



Standing All-American and Fast and Furious: Why the U.S. cannot afford to tiptoe around the issue of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan

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U.S. primacy and national security depend on vital interests. Instinctively, such national interests guide our foreign policy. The latter along with American values are somehow interlinked, and this interdependence guides the way policymakers craft U.S. foreign policy. Feulner (1996) [defines](#) “those vital interests as developments that could concretely affect the security or economic future of America and our citizens.” Allison and Blackwill (1998) list [five vital national interests](#) including guaranteeing U.S. allies’ survival and cooperation and ensuring the viability of major global systems. Along similar lines, a past commission on America’s national interests highlighted that U.S. foreign policy must emphasize five vital interests among which ensuring our allies’ survival and their close cooperation with the United States to create a [thriving international system](#). More recently, the Trump administration reiterated – through its National Security Strategy – the need to advance American influence stating: “[As a force for good throughout its history, America will use its influence to advance our interests and benefit humanity.](#)” Having maintained and strengthened its commercial ties with Taiwan since 1979, the U.S. became [Taiwan’s second largest partner](#). Hence, Taiwan is an exogenous factor of U.S. national interests. By economic reckoning, losing such partnership will effectively undermine U.S. prosperity and geological influence in Asia.

What is at stake?

Evidence of U.S. national interests in Taiwan abound, and a Chinese forceful takeover of that nation will impede U.S. interests both at home and abroad. Numerous American corporations rely on Taiwanese semiconductors for their operations. Since 1987, Taiwan is home to the world’s first and biggest dedicated semiconductor foundry Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Inc., or [TSMC](#). Not only the United States, but most nations’ national security is at risk because statistically, “[Taiwan accounts for 92 percent of the world’s most advanced \(below 10nm\) semiconductor manufacturing capacity, more than 50 percent of overall semiconductor manufacturing capacity, and is a key source for silicon wafers.](#)” Those chips are key electronic components in the manufacture of items ranging from electronics and medical equipment to cars, making [TSMC’s](#) operations global. Yearly, Taiwan manufactures more than [1 trillion chips](#), and between September 2020 and 2021, transactions between the U.S. and Taiwan amounted to [\\$72 billion](#), which shows incontrovertible evidence of U.S. interests in that country. Even more, by remarkable coincidence, the Covid-19 pandemic induced a shortage of computer chips, raising the price of both new and used cars in America, and inflicting a staggering [\\$210 billion](#) in lost



sales to the auto industry in a single year. Of added importance, technological dominance has become one key dimension of the [rivalry between America and China](#) for economic supremacy. The IT industry accounts for [\\$1.8 trillion](#) (10%) of U.S. GDP. Furthermore, the South China sea is a hub for major maritime trade routes and submarines cables ([FASTER](#); [NCP](#)) that link America to the [Indo Pacific](#). Thus, all the foregoing suggest America must militarily respond to China should Xi Jinping decide to take Taiwan by force. Considering what is at stake, choosing idleness will amount to a bold gamble.

Unlike China, Taiwan is living up to the promises. Taipei's current standing is praiseworthy because the country mirrors U.S. global expectations for democracy and stability. Due in large part to the United States, Taiwan successfully transitioned from being an import-dependent nation to becoming an exporter of cheap consumer goods to America, setting the stage for Taiwan's record [thirty-year economic boom](#). Wittingly, political progress followed, and after four decades of autocracy, Taiwan transitioned in the 1990s to democracy; [several peaceful transfers of power](#) have occurred so far. The contrast with Beijing is obvious; delinking human rights improvements from trade and bringing China into the [WTO did not suffice](#) to put the PRC on a democratic pathway despite its colossal economic success. Worse, China breached the 1997 Sino-British Joint Declaration regarding Hong Kong, which is another irrefutable proof of China's perfidy regarding democratic values. The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act clearly enshrines the U.S. commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining its [defensive capability](#), and corollary its democracy. Standing up to China in the 1950s during the Korean War to protect Taiwan from falling to the [PRC](#) has been paying its dividends. Hence, there are strong factual grounds to defend Taiwan. As a matter of fact, a war with China – in case of an invasion of Taiwan – is an obligation America should not shirk.