to send troops to aid Taipei should China invade; only 43 percent of Americans favor this.
- Americans are slightly more likely to favor using the US Navy to break a Chinese blockade of Taiwan (47%) than Taiwanese are to expect such a move (41%).

### Cross-Strait Policy: Taiwanese and Americans Support Status Quo

When asked about what Taiwan's policy should be toward mainland China, a large majority of Taiwanese (73%) say Taiwan should maintain the status quo, not moving toward independence or unification. Half of Americans (50%) express the same preference. About one-third of Americans (35%) believe Taiwan should move toward independence, even if it risks provoking a war with China—a position supported by only 16 percent of Taiwanese. Support for Taiwan moving closer to unification with China is limited in both places, with just 4 percent of Taiwanese and 6 percent of Americans favoring this option even if it worsens US-Taiwan relations.

## Views on Taiwan's Policy toward Mainland China

*What should Taiwan's policy toward mainland China be? (%)*



US: August 22-24, 2025 | n=1,022

Taiwan: August 26-31, 2025 | n=1,298

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS (US)

INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY RESEARCH (TAIWAN)



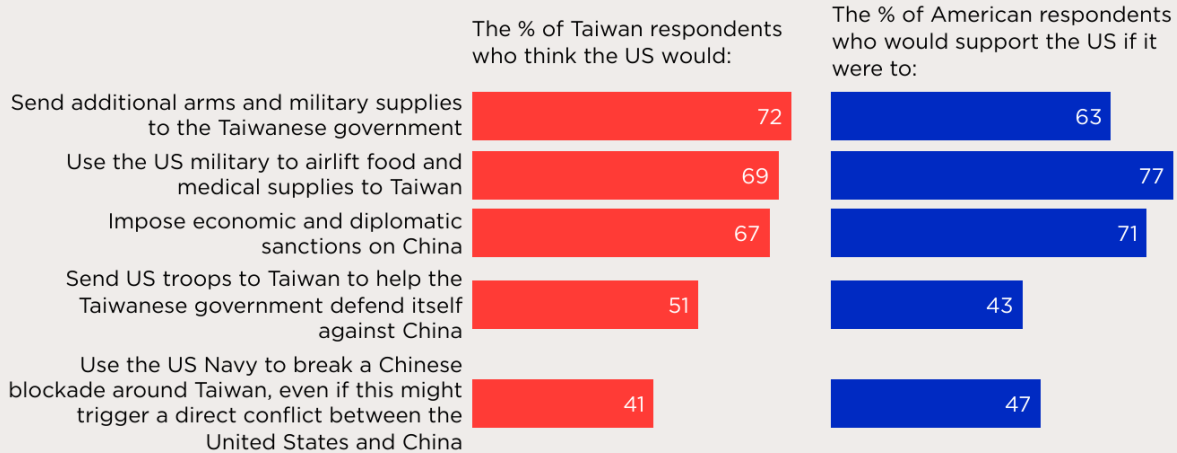
### Taiwanese Expectations and American Preferences in Crisis Situation

For all the discussions of US-Taiwan security relations in recent years, how the United States would respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan remains unclear as the official US government position remains one of “strategic ambiguity.”

In the event of a crisis, the American public favors—and the Taiwanese public expects—providing aid to Taiwan. If China were to invade Taiwan, 72 percent of Taiwanese believe the United States would provide additional military arms and supplies, while 63 percent of Americans say they would support such assistance. Americans show strong support for humanitarian measures: 77 percent favor using the US military to airlift food and medical supplies to Taiwan, compared with 69 percent of Taiwanese who think such an action is likely.

## Views on US Response if China were to Invade Taiwan

*Taiwan: Next, we'd like to ask you how you think the United States would assist Taiwan if China were to invade Taiwan. Would the United States: (% net would) | US: If China were to invade Taiwan, would you support or oppose the United States if it were to: (% support)*



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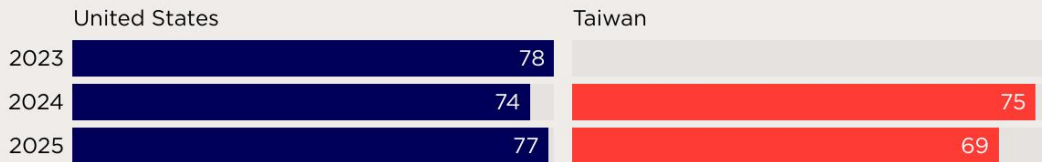
Support declines for measures that could involve direct military confrontation. Among Americans, 43 percent would support sending US troops to help Taiwan defend itself, and 47 percent would support using the US Navy to break a Chinese blockade around Taiwan. Taiwanese express similar caution: 51 percent believe the United States would send troops to help defend Taiwan, and an even smaller proportion, 41 percent, think the US Navy would be used to break a Chinese blockade around Taiwan.

Taken as a whole, the data suggest that Americans and Taiwanese broadly agree on US assistance in a crisis, though critical differences remain on direct US involvement in a potential cross-strait conflict. Those differences have narrowed over the past year, as Americans have become more likely to favor direct intervention. Americans are 10 percentage points more likely today than in 2024 to say the United States should use the US Navy to break a Chinese blockade of Taiwan even at the risk of triggering a direct US-China conflict. American support for sending US troops to Taiwan has also risen, up seven percentage points over the past year.

# Trends: Taiwanese Expectations and US Support for Response to Taiwan Invasion

*Taiwan: Next, we'd like to ask you how you think the United States would assist Taiwan if China were to invade Taiwan. Would the United States: (% net would) | US: If China were to invade Taiwan, would you support or oppose the United States if it were to: (% support)*

## Using the US military to airlift food and medical supplies to Taiwan



## Imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions on China



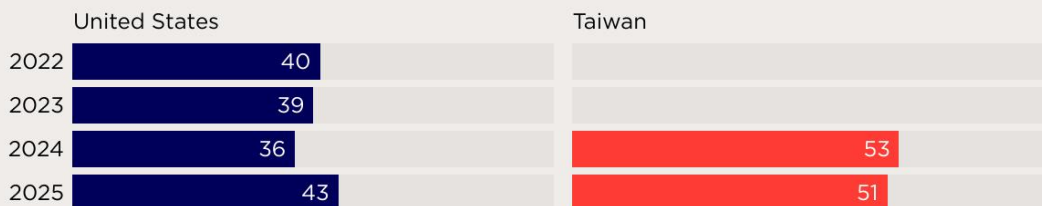
## Sending additional arms and military supplies to the Taiwanese government



## Using the US Navy to break a Chinese blockade around Taiwan, even if this might trigger a direct conflict between the United States and China



## Sending US troops to Taiwan to help the Taiwanese government defend itself against China



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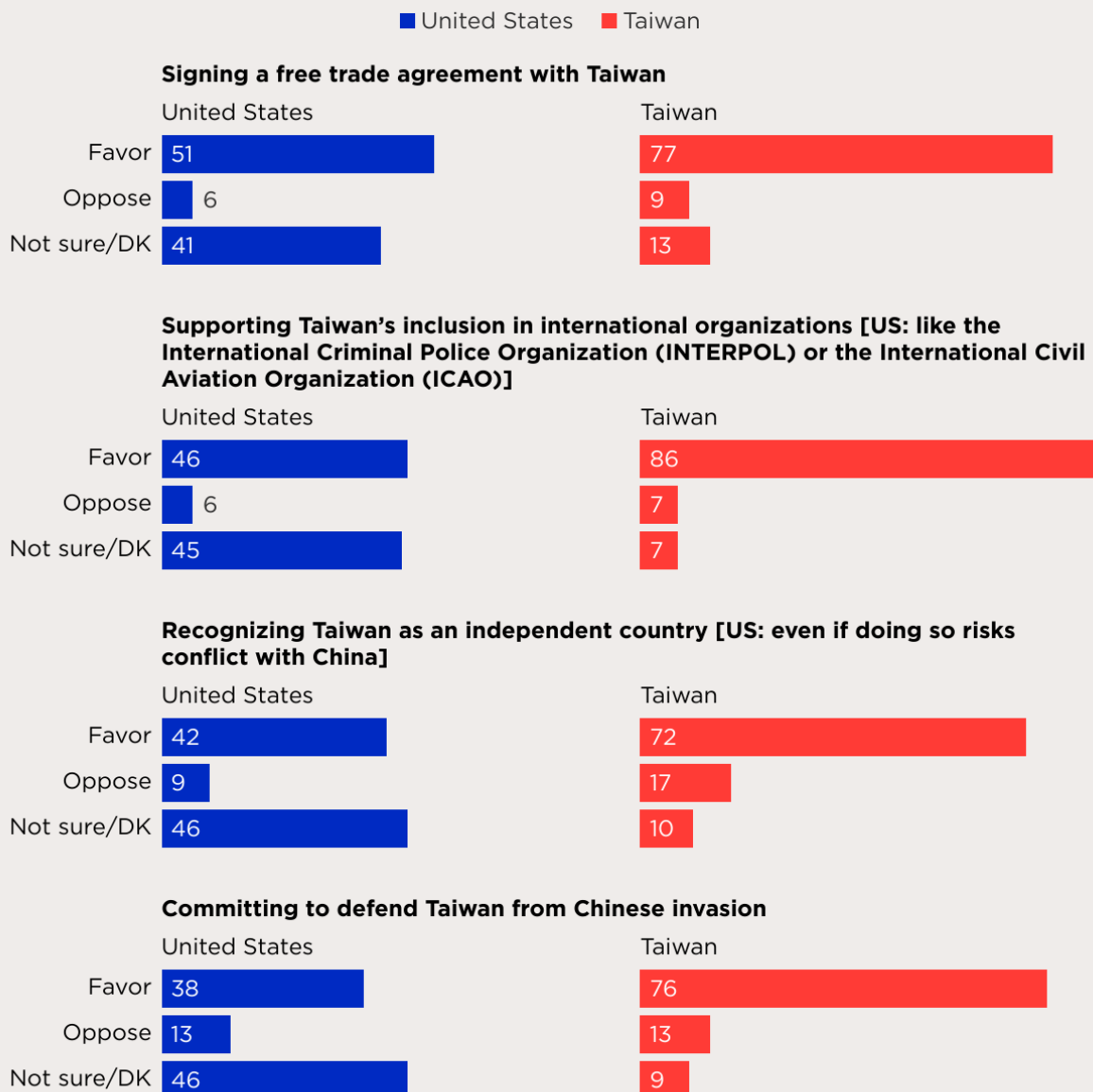
## Taiwanese Seek Greater US Support; Americans Unsure but Supportive

When asked about a range of potential US policies toward Taiwan, the Taiwanese express far stronger support than Americans on questions about the political status of the island. Much of this gap reflects high levels of uncertainty among Americans: For every policy surveyed, at least four in 10 Americans selected “not sure.” Outside of a potential free trade agreement, none of the listed US-Taiwan policies receive majority support from the American public, reflecting the far lower prominence of these issues in the American public debate. Those Americans who do provide a response tend to be supportive of Taiwan across various domains, with relatively few opposing the policies in question.

# American and Taiwanese Views of US-Taiwan Policy

**United States:** 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 towards Taiwan? (%)

**Taiwan:** Do you support or oppose the United States: (%)



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The largest divide appears on the policy of the US committing to defend Taiwan from Chinese invasion. While 76 percent of Taiwanese support such a commitment, only 38 percent of Americans say the same. This is slightly lower than the proportion of Americans who favor sending US forces to aid Taipei in the event of a Chinese invasion, perhaps reflecting public hesitancy about creating additional formal US defense commitments. Additionally, across various scenarios in the Council's years of polling, Americans have consistently hesitated to engage in a conflict with China likely because such a conflict would provide very costly.

The gap is somewhat smaller when it comes to the US signing a free trade agreement with Taiwan, with 77 percent of Taiwanese people supporting such an agreement compared with 51 percent of Americans. Still, the strongest support in Taiwan appears on the issue of international participation: 86 percent of Taiwanese favor US support for Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations, compared with 46 percent of Americans.

Finally, the two publics hold differing views about the desirability of the United States recognizing Taiwan as an independent country. While seven in 10 Taiwanese (72%) favor the United States doing so, just four in 10 Americans (42%) agree. Question wording is an additional factor that pushes American and Taiwanese views in different directions. The survey fielded in the United States mentions that a conflict with China could result as a consequence of recognizing an independent Taiwan.

### **Power Perceptions: Taiwanese More Confident in America than Americans**

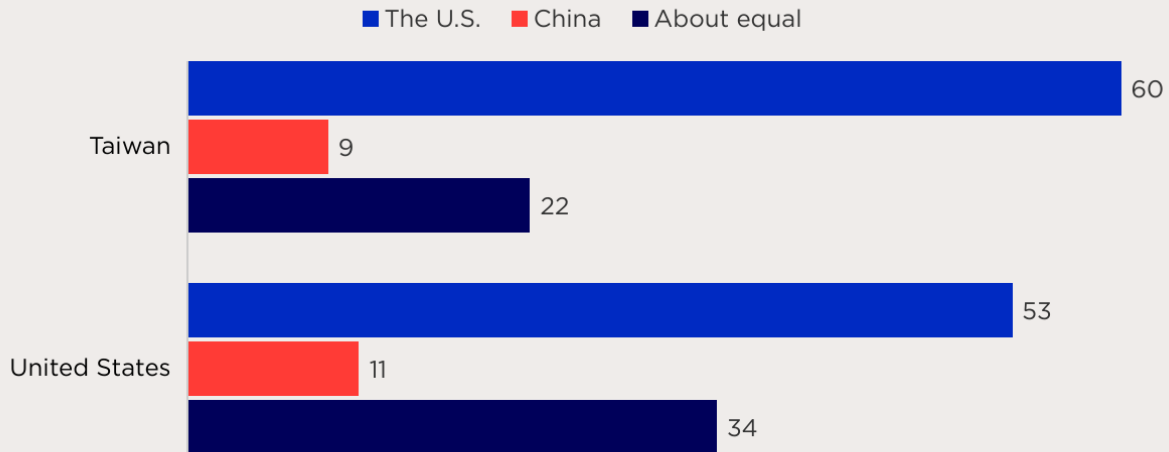
When asked to compare American and Chinese military and economic power, the Taiwanese public is consistently more confident in the United States than are Americans.

Americans and Taiwanese generally perceive the United States as militarily stronger than China. A majority of the public in both nations hold this view: 53 percent of Americans and 60 percent of Taiwanese. Americans (34%) are more likely than Taiwanese (22%) to say the United States and China have about equal military power, while only small minorities in either country believe China's military power surpasses that of the United States (11% of Americans, 9% of Taiwanese).



## Perceptions of US vs. China Military Power

*At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of military power, the US or China – or do you think they are about equal militarily? (%)*



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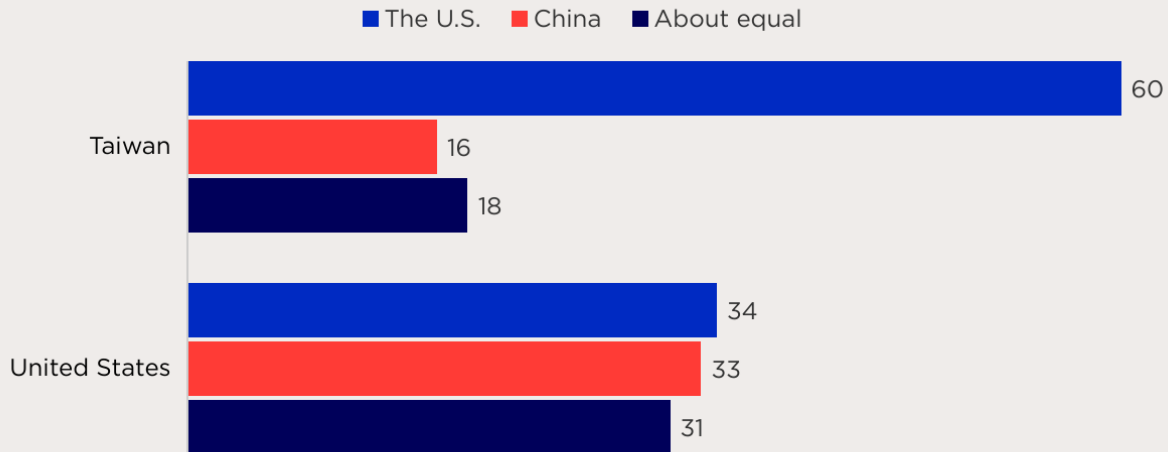
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Though Americans and Taiwanese assess US and Chinese economic power similarly, they differ more sharply on relative military strength. Six in 10 Taiwanese (60%) believe the United States holds stronger economic power—a percentage identical to their assessment of US military power—but Americans are far less unified. Only about one-third of Americans (34%) say the United States is economically stronger, and the remaining two-thirds are divided between those who see China as having greater economic power (33%) and those who view the two countries as about equal economically (31%).

## Perceptions of US vs. China Economic Power

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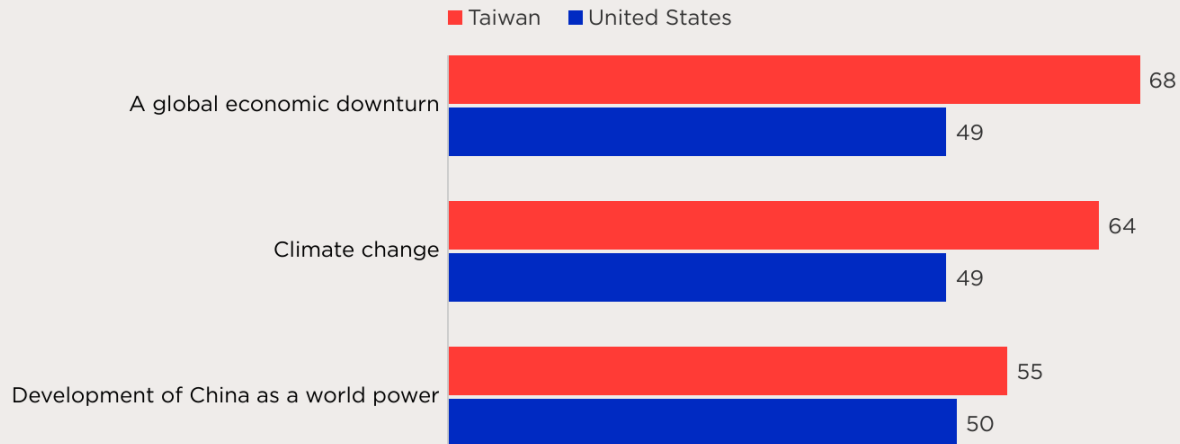


### Threat Perceptions: Taiwanese More Concerned about China, Economy, Climate

Finally, while half of Americans (50%) and a slightly higher percentage of Taiwanese (55%) view the development of China as a world power as a critical threat, China isn't the thing either public is most concerned about. The Taiwanese public expresses significantly greater concern about global issues such as a potential economic downturn (68%) and climate change (64%). About half of Americans (49%) view each of those as critical threats. For their part, the American public is more focused on domestic challenges, including US government corruption (73%) and weakening democracy in the United States (65%).

## View of Critical Threats

*Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of [Taiwan/United States] in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)*



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## Conclusion

The survey results show that Americans and Taiwanese generally share similar expectations about security in the Taiwan Strait. In both societies, most people prefer to maintain the status quo, and majorities support some form of US assistance to Taiwan if a conflict breaks out. These shared views offer a useful starting point for strengthening diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation, while also helping reduce the uncertainty that often surrounds the future of US-Taiwan relations. This common ground matters, especially in Taiwan, where discussions about unreliable US commitments or “abandonment” still circulate and shape public perceptions. Public expectations in both democracies—on stability in the Taiwan Strait and on possible US responses—can influence how policymakers think and act. The general positive inclination Americans have toward Taiwan, tempered with concerns about additional security commitments and little specific knowledge of Taiwan’s challenges, mean that American policymakers have both room to maneuver and a lot of work to do when it comes to informing and engaging the public. Additionally, understanding the preference for the status quo in both countries should encourage both Taipei and Washington to keep the relationship on an even keel.

At the same time, the data make clear that important gaps remain. Taiwanese expectations about direct US military involvement are consistently higher than what Americans say they would support. Narrowing these gaps will require clearer strategic communication between Washington and Taipei, particularly on what forms of US assistance are more realistic in a crisis. Highlighting strong American support for certain actions—such as breaking a blockade or providing humanitarian and military supplies—could help strengthen Taiwanese confidence while also making the public more aware of the rising hybrid threats Taiwan faces. As Taiwan continues to build resilience through its whole-of-society approach to civil defense, aligning public expectations with practical assessments of US support and emerging security challenges will be increasingly important.

## Methodology

This analysis is based on data from the 2025 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, an annual project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy, and the Taiwan National Defense Surveys, a project of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR).

### *US Methodology*

The 2025 Chicago Council Survey was conducted July 18–30, 2025, by Ipsos using its large-scale, nationwide, online research panel (KnowledgePanel) in English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 2,148 adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points, including a design effect of 1.07. Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard partisan self-identification question: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

Additional US results reported from August 2025 are from a Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Ipsos survey conducted August 22–24, 2025, by Ipsos using its large-scale, nationwide, online research panel (KnowledgePanel) among a weighted national sample of 1,021 adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, including a design effect of 1.05.

The data for the total sample were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, and household income using demographic benchmarks from the 2024 March Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The specific categories used were:

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59 and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, 2+ Races Non-Hispanic)
- Education (Less than High School, High School, Some College, Bachelor or Higher)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Metropolitan Status (Metro, Non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000–\$49,999, \$50,000–\$74,999, \$75,000–\$99,999, \$100,000–\$149,999, \$150,000+)

The 2025 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family and the Korea Foundation.

## *Taiwan Methodology*

The 2025 Taiwan National Defense Survey was commissioned by the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) and conducted by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University. The target population consisted of residents of Taiwan 18 and older, with the survey conducted through random sampling via telephone interviews. The data was collected August 26–31, 2025. A total of 1,298 valid responses were obtained, comprising 893 landline samples and 405 mobile phone samples. At a 95 percent confidence level, the maximum margin of sampling error is estimated to be  $\pm 2.72$  percentage points.

### **About the Institute for National Defense and Security Research**

The Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) is dedicated to fueling knowledge-based policy analyses and strategic assessments on Taiwan's security. The INDSR is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization based in Taipei, Taiwan, which aims to shape innovative ideas and lead constructive debates on issues pertaining to international security and national defense, Chinese politics and military affairs, nontraditional security, hybrid and cognitive warfare, and cybersecurity, among other security areas.

### **About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at [globalaffairs.org](https://globalaffairs.org).

### **About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy**

Established in 2018 with a transformative gift from the Crown Family, the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy is driven by the belief that the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. The centerpiece of the Lester Crown Center is its annual survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council Survey, which has been conducted since 1974.