

Americans Favor Aiding Taiwan with Arms but Not Troops

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's recent trip to Taiwan aimed to deliver "an unequivocal statement that America stands with Taiwan, our democratic partner, as it defends itself and its freedom." Results from the just-completed 2022 Chicago Council Survey, fielded July 15–August 1, show that the American public also expresses support for Taiwan. Favorable ratings for the island have never been higher, and if China were to invade Taiwan, majorities of Americans say they would support substantially assisting Taipei—though the public stops short of sending US troops to the island.

Key Findings

- Three-quarters of Americans (76%) think it is likely that China will see Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a precedent, encouraging it to invade Taiwan.
- In the event of a Chinese invasion of the island, majorities would support imposing diplomatic and economic sanctions (76%), sending additional arms and military supplies to the Taiwanese government (65%), and using the US Navy to prevent Beijing from imposing a blockade against Taiwan (62%).
- Four in 10 would support sending US troops to Taiwan to help the Taiwanese government defend the country against China (40%).
- On a 0–100 feeling thermometer, Americans give Taiwan an average rating of 60, the highest rating yet recorded in Chicago Council Surveys. Meanwhile, ratings for China remain at all-time lows (averaging 32 out of 100).

Introduction

Chinese officials had cautioned against Pelosi's visit to Taiwan before it commenced; in a phone call, President Xi Jinping warned President Joe Biden that ["those who play with fire will perish by it."](#) Even some American

observers characterized the trip as [reckless and not necessarily helping Taiwan's security situation](#). But Pelosi's visit was [welcomed by Taipei](#), and continues a trend in [strong US congressional support for Taiwan](#). In response to her trip, Beijing has suspended bilateral talks on climate, transnational crime, and other global issues of concern to the United States, [imposed sanctions](#) against Pelosi and her family, and conducted [extensive military exercises](#) in the water and air around Taiwan in what some experts have labeled a "[rehearsal for combat](#)".

This escalation—what some experts are calling the [Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis](#)—comes after several [years of increasing ties](#) between the US and Taiwan. As Chicago Council Surveys in the past have shown, Americans support increased ties between the US and Taiwan and a greater international role for Taipei. The 2022 Chicago Council Survey further shows that Americans would provide the same level of aid to Taiwan as the US currently provides to Ukraine should China invade the island.

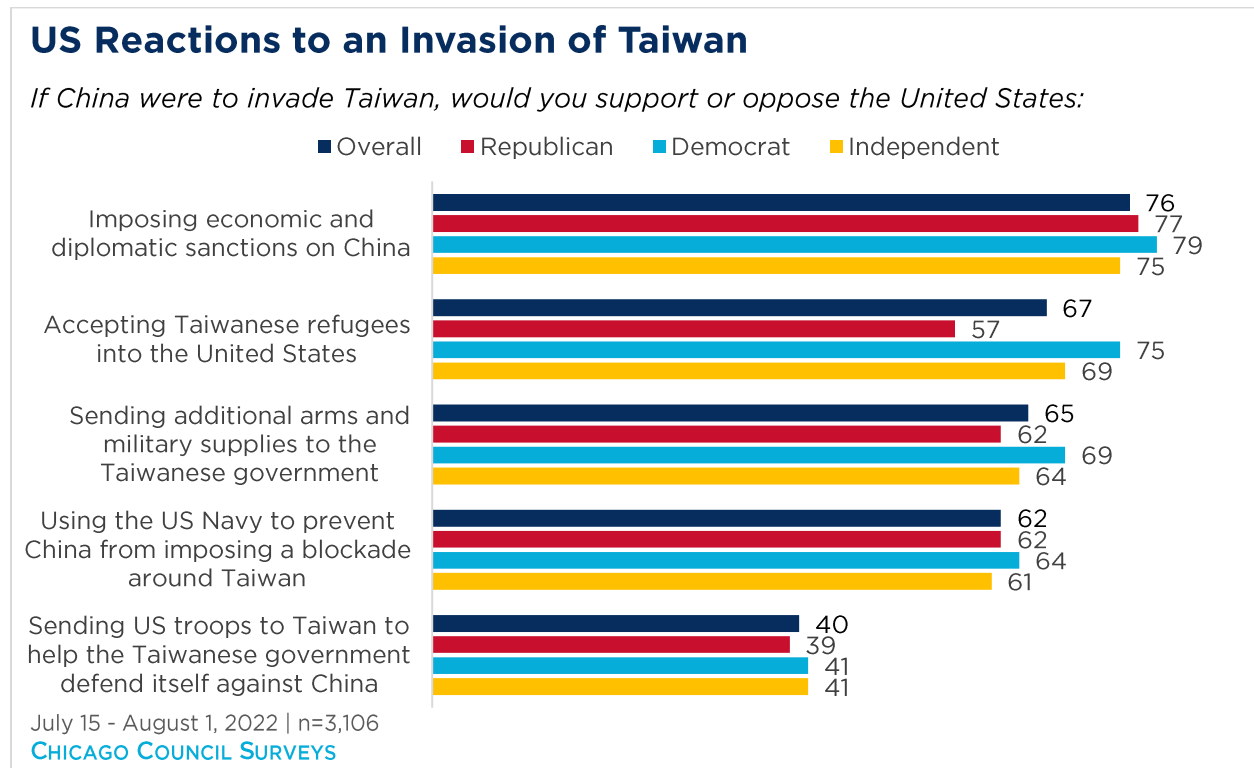
If China Invades, Americans Are Willing to Assist Taiwan...

Though the Pentagon [does not believe China is prepared](#) to invade Taiwan in the next two years, some [analysts suggest](#) that the Chinese may do so in the next half decade, perhaps by 2027. Many experts have concluded that Xi and company are watching the international response to Russia's invasion in Ukraine closely to gauge a potential international response if China were to invade Taiwan.

Everyday Americans seem to agree. About three-quarters of Americans think it is likely that China sees the invasion of Taiwan as a precedent, encouraging it to invade Taiwan (76% say it is likely, including 29% who say it is very likely). Republicans are especially inclined to think this is the case (83% say it is likely vs. 75% of Democrats and 73% of Independents).

If Beijing does launch an invasion of Taiwan, Americans seem willing to aid Taiwan in a manner similar to current US assistance to Ukraine. Majorities say that if China were to invade Taiwan, they would support imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions against China (76% overall), sending additional arms and military equipment to Taiwan (65%), and using the US Navy to prevent China from imposing a blockade around Taiwan (62%). Public support for *providing* arms to Taiwan in reaction to a Chinese invasion is higher than past support for *selling* arms to Taiwan in peacetime; in the 2021 Chicago Council Survey, Americans were split on whether to sell (50%) or not sell (47%) arms and military equipment to Taiwan.

For each of these items, there is cross-partisan agreement between self-described Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. Where partisans differ somewhat is on accepting Taiwanese refugees: two-thirds overall are willing to do so, including 75 percent of Democrats and 69 percent of Independents, but only 57 percent of Republicans.

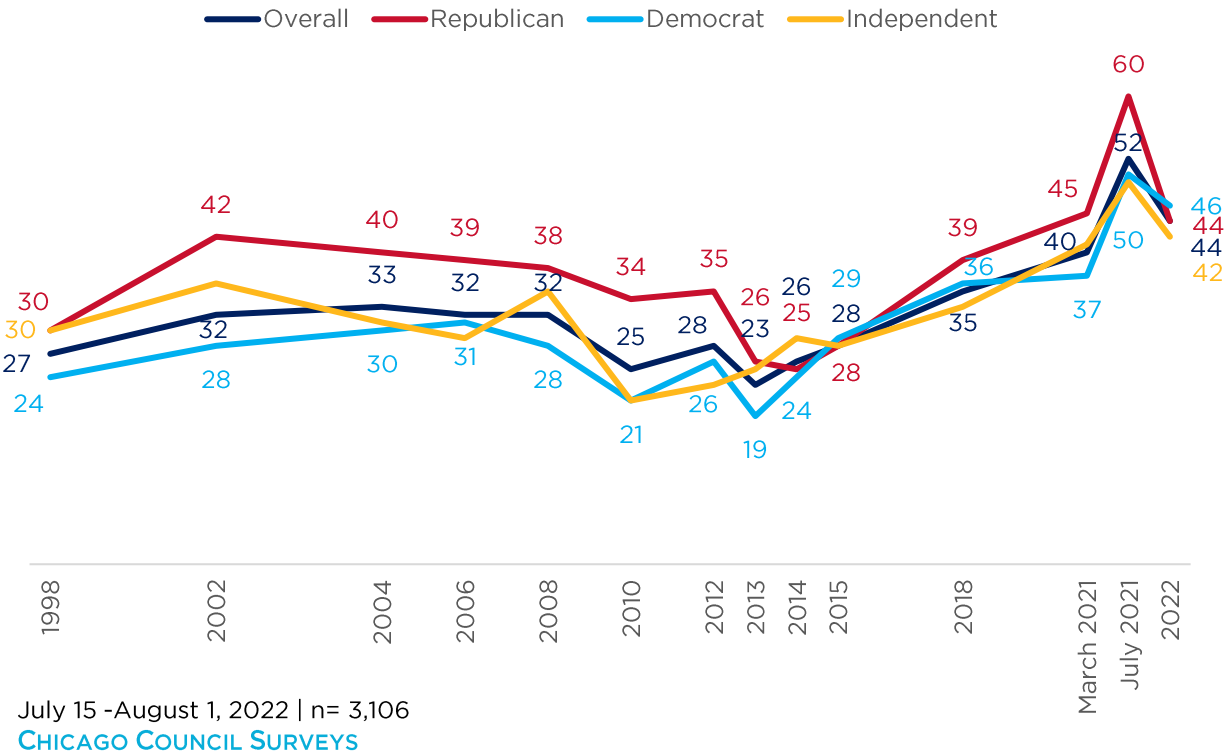


... But Not with Boots on the Ground

Americans are generally risk-averse when it comes to sending US troops into combat, a pattern that holds in this case. A majority oppose “sending US troops to help the government of Taiwan defend itself against China” (55%), though a sizable minority would favor it (40%; see figure above) In a separate question that focuses on a range of hypothetical scenarios, a similar proportion of Americans would oppose “the use of US troops if China invaded Taiwan” (54%), with 44 percent in favor. This figure (shown below) is down from a year ago when 52 percent said they would favor sending US troops but is in line with previous trends, which have shown support for using US troops to defend Taiwan steadily increasing since 2013. As with other questions about support for Taiwan, there is little difference between partisans here, though Republicans have traditionally been more supportive of using US troops in this situation.

Use of US Troops if China invaded Taiwan

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops: (% favor)



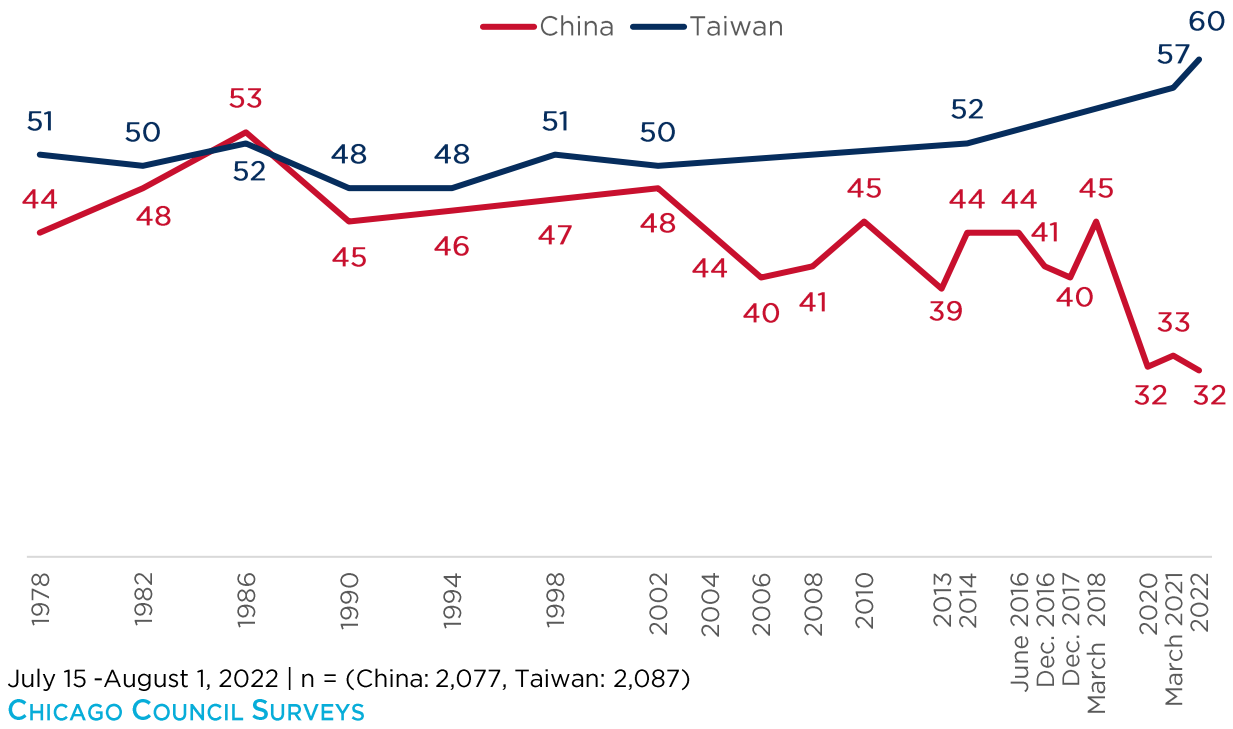
Two factors more influential than partisanship when it comes to Americans' views of US-Taiwan policy: their education levels and news interest. More educated Americans, and those who say they are very interested in news about US foreign relations, are consistently more likely to support a range of US policies to support Taiwan in a crisis.

Americans Have Never Been More Favorable toward Taipei

The current crisis also comes at a time when the American public's views of Taiwan and China have diverged sharply. On a feeling thermometer, with 0 representing a very unfavorable view and 100 representing a very favorable view, the US public gives Taiwan an average score of 60 degrees, the highest rating Taiwan has ever received in Chicago Council Surveys. By contrast, opinion of China remains at a record low of 32.

Feeling Thermometer: China and Taiwan

Please rate your feelings toward some countries, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that country. (mean)



This widening gap between perceptions of China and of Taiwan coincide with growing public concerns about the rise of China and support for Taiwan as a democratic nation. Even before US-China tensions reached their current fever pitch, [results from the 2021 Chicago Council Survey](#) showed that Americans extended a great deal of goodwill toward Taipei. An overall majority described Taiwan as either an ally or a necessary partner (30% each), while China was predominantly described as a rival (32%) or adversary (29%). Moreover, majorities favored US recognition of Taiwan as an independent country (69%), supported Taipei’s inclusion in international organizations (65%), and favored a US-Taiwan free trade agreement (57%). A slimmer majority (53%) supported the United States signing a formal alliance with Taiwan, and only 46 percent favored explicitly committing to defend Taiwan from any potential invasion.

Conclusion

Expert opinions differed greatly on the wisdom of Pelosi’s visit. The trip to Taipei by such a high-ranking member of the US government was certainly

important symbolically, and perhaps important for the Speaker personally. Aside from the theater of the visit, it underscored a basic point: that the United States continues to maintain a robust albeit unofficial political, security, and economic relationship with Taiwan, and will do so even in the face of Chinese pressure.

Perhaps most concerning to Beijing is that despite repeated [warnings](#) and [lectures](#), substantive American support for Taiwan has only grown in recent years. Those areas of increased support include [arms sales led by the executive branch](#) and new congressional efforts to strengthen Taiwan's international position, both of which are backed by the American public. Moreover, the diverging trends of American public favorability regarding Taiwan and China will do little to restrain a Congress that has demonstrated strong interest in bolstering US-Taiwan ties, despite Beijing's objections. If this is indeed the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis, it won't be over soon.

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from the 2022 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2022 Chicago Council Survey was conducted July 15–August 1, 2022 by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, in both English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 3,106 adults aged 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 1.8 percentage points. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

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?”

The 2022 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family and the Korea Foundation.

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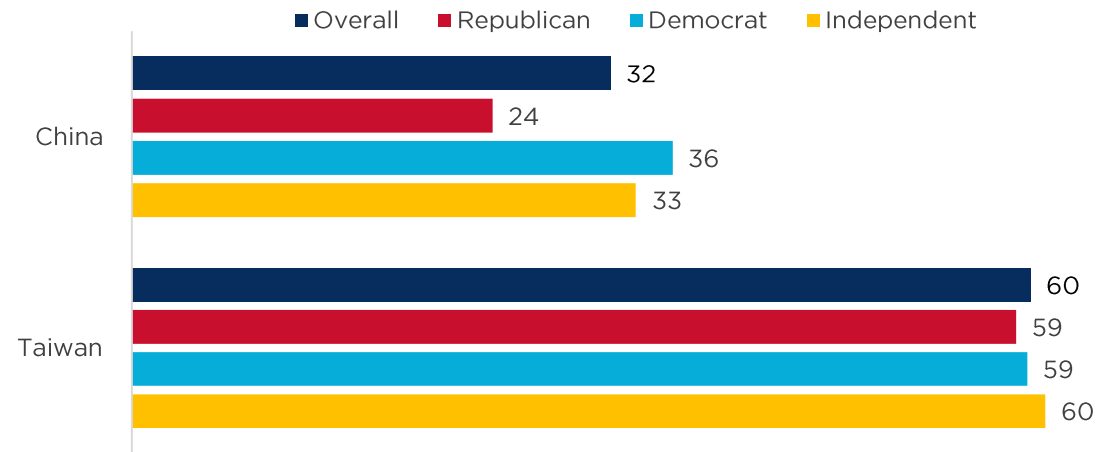
About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

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. For the latest research from the Crown Center, follow [@ChiCouncilFP](https://twitter.com/ChiCouncilFP).

Appendix

American Views of China and Taiwan

Please rate your feelings toward some countries, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that country. (mean)



July 15 - August 1, 2022 | n= (China: 2,077, Taiwan: 2,087)

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS